

# Message 1

## A Holy Marriage for God's Purpose

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18, 23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Heb. 13:4; Eccl. 9:9; Prov. 5:18; Mal. 2:14-15; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21a; Eph. 5:18-33; Col. 3:16-19

- Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
- Gen 1:27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
- Gen 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.
- Gen 2:18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart.
- Gen 2:23 And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones / And flesh of my flesh; / This one shall be called Woman / Because out of Man this one was taken.
- Gen 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
- Matt 19:4 And He answered and said, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,
- Matt 19:5 And said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh"?
- Matt 19:6 So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has yoked together, let man not separate.
- Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
- Eccl 9:9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you have loved all the days of your life of vanity which He has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity; for this is your portion in life and in your labor by which you have labored under the sun.
- Prov 5:18 Let your fountain be blessed, / And rejoice in the wife of your youth,
- Mal 2:14 Yet you say, For what reason? Because Jehovah has been the witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been treacherous; yet she is your companion and your wife of covenant.
- Mal 2:15 But did He not make them one? And the remnant of the Spirit was His. And why the one? He sought the seed of God. Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one be treacherous to the wife of his youth.
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
- Eph 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord,
- Eph 5:20 Giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father,
- Eph 5:21 Being subject to one another in the fear of Christ:
- Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;
- Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.
- Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
- Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
- Eph 5:28 In the same way the husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his own wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,  
 Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.  
 Eph 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.  
 Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.  
 Eph 5:33 Nevertheless you also, each one of you, in the same way love your own wife as yourself; and the wife should fear her husband.  
 Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.  
 Col 3:17 And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.  
 Col 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.  
 Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter against them.

**I. Married life is the foundation of the family life, and the family life is the basis of our daily life, and our daily life is the basis of the church life; this shows the crucial importance of our married life—Heb. 13:4:**

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

A. Marriage is a very important factor in the church life; whether a church is sound and healthy or loses its element and essence is very much dependent upon the marriage life; we should not consider the matter of marriage to be a light thing; we must hold it in honor—v. 4; cf. 1 Thes. 4:3-8.

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

1 Thes 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication;

1 Thes 4:4 That each one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1 Thes 4:5 Not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1 Thes 4:6 That no one overstep and take advantage of his brother in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger concerning all these things, even as we also said before to you and solemnly charged.

1 Thes 4:7 For God has not called us for uncleanness but in sanctification.

1 Thes 4:8 Consequently, he who rejects, rejects not man but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.

B. Paul's burden in Ephesians 5 was to cover both married life and the church life at the same time; Paul did not separate married life from the church life; rather, he blended the two together, for he knew that married life is actually part of the church life—vv. 22-33.

Eph 5 be omitted.

Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;

Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 In the same way the husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his own wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,

Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.

Eph 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.

Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.  
 Eph 5:33 Nevertheless you also, each one of you, in the same way love your own wife as yourself; and the wife should fear her husband.

## II. Marriage is ordained by God and is important to God—Gen. 2:18; Matt. 19:4-5:

Gen 2:18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart.  
 Matt 19:4 And He answered and said, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,  
 Matt 19:5 And said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh"?

A. When God created man, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He determined to make a helper for man as his counterpart; this shows that marriage is according to God's divine and holy ordination—Gen. 2:18:

Gen 2:18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart.

1. Immediately after God created man, He charged man to be "fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," that is, to fill the earth with human beings—1:28.

Gen 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

2. This indicates that we need to be married properly according to God's purpose and for God's purpose; God's purpose in marriage is to use us to maintain the existence of mankind on earth—vv. 27-28.

Gen 1:27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Gen 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

3. Man should enjoy God's provision for his living and the marriage life for man's existence and multiplication to replenish the earth that it may be possible for God to save some men in order to produce the church—the Body of Christ—which will issue in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal enlargement and expression according to God's eternal economy—Eccl. 9:7-9, and note 7<sup>1</sup>; Prov. 5:18; Mal. 2:14-15, and note 15<sup>1</sup>; Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 21:2, 10.

Eccl 9:7 Go; <sup>1</sup>eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works.

Note 1 See note 121 in ch. 3. Man should enjoy God's provision for his living and the marriage life for man's existence and multiplication (vv. 7-10) to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28) that it may be possible for God to save some men in order to produce the church—the Body of Christ—which will issue in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal enlargement and expression according to God's eternal economy.

Eccl 9:8 Let your garments always be white, and do not let oil be lacking on your head.

Eccl 9:9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you have loved all the days of your life of vanity which He has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity; for this is your portion in life and in your labor by which you have labored under the sun.

Prov 5:18 Let your fountain be blessed, / And rejoice in the wife of your youth,

Mal 2:14 Yet you say, For what reason? Because Jehovah has been the witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been treacherous; yet she is your companion and your wife of covenant.

Mal 2:15 But did He not make them one? And the remnant of the Spirit was His. And why the one? He sought the <sup>1</sup>seed of God. Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one be treacherous to the wife of his youth.

Note 1 In marriage God has made the husband and wife one in order to produce "the seed of God," i.e., godly children.

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,  
 Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.  
 Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  
 Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

B. God's enemy has a desire to destroy the accomplishment of God's goal, which depends upon human marriage—1 Tim. 4:1-3:

1 Tim 4:1 But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons  
 1 Tim 4:2 By means of the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, of men who are branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron,  
 1 Tim 4:3 Who forbid marriage and command abstaining from foods, which God has created to be partaken of with thanksgiving by those who believe and have full knowledge of the truth.

1. Attacks on this divine matter of God's ordination come from enemies who have an intention to destroy God's goal by causing people to marry loosely or by forbidding them to marry—vv. 1-3; Luke 17:26-27.

1 Tim 4:1 But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons  
 1 Tim 4:2 By means of the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, of men who are branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron,  
 1 Tim 4:3 Who forbid marriage and command abstaining from foods, which God has created to be partaken of with thanksgiving by those who believe and have full knowledge of the truth.  
 Luke 17:26 And even as it happened in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man:  
 Luke 17:27 They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.

2. We should be aware that an ideology not to marry comes from demons, God's enemies.

C. Marriage is a symbol of the union between Christ and the church—Gen. 2:18, 21-24; Eph. 5:22-32:

Gen 2:18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart.  
 Gen 2:21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place.  
 Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.  
 Gen 2:23 And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones / And flesh of my flesh; / This one shall be called Woman / Because out of Man this one was taken.  
 Gen 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.  
 Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;  
 Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.  
 Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.  
 Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her  
 Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,  
 Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.  
 Eph 5:28 In the same way the husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his own wife loves himself.

- Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.
- Eph 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.
- Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.
1. Adam typifies God in Christ as the real, universal Husband, who is seeking a wife for Himself; Adam's need for a wife typifies and portrays God's need, in His economy, to have a wife as His counterpart, His complement (lit. , his parallel)—Rom. 5:14; cf. Isa. 54:5; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 21:9.
 

Rom 5:14 But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Isa 54:5 For your Maker is your Husband; / Jehovah of hosts is His name. / And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; / He is called the God of all the earth.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Eph 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.

Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Rev 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.
  2. God desires to have both Adam, typifying Christ, and Eve, typifying the church; His purpose is to "let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26); it is to have a victorious Christ plus a victorious church; God wants Christ and the church to have dominion—Rom. 5:17; 16:20; Eph. 1:22-23.
 

Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Rom 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom 16:20 Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

### **III. We need to live the life of a God-man in our married life—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21a; Eph. 5:18-33; Col. 3:16-19:**

- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
- Eph 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord,
- Eph 5:20 Giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father,
- Eph 5:21 Being subject to one another in the fear of Christ:
- Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;
- Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

- Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
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- Eph 5:33 Nevertheless you also, each one of you, in the same way love your own wife as yourself; and the wife should fear her husband.
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- Col 3:17 And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
- Col 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
- Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter against them.
- A. We need to have a God-man living in our married life in order to have a God-man living in the church; if a husband and a wife are not vital at home in their married life, they have no way to be vital in the meeting; we need to live Christ at home with our husband or wife and with our children.
- B. Because we are short of the God-man living, we need a real revival to be God-men who live a life of always denying ourselves and being crucified to live Christ for the expression of God—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21a.
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- C. In order to have the God-man living, we need to live and walk according to the mingled spirit—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4:
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
1. A very important area in which to walk according to our spirit is our married life.
  2. If we can live according to our spirit in our married life, a great many difficulties will disappear.

#### **IV. Isaac's marriage was not common nor merely for his human living; it was for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—Gen. 21:12; 24:1-4:**

- Gen 21:12 And God said to Abraham, Do not be displeased on account of the boy and on account of your maidservant. Whatever Sarah says to you, listen to her voice, for in Isaac shall your seed be called.
- Gen 24:1 And Abraham was old and advanced in age. And Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things.
- Gen 24:2 And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who ruled over all that he had, Put your hand under my thigh;
- Gen 24:3 And I will make you swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am dwelling.
- Gen 24:4 But you shall go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.

- A. God’s eternal purpose is to express Himself in a corporate way; in order to have this corporate expression, God must have a people; this people is the seed of Abraham—1:26; 12:1-3; 15:5; 21:12.

Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Gen 12:1 Now Jehovah said to Abram, Go from your land / And from your relatives / And from your father's house / To the land that I will show you;

Gen 12:2 And I will make of you a great nation, / And I will bless you / And make your name great; / And you shall be a blessing.

Gen 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, / And him who curses you I will curse; / And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Gen 15:5 And He brought him outside and said, Look now toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, So shall your seed be.

Gen 21:12 And God said to Abraham, Do not be displeased on account of the boy and on account of your maidservant. Whatever Sarah says to you, listen to her voice, for in Isaac shall your seed be called.

- B. Isaac’s marriage was not simply that a single man might have a happy, comfortable life; without marriage, Isaac could not have brought forth the seed; if this single man was to have the seed for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose, he had to get married—24:1-4.

Gen 24:1 And Abraham was old and advanced in age. And Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things.

Gen 24:2 And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who ruled over all that he had, Put your hand under my thigh;

Gen 24:3 And I will make you swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am dwelling.

Gen 24:4 But you shall go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.

- C. “We long to see that all the marriages in the churches will be for the fulfillment of God’s purpose. This kind of marriage requires a daily living in oneness with God. Young brothers, if everything you do is in accordance with God’s economy, even your marriage will be the carrying out of His economy. You need to say, ‘Lord, what I am doing here today must be in accordance with Your economy. I am single now, but one day I will be married. May my marriage be for Your economy.’ This is the main point of Genesis 24”—*Life-Study of Genesis*, msg. 60, pp. 791-792.

Gen 24 be omitted.

## V. We need to be deeply impressed with the best marriage in the Bible—the model marriage of Boaz and Ruth—Matt. 1:5, 16; Ruth 4:13-22:

Matt 1:5 And Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab, and Boaz begot Obed of Ruth, and Obed begot Jesse,

Matt 1:16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah made her conceive; and she bore a son.

Ruth 4:14 And the women said to Naomi, Blessed be Jehovah, who has not left you today without a kinsman; and may his name be famous in Israel.

Ruth 4:15 And he will be to you as a restorer of life and a sustainer in your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.

Ruth 4:16 And Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and she became his nurse.

Ruth 4:17 And the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, A son has been born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Ruth 4:18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez begot Hezron,

Ruth 4:19 And Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab,

Ruth 4:20 And Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon,

Ruth 4:21 And Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed,

Ruth 4:22 And Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

- A. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth may be considered the best marriage recorded in the Bible.
- B. The particular striking point in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth is not anything concerning their living or career but something concerning an excellent matter, that is, to be one part of the lineage to bring Jesus Christ into humanity—Matt. 1:5.  
 Matt 1:5       And Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab, and Boaz begot Obed of Ruth, and Obed begot Jesse,
- C. Through their participating in the lineage to bring forth Christ, God could accomplish His eternal economy by having an organic Body for Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the center of the new heaven and new earth to be God’s divine expansion in humanity for His eternal expression in His divine glory—v. 16; Eph. 4:15-16; Rev. 21:1-2, 9-10.  
 Matt 1:16       And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.  
 Eph 4:15       But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,  
 Eph 4:16       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.  
 Rev 21:1       And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.  
 Rev 21:2       And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  
 Rev 21:9       And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.  
 Rev 21:10      And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### MARRIAGE

#### Marriage Being Ordained by God

**“Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart”** (Gen. 2:18).

When God created man, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He determined to make a helper for man as his counterpart. This shows that marriage is according to God’s divine and holy ordination. Marriage was ordained by God when God first created man. Marriage did not come in after the fall of man, nor is it based on the lusts of man. Marriage was ordained by God for man in creation, and it is a primary matter in our human living. In our living, only creation is higher than marriage, and all other matters are headed up by marriage. The origin of man was through creation; the continuation of man is through marriage. In the beginning God created man, but the continuation and propagation of man is through marriage. Therefore, marriage is important to God, and He ordains that man marry.

God ordained man to have a helper as his counterpart because it was not good for the man to be alone. Being alone is not good for several reasons. It is not good in regard to reaching God’s goal, and even more, it is not good in regard to man himself. Both physically and emotionally, in human living and human affairs, it is not good for man to be alone. Therefore, God determined to make a helper as a counterpart for man.

**“He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh’”** (Matt. 19:4-5).

In the beginning God not only ordained that man have a helper as his counterpart in marriage, He

also created them male and female and ordained that the two should be one flesh. Man has an inward need for marriage, which comes from God's creation. God created this need in human nature. The Bible reveals that God's goal in the universe is with man. In order for God to accomplish His goal in the universe, He must gain man, and in order to gain man, He must ensure that the man He created for His purpose continues and propagates through marriage. Therefore, God not only ordained marriage; He also created a need for marriage within man.

God's creation of man was very special. He created man so that a male and a female would need each other in order to be a complete person by becoming one flesh. According to the teaching of the Bible, neither a female nor a male is a complete person. In order to be complete, a male and a female must join together as one. Just as two halves of a watermelon are needed in order to be a complete watermelon, only a man and a wife are a complete person from God's point of view. A brother once invited a couple over for dinner, but the husband came without his wife. The brother mentioned to his guest that only half of a person came. According to the Bible and God's original ordination, I felt that this word was correct. God wants male and female to become one flesh; therefore, He wants man to marry. Marriage is God's original ordination.

The Scripture quoted by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 19:5 was in response to a question concerning divorce. In His word the Lord acknowledged God's original ordination concerning marriage. Furthermore, the Lord indicated that man should honor God's original ordination concerning marriage. In the New Testament the Lord's consideration of the importance of human marriage matched God's consideration in creation.

### **Marriage Being a Symbol of the Union between Christ and the Church**

**"I betrothed you to one husband...as a pure virgin to Christ"** (2 Cor. 11:2).

The marriage of a man and a woman is a symbol of the joining of Christ and the church. The apostle considers Christ as the Husband and the believers as His betrothed. Furthermore, he betrothed us as a pure virgin to Christ. Therefore, whenever we see a marriage, we should be reminded of our relationship to Christ and of Christ's relationship to us.

**"The two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church"** (Eph. 5:31-32).

A husband and a wife, being one flesh, are a symbol of a great mystery, Christ and the church, and of the oneness between Christ and the church. Whenever we consider a husband and wife being one flesh, we should see the mystery of the oneness of Christ and the church.

**"A husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church...But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"** (Eph. 5:23-25).

A husband, as the head of the wife, is a symbol of Christ as the Head of the church. Therefore, a wife being subject to her husband is a symbol of the church being subject to Christ, and a husband loving his wife is a symbol of Christ loving the church. Every proper relationship between husband and wife is a manifestation of the story of Christ and the church. Therefore, as husbands and wives, we should be careful to be proper husbands and wives in order to properly manifest the relationship between Christ and the church. (*CWWL, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, "Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures," ch. 33, pp. 603-614)

### **HOLDING MARRIAGE IN HONOR**

Verse 4 says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Apparently this is unrelated to the church life. However, marriage is a very important factor in the church life. Whether a church is sound and healthy or loses its element and essence is very much dependent upon the marriage life. Do not consider the matter of marriage to be a

light thing. We must hold it in honor. This means that we must possess our body, our vessel, in sanctification and honor (1 Thes. 4:3-4), that “no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter” (1 Thes. 4:6). In the church life, the brothers and sisters must contact one another in a holy way. This means that we honor our marriage and others’ marriage. To honor marriage means to possess our body in sanctification and honor and to flee fornication. (*Life-Study of Hebrews*, msg. 55, p. 613)

### **WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT**

Romans 8:4 is a verse that is parallel to Colossians 2:8 in the sense that it tells us to walk according to spirit. To walk according to spirit is to walk according to Christ. If you walk daily according to spirit, you will automatically walk according to Christ. If you walk in this way, you will do certain things or refrain from doing things, not because you are conforming to the practice of the local churches, but because you are walking according to Christ...

We need to apply the matter of walking according to spirit in every aspect of our daily living. For example, the brothers who live together need to apply this to their conversation with one another. One brother may be accustomed to speaking according to his mind, whereas another brother may talk according to his emotion. Both brothers must learn to talk according to the spirit. When they rise up early in the morning, they should exercise to talk not from the mind or from the emotion, but from the spirit. The brothers should pray, “Lord, grant me the grace to speak from my spirit.” However, instead of doing this, the brothers may live according to the tradition of men and the elements of the world. Although they may not quarrel with each other, they may live according to their humanity which has been refined by the church life and not live according to Christ.

A very important area in which to walk according to our spirit is our married life. It is difficult for husbands to remain in the spirit with their wives. It is easy for them to be either in the mind, the emotion, or the will. One of the most difficult things for a brother to do is to turn to his spirit in the presence of his wife. But we brothers need to learn to walk according to spirit in relating to our wives. If a brother’s wife treats him well, he may be happy. But if she is not pleasant to him, he may be offended. Instead of turning to the spirit, he may choose to stay in his emotion. But whether our wives are kind or unkind, we need to stay in our spirit. If your wife rebukes you, stay in the spirit. If she speaks well of you, stay in the spirit. If you stay in the spirit, you will walk according to Christ in your married life.

Wives also need to learn to be in the spirit when they are with their husbands. This is even more difficult than for a husband to be in spirit with his wife. Many sisters can be in the spirit with almost anyone except their husbands. When they are with their husbands, they are usually in the emotion, not in the spirit. We need the Lord’s mercy and grace to be in the spirit with our husband or wife. We must confess that, to a large degree, our married life is not according to Christ. Let us look to the Lord that He would grant us the mercy and grace to have our married life according to the spirit. This is basic and crucial for the church life. The married life is the foundation of the family life, the family life is the basis of our daily life, and our daily life is the basis of the church life. This shows the crucial importance of our married life. If we can live according to our spirit in our married life, a great many difficulties will disappear. (*Life-Study of Colossians*, msg. 54, pp. 475-477)

### **LIVING THE LIFE OF A GOD-MAN IN OUR MARRIED LIFE AND IN THE CHURCH LIFE**

Let us now consider the situation in the recovery. We all are believers. We believe in the Lord Jesus. We have repented and come back to the Lord, and we have been saved, even dynamically saved. Yet in our daily life we may not have the living of a God-man.

We have pointed out that for the children of Israel to keep the law was to live God and express God. However, they did not keep the law, and therefore they did not live God and express God. The situation is the same with us today. For the most part, we do not express God in our daily living.

We need to have a God-man living in our married life. If a married brother would live the life of a God-man in his married life, he would surely be a good husband, for he would be a real God-man in loving his wife. Likewise, if a married sister would live the life of a God-man in her married life, she would be a good wife, submitting herself to her husband.

We also need to have a God-man living in the church life, especially in relation to what we call the vital groups. How can we have a vital group if we ourselves are not vital? This is impossible. Suppose at dinner a brother and his wife are not happy with each other. They even exchange words and argue for quite a long time. Suddenly they remember that later that evening they must attend a meeting of their vital group. But how could this couple be vital in the meeting? Because they are not vital at home in their married life, they have no way to be vital in the meeting.

### **OUR NEED FOR A REAL REVIVAL**

Because we are short of the God-man living, we need a real revival. The children of Israel had only an outward law, but today we have something much stronger and much higher than the law. We have the all-inclusive, life-giving, compounded, consummated Spirit in us, who is the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). We need to live Christ by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (vv. 20-21a).

We have such a Spirit within us, but what do we live and how do we live? Do we live Christ? In the church meetings we may live Christ, but do we live Christ at home with our husband or wife and with our children? We need a real revival to be God-men who live a life of always denying ourselves and being crucified to live Christ for the expression of God. (*Life-Study of 1 & 2 Chronicles*, msg. 11, pp. 76-77)

### **THE BEST MARRIAGE**

The Bible unveils to us that God created man in His own image in His highest intention to carry out His eternal economy. Right after God created man, God ordained the marriage of man. According to the divine revelation in the Bible, the human marriage ordained by God is not merely for man to live and to carry out some career but for man to be one with God so that God can have a way to carry out His eternal economy through man.

The highest intention of God in creating man and ordaining man's marriage is that He desires to be one with man, even by becoming man, that man could be made like Him in His divine life and nature but not in His divine Godhead. Four thousand years after the history of mankind began, God came out of eternity into time to be incarnated, to become a man in the flesh, and this man was Jesus Christ as the embodiment of God. Jesus Christ is both God and man, a God-man who produced many believers through His death and resurrection to be His organic Body, the church. All this was done through man's marriage.

The best marriage as recorded in the Bible is the marriage of Boaz and Ruth. The particular striking point in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, as the Bible records, is not anything concerning their living or anything concerning their career but something concerning an excellent matter, that is, to be one part of the lineage to bring Jesus Christ into humanity so that God could accomplish His eternal economy by having an organic Body for Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the center of the new heaven and new earth to be God's divine expansion in humanity for His eternal expression in His divine glory. (*CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 1, "The Best Marriage," p. 489)

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. Life-Study of Colossians, msg. 54.
2. Life-Study of Hebrews, msg. 55.
3. The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," ch. 30

4. Life-Study of Ephesians, msg. 53.
5. The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949, vol. 3, "Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Volume 3," ch. 33.
6. Life-Study of Matthew, msg. 53.
7. Life-Study of Deuteronomy, msg. 23.
8. Life-Study of 1 & 2 Chronicles, msgs. 8, 11.
9. The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1993, vol. 1, "Miscellaneous Fellowship," ch. 3.
10. Life-Study of Genesis, msg. 60.
11. Life-Study of Ruth, msgs. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8.
12. The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994-1997, vol. 1, "The Best Marriage."

## Message 2

# A Godly Family for the Church Life

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Gen. 5:22, 25-29; 6:8, 11-14; 7:1;

Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:3-5; Philem. 1-2

- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- Gen 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
- Gen 5:25 And Methuselah lived one hundred eighty-seven years and begot Lamech.
- Gen 5:26 And Methuselah lived after he had begotten Lamech seven hundred eighty-two years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
- Gen 5:27 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years, and he died.
- Gen 5:28 And Lamech lived a hundred eighty-two years and begot a son.
- Gen 5:29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands, which come because of the ground which Jehovah has cursed.
- Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah.
- Gen 6:11 And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.
- Gen 6:12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.
- Gen 6:13 And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and now I am about to destroy them with the earth.
- Gen 6:14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make rooms in the ark and shall cover it within and without with pitch.
- Gen 7:1 Then Jehovah said to Noah, Come into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.
- Matt 16:18 And 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.
- Rom 16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
- Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
- Rom 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.
- Philem 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow worker
- Philem 2 And to Apphia the sister and to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church, which is in your house:

### **I. Godliness is a living that expresses the divine reality, an expression of God in all His riches—1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 6, 11; Titus 1:1; 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:3, 6-7; 3:11:**

- 1 Tim 2:2 On behalf of kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 1 Tim 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
- 1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,
- 1 Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain;
- 1 Tim 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.

- Titus 1:1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness,
- Titus 2:12 Training us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age,
- 2 Pet 1:3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,
- 2 Pet 1:6 And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness;
- 2 Pet 1:7 And in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.
- 2 Pet 3:11 Since all these things are to be thus dissolved, what kind of persons ought you to be in holy manner of life and godliness,

A. Godliness refers not only to piety but also to the living of God in the church, that is, to God as life lived out in the church—1 Tim. 3:15-16.

- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.

B. The living of the church as the new man should be exactly the same as the living of Jesus; it should be a life according to the reality that is in Jesus—Eph. 4:17-24:

- Eph 4:17 This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk in the vanity of their mind,
- Eph 4:18 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;
- Eph 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.
- Eph 4:20 But you did not so learn Christ,
- Eph 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus,
- Eph 4:22 That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit,
- Eph 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind
- Eph 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

1. The *reality is in Jesus* refers to the actual condition of the life of Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels; in the godly life of Jesus there is truth, reality—v. 21, and note 1.

- Eph 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the <sup>1</sup>reality is in Jesus,

Note 1 The reality is in Jesus refers to the actual condition of the life of Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels. In the godless walk of the nations, the fallen people, there is vanity. But in the godly life of Jesus there is truth, reality. Jesus lived a life in which He did everything in God, with God, and for God. God was in His living, and He was one with God. This is what is meant by the reality is in Jesus. We, the believers, who are regenerated with Christ as our life and are taught in Him, learn from Him as the reality is in Jesus.

2. Jesus lived a life in which He did everything in God, with God, and for God; God was in His living, and He was one with God—John 14:9-10; 16:32b; 5:30; 6:57; 10:30.

- John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?
- John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.
- John 16:32b ... yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.
- John 5:30 I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 10:30 I and the Father are one.

3. We, the believers, who are regenerated with Christ as our life and are taught in Him, learn from Him as the reality is in Jesus—3:3, 5-6; Col. 3:4; Eph. 4:20-21.
  - John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
  - John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
  - John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
  - Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
  - Eph 4:20 But you did not so learn Christ,
  - Eph 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus,

## II. Noah's life and work was one that changed the age; Noah came from a godly family and learned from his forefathers all the godly things—Gen. 5:22, 25-29; 6:8:

- Gen 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
  - Gen 5:25 And Methuselah lived one hundred eighty-seven years and begot Lamech.
  - Gen 5:26 And Methuselah lived after he had begotten Lamech seven hundred eighty-two years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
  - Gen 5:27 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years, and he died.
  - Gen 5:28 And Lamech lived a hundred eighty-two years and begot a son.
  - Gen 5:29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands, which come because of the ground which Jehovah has cursed.
  - Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah.
- A. Noah inherited the spiritual blessings from his forefathers to maintain and extend God's way of redemption and life:
1. Noah found grace in the eyes of God (v. 8); born into a godly family (cf. Gen. 5:4-29), he inherited the spiritual blessings from his forefathers and took God's way of redemption and life, including Adam's way of salvation (3:20-21), Abel's way of offering (4:4), Enosh's way of calling (v. 26), all the fathers' way of living and begetting (5:3-28), Enoch's way of walking with God (vv. 22, 24); moreover, by faith he became a righteous man in God's eyes and a perfect man who walked with God in that generation (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:9).
    - Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah.
    - Gen 5:3 And Adam lived one hundred thirty years and begot a son in his likeness according to his image, and he called his name Seth.
    - Gen 5:4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
    - Gen 5:5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years, and he died.
    - Gen 5:6 And Seth lived one hundred five years and begot Enosh.
    - Gen 5:7 And Seth lived after he had begotten Enosh eight hundred seven years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
    - Gen 5:8 And all the days of Seth were nine hundred twelve years, and he died.
    - Gen 5:9 And Enosh lived ninety years and begot Kenan.
    - Gen 5:10 And Enosh lived after he had begotten Kenan eight hundred fifteen years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
    - Gen 5:11 And all the days of Enosh were nine hundred five years, and he died.
    - Gen 5:12 And Kenan lived seventy years and begot Mahalalel.
    - Gen 5:13 And Kenan lived after he had begotten Mahalalel eight hundred forty years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
    - Gen 5:14 And all the days of Kenan were nine hundred ten years, and he died.
    - Gen 5:15 And Mahalalel lived sixty-five years and begot Jared.
    - Gen 5:16 And Mahalalel lived after he had begotten Jared eight hundred thirty years, and he begot more sons and daughters.

Gen 5:17 And all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred ninety-five years, and he died.

Gen 5:18 And Jared lived a hundred sixty-two years and begot Enoch.

Gen 5:19 And Jared lived after he had begotten Enoch eight hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.

Gen 5:20 And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty-two years, and he died.

Gen 5:21 And Enoch lived sixty-five years and begot Methuselah.

Gen 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.

Gen 5:23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years.

Gen 5:24 And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Gen 5:25 And Methuselah lived one hundred eighty-seven years and begot Lamech.

Gen 5:26 And Methuselah lived after he had begotten Lamech seven hundred eighty-two years, and he begot more sons and daughters.

Gen 5:27 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years, and he died.

Gen 5:28 And Lamech lived a hundred eighty-two years and begot a son.

Gen 5:29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands, which come because of the ground which Jehovah has cursed.

Gen 3:20 And the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Gen 3:21 And Jehovah God made coats of skins for Adam and for his wife and clothed them.

Gen 4:4 And Abel also brought an offering, from the firstlings of his flock, that is, from their fat portions. And Jehovah had regard for Abel and for his offering.

Gen 4:26 And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Jehovah.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, having been divinely instructed concerning things not yet seen and being moved by pious fear, prepared an ark for the salvation of his house, through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Gen 6:9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generations; and Noah walked with God.

2. Therefore, he maintained and extended God's way of life so that God could carry out His plan on the corrupted earth according to His desire.

B. The ark built by Noah eventually not only saved him from God's judgment but also saved his family from that evil generation—vv. 11-14; 7:1; Matt. 24:37-39:

Gen 6:11 And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

Gen 6:12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.

Gen 6:13 And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and now I am about to destroy them with the earth.

Gen 6:14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make rooms in the ark and shall cover it within and without with pitch.

Gen 7:1 Then Jehovah said to Noah, Come into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.

Matt 24:37 For just as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt 24:38 For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark,

Matt 24:39 And they did not know that judgment was coming until the flood came and took all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

1. This is a type of Christ's salvation that not only delivers us out of eternal perdition but also saves us from the corrupted generation—Acts 2:40; cf. Gal. 1:4.

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this crooked generation.

Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,

2. Whoever is saved will by no means perish; however, we need the further and higher salvation that saves us from the corrupted generation; this salvation is the corporate Christ whom we are building—Gen. 6:11-14; 7:1; Acts 2:40-42; 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:16.

Gen 6:11	And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.
Gen 6:12	And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.
Gen 6:13	And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and now I am about to destroy them with the earth.
Gen 6:14	Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make rooms in the ark and shall cover it within and without with pitch.
Gen 7:1	Then Jehovah said to Noah, Come into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.
Acts 2:40	And with many other words he solemnly testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this crooked generation.
Acts 2:41	Those then who received his word were baptized, and there were added on that day about three thousand souls.
Acts 2:42	And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.
1 Cor 12:12	For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
Eph 4:16	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.

### **III. Among us in the Lord's recovery the most important unit is the church; after the church, the most important unit is the family—1 Tim. 3:15-16; Titus 1:5-9; 2:3-5:**

1 Tim 3:15	But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
1 Tim 3:16	And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
Titus 1:5	For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things which I have begun that remain and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you:
Titus 1:6	If anyone is unreprouvable, the husband of one wife, having believing children, not accused of dissoluteness or unruly.
Titus 1:7	For the overseer must be unreprouvable as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a striker, not greedy for base gain;
Titus 1:8	But hospitable, a lover of good, of a sober mind, righteous, holy, self-controlled;
Titus 1:9	Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.
Titus 2:3	Older women likewise to be in demeanor as befits those who engage in sacred things, not slanderers, nor enslaved by much wine, teachers of what is good,
Titus 2:4	That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,
Titus 2:5	To be of a sober mind, pure, workers at home, good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God would not be blasphemed.

- A. Next to the church, the family is the most important unit in society; without a proper family life, there would be no way to have a healthy society or country; a nation is constituted of families as the basic factors.
- B. We fully realize that without a proper family life it is difficult to have an orderly church life; we also realize that without a proper church life it is difficult to have a normal and proper family life; we are here for the church and also for the family.

### **IV. Apart from the book of Proverbs, the Old Testament does not seem to give us**

**much teaching concerning parenting, but there are some good examples—Exo. 12:3-7; Deut. 6:7-9, 20-21; 11:18-21; Psa. 78:5-7; Joel 1:3:**

- Exo 12:3 Speak to all the assembly of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month each man shall take a lamb according to his fathers' house, a lamb for a household.
- Exo 12:4 And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor next to his house shall take one according to the number of the persons in the houses; according to each man's eating you shall make your count for the lamb.
- Exo 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.
- Exo 12:6 And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel shall kill it at twilight.
- Exo 12:7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.
- Deut 6:7 And you shall repeat them to your children, and speak about them when you sit in your house and when you journey on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up;
- Deut 6:8 And you shall bind them on your hand as a sign, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes;
- Deut 6:9 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
- Deut 6:20 When your son asks you in the future, saying, What is the significance of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances that Jehovah our God commanded you?
- Deut 6:21 Then you will say to your son, We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and Jehovah brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.
- Deut 11:18 Therefore you shall lay these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them on your hand as a sign, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes;
- Deut 11:19 And you shall teach them to your children, speaking about them when you sit in your house and when you journey on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up;
- Deut 11:20 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates;
- Deut 11:21 That your days may be multiplied, as well as the days of your children, upon the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the days of heaven are above the earth.
- Psa 78:5 Indeed He has established a testimony in Jacob / And appointed a law in Israel, / Which He commanded our fathers / That they should make them known to their children;
- Psa 78:6 That the generation to come, / The children to be born, may know them, / Who should arise and relate them to their children;
- Psa 78:7 That they might set their hope in God, / And not forget the deeds of God, / But observe His commandments;
- Joel 1:3 Tell your children about it, / And let your children tell their children, / And let their children tell the next generation.

- A. Adam and Eve were saved, and they passed on the word of salvation to the following generation; we also must share these things with our own children, telling them the sad story of man's fall and proclaiming to them the good news of God's salvation—Gen. 3:21; 4:4.

- Gen 3:21 And Jehovah God made coats of skins for Adam and for his wife and clothed them.
- Gen 4:4 And Abel also brought an offering, from the firstlings of his flock, that is, from their fat portions. And Jehovah had regard for Abel and for his offering.

- B. "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice"; since Abel had such faith, exercised this faith, and offered a sacrifice to God in accordance with this faith, he must have heard the preaching of the glad tidings from his parents—Heb. 11:4.

- Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts; and through faith, though he has died, he still speaks.

- C. In the preparation of Moses, God prepared godly parents who infused him with godly thoughts after his birth; through the infusing of his parents, Moses had the godly thought and concept that he needed to rescue the children of Israel—Exo. 2:7-9; Heb. 11:24-25.

- Exo 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call a nurse from the Hebrew women for you that she may nurse the child for you?

- Exo 2:8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the girl went and called the child's mother.

- Exo 2:9 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages. So the woman took the child and nursed him.
- Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
- Heb 11:25 Choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin,

D. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, those who were qualified and ready to take possession of the good land were younger ones, the second generation—Num. 14:29-31, 38; Deut. 1:35-36:

- Num 14:29 Your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, and none of you who were numbered, according to the number you counted from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against Me,
- Num 14:30 Shall come into the land, in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.
- Num 14:31 But your little ones, whom you said would become plunder, I will bring in, and they will know the land which you have rejected.
- Num 14:38 Only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land.
- Deut 1:35 Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall by any means see the good land which I have sworn to give to your fathers,
- Deut 1:36 Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it. And to him I will give the land on which he has trodden, and to his children, because he has fully followed Jehovah.

1. The second generation did not pass through as much as the first generation did, but they received the benefit of what the first generation experienced—11:2-7; Josh. 1:1-3.

- Deut 11:2 And realize today that I am speaking not with your sons, who do not know and who have not seen the discipline of Jehovah your God, His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm;
- Deut 11:3 And His signs and works, which He did in the midst of Egypt against Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and against all his land;
- Deut 11:4 And what He did to Egypt's forces, to their horses and to their chariots, when He caused the water of the Red Sea to flow over them while they were pursuing you; and Jehovah made them perish to this day;
- Deut 11:5 And what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place;
- Deut 11:6 And what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up and their households and their tents and all their substance that went with them, from the midst of all Israel.
- Deut 11:7 But it is your eyes that have seen all the great work of Jehovah which He did.
- Josh 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah, Jehovah spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' attendant, saying,
- Josh 1:2 Moses My servant is dead; now then arise, and cross over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the children of Israel.
- Josh 1:3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads I have given to you, as I promised Moses.

2. The principle is the same with us in the Lord's recovery today; what the older ones have experienced is being passed on to the younger ones and will be very effective in building them up and preparing them to fight with God and for God—2 Tim. 2:2.

- 2 Tim 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.

## V. The New Testament gives examples of households, which clearly show us that the unit of God's salvation and service is the household:

A. In the New Testament we see many sweet households, such as the household of Caesar (Phil. 4:22), the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:22-24), the household of Lydia (16:13-15), the household of the jailer (vv. 29-34), and the household of Crispus (18:8).

- Phil 4:22 All the saints greet you, and especially those of Caesar's household.

- Acts 10:22 And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God and is well attested to by the whole nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear words from you.
- Acts 10:23 So he called them in and lodged them. And on the next day he rose up and went away with them; and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.
- Acts 10:24 And on the next day they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius was awaiting them, having called together his relatives and intimate friends.
- Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.
- Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple-dyed goods from the city of Thyatira who worshipped God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened to give heed to the things being spoken by Paul.
- Acts 16:15 And when she was baptized, as well as her household, she entreated us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide. And she constrained us.
- Acts 16:29 And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in; and trembling, he fell down before Paul and Silas.
- Acts 16:30 And leading them outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
- Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.
- Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of God to him together with all those in his house.
- Acts 16:33 And he took them with him in that very hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household.
- Acts 16:34 And he brought them up into his house and set a table before them; and he exulted because he had believed in God with all his household.
- Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with his whole household; and many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.
- B. In addition, there were houses in which the meetings were held, such as Aquila and Prisca's house (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19) and the house of Philemon (Philem. 1-2).
- Rom 16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
- Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
- Rom 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.
- 1 Cor 16:19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, with the church, which is in their house.
- Philem 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow worker
- Philem 2 And to Apphia the sister and to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church, which is in your house:

## **VI. From the beginning of the Lord's recovery in China, Brother Nee pointed out that the church needs to be built up with the household as a unit:**

- A. "I would like to say emphatically that the family life of our next generation has much to do with the church life of our next generation...The church life of the next generation will be strong only if you take care of this matter well. If our next generation has terrible families, the church will suffer many drawbacks...In the coming days may God bestow His grace to the church so that many young families will be raised up in which both the husband and the wife serve the Lord and walk in His way together in one accord. How beautiful such a picture will be!"—*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, p. 497.
- B. "A good church life is maintained through good families. The husbands have to be good and the wives also have to be good. Then the church life will be free of problems"—p. 518.

## **VII. The church life is the purpose of the Christian life, and it is a great reality in**

**the universe; hence, our family life should be brought into the church life—  
Matt. 16:16-19; Philem. 1-2:**

Matt 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.  
Matt 16:17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens.  
Matt 16:18 And 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.  
Matt 16:19 I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.  
Philem 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow worker  
Philem 2 And to Apphia the sister and to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church, which is in your house:

A. We need to realize that in the sight of God, nothing compares with the church; thus, apart from the church life, our family life is vanity; only when our family life is brought into the church life will it be reality—Matt. 13:45-46; Acts 20:28; Eccl. 1:2:

Matt 13:45 Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking fine pearls;  
Matt 13:46 And finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.  
Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.  
Eccl 1:2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; / Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

B. While we need to bear the responsibility of taking care of our family, we need to see that the church is a treasure in God’s heart—1 Tim. 3:2, 4, 12; Titus 2:4-5; Matt. 13:45-46.

1 Tim 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;  
1 Tim 3:4 One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity  
1 Tim 3:12 Deacons must be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own houses well.  
Titus 2:4 That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,  
Titus 2:5 To be of a sober mind, pure, workers at home, good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God would not be blasphemed.  
Matt 13:45 Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking fine pearls;  
Matt 13:46 And finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS—  
GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH**

According to the context [in 1 Timothy 3], godliness here [1 Timothy 3:16a: “And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness”] refers not only to piety but also to the living of God in the church, i.e., to God as life lived out in the church. This is the great mystery confessed universally by believers in Christ. (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 3:16, footnote 2)

According to unconfirmed historical accounts, these six lines of poetry [in 1 Timothy 3:16] made up a song that the saints in the early church loved to sing. *He* refers to Christ, who was God manifested in the flesh as the mystery of godliness. The transition from *the mystery of godliness* to *He* implies that Christ as the manifestation of God in the flesh is the mystery of godliness (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20). This mystery of godliness is the living of a proper church, and such a living also is the manifestation of God in the flesh. (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 3:16, footnote 3)

[“Taken up in glory” in 1 Timothy 3:16] refers to Christ’s ascension into glory (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; 2:33; Phil. 2:9). According to the sequence of historical events, Christ’s ascension preceded His being preached among the nations. However, it is listed here as the last step in Christ’s being the

manifestation of God in the flesh. This must indicate that the church too is taken up in glory. Hence, it implies that not only Christ Himself as the Head but also the church as the Body are the manifestation of God in the flesh. When a church is well taken care of according to the instructions given in the first two chapters [of 1 Timothy]...the church will function as the house and household of the living God for His move on the earth, and as the supporting pillar and holding base of the truth, bearing the divine reality of Christ and His Body as a testimony to the world. Then the church becomes the continuation of Christ as the manifestation of God in the flesh. This is the great mystery of godliness—Christ lived out of the church as the manifestation of God in the flesh! (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 3:16, footnote 9)

## NOAH

Genesis 6:9 tells us that Noah walked with God. Undoubtedly, Noah inherited all the spiritual blessings from his forefathers, such as Adam, Abel, Enosh, Enoch, etc. and he followed his great grandfather, Enoch, to walk with God in a crooked, perverse, and adulterous generation. I do believe that he was much influenced by hearing of his great grandfather Enoch's godly walk. Noah stood for a strong continuation of the line of life and, with much development, he carried it on further...

Genesis 6:8 says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Finding grace in the eyes of the Lord is not a small thing. What does "finding grace" mean? Notice that this verse does not say that God was gracious to Noah, or that the Lord granted grace to Noah. No, it says that Noah found grace. Remember that Genesis is a book filled with spiritual seeds. Here, in 6:8, we have the first mention of grace in the Bible. Noah was able to be what he was because he found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Hebrews 4:16 tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need. When I was young, nearly every day in my prayers I would say, "Lord, I am coming to the throne of grace. At Your throne of grace I find grace for my timely need. Lord, I need Your grace every minute. I not only need Your grace every year, every week, every day, and every hour, but every minute. Without Your grace, I simply cannot bear anything." Today I still need the Lord's grace every minute. Perhaps in a few minutes my folks will give me a difficult time, or else one of the brothers will come to bother me. Perhaps I will receive a phone call from a sister. So, I keep on telling the Lord, "Lord, I need Your grace every minute. I know that You are gracious and that You have grace ready for me. Lord, since grace needs my cooperation, I kneel before the throne of grace to find grace to meet my need." Many times we simply cannot stand our situation and we cannot face what is happening to us. However, there is a place called the throne of grace. Come boldly to the throne of grace that you may find mercy and grace for your time of need.

Do you believe that, by himself, Noah was able to find grace in the eyes of the Lord? I do not believe that he did this by himself. The flood came 1,656 years after Adam was made. Adam lived for nine hundred thirty years. This leaves seven hundred twenty-six years from the year Adam died to the year the deluge came. When Adam was six hundred twenty-two years of age, Enoch was born and he lived as a contemporary of Adam for three hundred and eight years. After Adam died, Enoch still lived another fifty-seven years before he was taken by God. Sixty-nine years later Noah was born. So, Noah was born only one hundred twenty-six years after Adam's death. When Enoch was sixty-five, he begat Methuselah and then lived for another three hundred years before he was taken away. Methuselah lived for nine hundred sixty-nine years, dying in Noah's six hundredth year, the year the deluge came. Undoubtedly, Enoch learned the things of God from his forefathers, perhaps even learning directly from Adam. The fact that Enoch named his son "Methuselah," which means "when he is dead, it shall be sent," proves that he taught his son concerning God. Methuselah must have taught his son, Lamech, and Lamech his son, Noah. Noah came from a godly family and learned from his forefathers all the godly things. Thus, he came to realize his need for grace. His generation was corrupt and filled with violence. The human race had become flesh. Noah lived in a crooked, perverse, and evil generation. Nevertheless, his parents and grandparents taught him the things of God, and he realized that he

needed God's grace. (*Life-Study of Genesis*, msg. 28, pp. 374-376)

Noah was born into the human race that was corrupt to the uttermost, and he lived among that race. At that time, men abused their fallen bodies and became flesh. They were full of lusts (Gen. 6:3a, 5). As a result, the fallen angels joined themselves to man through illegal marriage, so that the human race was no longer pure but became a mixture of the human nature with fallen spirits (Gen. 6:2, 4). That was the most evil thing in the eyes of God, and He could not tolerate it.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of God (Gen. 6:8). Born into a godly family (cf. Gen. 5:4-29), he inherited the spiritual blessings from his forefathers and took God's way of redemption and life, including Adam's way of salvation, Abel's way of offering, Enosh's way of calling, and Enoch's way of walking with God. Moreover, by faith he became a righteous man in God's eyes and a perfect man who walked with God in that generation (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:9). Therefore, he maintained and extended God's way of life so that God could carry out His plan on the corrupted earth according to His desire. (*Truth Lessons*, Level Two, vol. 2, ch. 17, p. 44)

The ark saved the whole family of Noah from the pounding and drowning of the flood. This is a type of the salvation of Christ that saves God's elect from God's punishment. In the days of Noah, people were befuddled by eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage; they did not know that judgment was coming, until the flood came and destroyed them all (Luke 17:26-27). Likewise, people today are befuddled by the necessities of this life and do not know that God's judgment will come upon them by the Lord's appearing. Just as Noah was saved by the ark that was built by his work, so we must also work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12) that at the Lord's coming we may be saved from God's punishment and not suffer the plagues that the world will suffer.

The ark built by Noah eventually not only saved him from God's judgment but also saved his family of eight from that evil generation. This is a type of Christ's salvation that not only delivers us out of eternal perdition but also saves us from the corrupted generation. Whoever is saved will by no means perish. However, we need the further and higher salvation that saves us from the corrupted generation. This salvation is the corporate Christ whom we are building. We need not only to preach the individual Christ but also to build the corporate Christ, the church. This Christ may be considered today's ark. Through this Christ as salvation thousands of people have been saved not only from God's judgment but also from the crooked and perverted generation...

The ark saved Noah and his whole family from the evil generation and ushered them into a new age that they might live an altogether new life for God and before God. In like manner, Christ's salvation also saves God's chosen people from the corrupted generation and ushers them into a renewed age, into the new realm of resurrection. Noah and his household passed through the flood waters by being in the ark. After the flood, the ark rested on the mountain of Ararat. Their passing through the flood was a type of baptism; the ark's resting upon the mountains was a type of Christ's resurrection; and the living of Noah's family of eight after the flood was a type of the church life. Through baptism we buried the old community and the old society, and in resurrection we have entered into another community, another society, which is the church life. (*Truth Lessons*, Level Three, vol. 1, ch. 4, pp. 42-44)

### **THE FOCUS OF THE CHANGE IN SYSTEM— THE HOUSEHOLD**

The focus of the change in system is the household. In the New Testament we see many sweet households, such as the household of Caesar (Phil. 4:22), the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:22-24), the household of Lydia, a seller of purple-dyed goods (16:13-15), and the household of the jailer whose name is unknown (vv. 29-34). There was also the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16) and the household of Crispus (Acts 18:8). In addition, there were houses in which the meetings were held, such as Aquila and Prisca's house (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19), the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15), and the house of Philemon (Philem. 1-2). These examples clearly show us that the unit of God's salvation and

service is the household.

Even in the Old Testament, in the two great types of salvation, the household is the unit of salvation. The first is the type of the flood, in which the eight members of the house of Noah entered into the ark and were thus saved from God's judgment on the world (Gen. 7:1; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5). The second is the type of the passover, in which each Israelite household took a lamb, killed it, put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel of the house, and ate the flesh of the lamb. It was not a lamb for each person but a lamb for each household as a unit (Exo. 12:3-8). In the past we have ignored these clear truths of the Bible; we were influenced by Christianity and were distracted and carried away.

From the beginning of the Lord's recovery in China, Brother Nee pointed out that the church needs to be built up with the household as a unit. I received this matter from him and brought the practice to Taiwan. In addition, I introduced the practice of the "groups." However, in 1984 when I returned to Taiwan, these two practices were almost non-existent. We were under the influence of the nations and were following their customs (2 Kings 17:33) to walk in the way of the denominations in Christianity by copying their practice of big meetings, in which one man speaks while all the rest listen. This practice brings forth the "clergy" and the "laity," which prevents the functioning of the saints. Seeing this, I want to bring out a specific way for our practice at this crucial time. (*CWWL, 1986, vol. 3, "The Furtherance of the New Way for the Lord's Recovery," ch. 1, pp. 488-489*)

### **BRINGING OUR FAMILY LIFE INTO THE CHURCH LIFE**

The church life is the purpose of the Christian life, and it is a great reality in the universe. Hence, our family life should be brought into the church life. We should help all the members of our family to be not only saved but also brought into the church life. This is a matter of spiritual warfare.

We need to realize that in the sight of God, nothing compares with the church. Thus, apart from the church life, our family life is vanity. Only when our family life is brought into the church life will it be reality. While we need to bear the responsibility of taking care of our family, we need to see that the church is a treasure in God's heart.

In order for the saints in the church life to meet the Lord's requirements, they need to realize that in the sight of God, the genuine church life is the kingdom of God. Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Because the context here deals with the church life in the present age, this verse is a strong proof that, in a practical sense, the proper church life is the kingdom of God.

Although many Christians appreciate the Lord's charge in Matthew 6:33 to seek first the Father's kingdom and His righteousness, few realize that the kingdom of God in this age is the church life. This is confirmed by the Lord's word in Matthew 16:18-19, which says, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens." In these verses kingdom of the heavens is used interchangeably with church, indicating that the genuine church is the kingdom of the heavens in this age. For this reason Matthew 18:17 reveals that the believers are to obey the church. If a brother sins, we first need to deal with him in love (v. 15), then by two or three witnesses (v. 16), and finally through the church with authority. Verse 17 says, "If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector." If a believer refuses to hear the church, he will lose the fellowship of the church. The Gospel of Matthew, a book on the kingdom, reveals that the church life is the practical kingdom of God on earth in the present age. If we are sincere with the Lord about seeking first the kingdom of God, we must be in the church life. Apart from the church life we cannot be in the kingdom of God in a practical way.

Furthermore, the church meetings are crucial because the church life is practically expressed by the church meetings. Without the church meetings, the church is something ethereal; it cannot be manifested in a practical way. The church meetings constitute the practical church life. Thus, we should not come to the church meetings empty-handed. Rather, we should come with a portion of

Christ and offer it to God and share it with others by functioning in the meetings. (CWWL, 1982, vol. 1, "Miscellaneous Messages in Anaheim," ch. 7, pp. 29-30)

**References and Further Reading:**

1. *Life-Study of 1 Timothy*, msg. 6.
2. *Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Timothy 3:16 and notes; Ephesians 4:21 and note 1.
3. *Life-Study of Titus*, msg. 5.
4. *Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 28.
5. *Truth Lessons*, Level 2, vol. 2, ch. 17.
6. *Truth Lessons*, Level 3, vol. 1, ch. 4.
7. *Raising Up the Next Generation for the Church Life*, ch. 6.
8. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," chs. 20, 23, 31.
9. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1986, vol. 2, "Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 1," chs. 5, 12.
10. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1986, vol. 3, "The Furtherance of the New Way for the Lord's Recovery," ch. 1.
11. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1982, vol. 2, "Miscellaneous Messages in Anaheim," ch. 7.