

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GOD'S BUILDING

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

The Definition of a Priest

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10

- I. **A priest is a person who lives solely for God's interests and serves Him—Exo. 19:6; Rom. 14:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:15:**
 - A. Priests are the most normal and proper persons, those who realize that God's plan is to work Himself into a group of people in order that He might be their life and that they might become His expression—1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6.
 - B. A normal and proper human being is one who is a priest, one who serves God; if we are not priests serving God in all that we do, we are abnormal—5:10.
- II. **A priest is one who receives God, who is filled, saturated, and permeated with God, and who has God flowing out of him so that he might be a living expression of God—1 Pet. 2:5, 9:**
 - A. Although a priest is a person who serves God, this does not mean that he works for God or does something for God; according to the revelation of the Scriptures, to serve God is to contact God, to receive God into us, and to be filled, saturated, and permeated with God—Rom. 1:9; 8:11.
 - B. God's intention is not to call us merely to work for Him; His intention is that we first open ourselves to Him in order that He may come into us to fill and flood us until He has taken possession of every part of our being—Eph. 3:16-21.
 - C. Our entire being must be saturated, permeated, and possessed by God—1 Thes. 5:23:
 1. If this is our situation, we will be one with God and will not only be clothed outwardly with Him as power but also permeated inwardly with Himself as everything—Luke 24:49; Eph. 5:18.
 2. As we are saturated, permeated, and possessed by God, spontaneously He will flow out of us, and we will be built up with others in this flow of life—John 7:38; Eph. 2:21-22.
 - D. God has no intention of calling us to do something *for* Him; rather, His intention is that we answer His call by opening ourselves to Him and saying, "Lord, here I am, not ready to work for You but ready to be filled and possessed by You and to be one with You."
 - E. Not until we are one with the Lord and possessed by Him can we ever work for Him—3:16-21; 1 Cor. 3:9a; 15:58; 2 Cor. 5:20; 6:1.
- III. **A priest is a person who contacts God in the mingling with God—1 Cor. 6:17:**
 - A. The priest's passing through the Holy Place and into the Holy of Holies is his contact with God, and this contact is not in himself but in a mingling with God; a priest's contact with God is in God—Heb. 10:19.

- B. When we as priests contact God, we contact Him not merely objectively but also subjectively; we do not contact God apart from God, but we contact God in God, that is, in the mingling with God—John 15:4-5.

IV. A priest is one who is absolutely and thoroughly mingled with God—14:20:

- A. God's purpose is to mingle Himself with us so that He becomes our life, nature, and content, and we become His corporate expression—Eph. 3:16-21; 4:4-6, 16:
 - 1. The mingling of God and man is an intrinsic union of the elements of divinity and humanity to form one organic entity, yet the elements remain distinct in the union—Luke 1:35, footnote 2.
 - 2. The will of God is the mingling of God with man, and the fulfillment of God's purpose depends on the mingling of divinity and humanity—Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:11.
 - 3. The Christian life is the mingling of divinity and humanity; to be a Christian is to be mingled with God, to be a God-man—2 Tim. 3:17:
 - a. In His economy God mingles Himself with us to become one entity with us—1 Cor. 6:17.
 - b. We may experience God's organic salvation to such an extent that we and God are completely mingled as one, having one life and one living—John 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21a.
- B. If we would serve God as priests, we need to see a vision of the mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with our regenerated human spirit—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4:
 - 1. The Father is in the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is now mingled with our regenerated spirit—John 14:9-10, 16-18; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17.
 - 2. The focus of God's economy is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with the human spirit—Rom. 8:4:
 - a. The union of these two spirits is the deepest mystery in the Bible.
 - b. Whatever God intends to do or accomplish is related to the mingled spirit—Eph. 3:9, 5; 1:17; 2:22; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18.
 - 3. The mingled spirit is both the Spirit of the Lord and our spirit—2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:17.
 - 4. The mingled spirit is a spirit that is one spirit with God and that is the same as God in His life and nature but not in His Godhead—1 John 5:11; 2 Pet. 1:4:
 - a. The divine Spirit and the human spirit are mingled as one within us so that we can live the life of a God-man, a life that is God yet man and man yet God—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21a.
 - b. The God-man living is the living of the two spirits, the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, joined and mingled together as one—1 Cor. 6:17.
 - 5. To live in the mingled spirit is to let Christ fill and saturate us until He permeates our whole being and is thereby expressed through us—Eph. 2:22; 3:16-21.
 - 6. In order to live and serve as priests, we need to know that the Lord Jesus today, as the embodiment of the Triune God, is the Spirit indwelling our spirit and is mingled with our spirit as one spirit—2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17.

V. A priest is one who serves in newness of spirit—Rom. 7:6:

- A. Everything that is related to our spirit is new, and everything that comes out of our spirit is new—2 Cor. 5:17.
- B. Our regenerated spirit is the source of newness because the Lord, the life of God, and the Holy Spirit are there.

VI. A priest is a person who ministers to the Lord—Acts 13:1-4a:

- A. “As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”—v. 2:
 - 1. The work of the church in Antioch began during a time of ministering to the Lord.
 - 2. All our work for the Lord must issue from this priestly service of ministering to the Lord; this is the unique principle for the work of the New Testament.
- B. The work of the Holy Spirit can be revealed only at a time of ministering to the Lord—v. 2:
 - 1. If we do not place ministering to the Lord as the top priority, everything will be out of order.
 - 2. Only at a time of ministering to the Lord will the Holy Spirit send some forth.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

GOD’S INTENTION AND THE PRIESTHOOD

In this universe God has an administration, in which is His divine economy. The Greek word for *economy* means “household law,” implying a plan, an administration, an arrangement, for distributing, or dispensing, the household supply to the members of a family. The base of this word is of the same origin as that for *pasture* in John 10:9, implying a distribution of the pasture to the flock. God’s economy is His household economy, His household administration (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4), which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen people that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church (3:15), the Body of Christ. In God’s economy, in this divine household administration, there are three main ministries: the priesthood, the kingship, and the prophethood. The priesthood is the first and leading ministry in God’s economy.

In the New Testament three Greek words are used in relation to the priesthood. The first word refers to the priestly office, as in Hebrews 7:12; the second refers to the priestly service, as in Hebrews 7:5; and the third refers to the assembly of priests, a priesthood, a body of priests who serve in a corporate way, as in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9. According to the natural human concept, a priest is a professional person, a person whose profession is to serve God. Most Christians consider a priest to be someone who serves God. Although this is correct, it is necessary to explain what it means to serve God. The common concept among Christians is that to serve God is to work for God. However, this is not an accurate concept. Although it is right to say that a priest is a person who serves God, it is wrong to consider that to serve God is merely to do something for God or to work for God.

In order to know what it means to be a priest, we must first discover God’s eternal

intention, that is, God's desire in eternity past and His intention for eternity future. God is a God of purpose. Just as we human beings are purposeful and always do things with a purpose, God, who is much greater than we are, is a God of purpose who has an intention to accomplish.

The Scriptures reveal that before the ages, in eternity past before the foundation of the world, God had a good pleasure, a heart's desire (Eph. 1:9). According to His good pleasure, He made a purpose, an intention, to gain His heart's desire, and He also made a plan to accomplish His purpose (3:11). In this plan He determined to work Himself into a group of people so that He might be their life and they might be His expression (1:5). Based on this divine determination, God created man. Man was destined to receive God, to be filled with God, to be saturated and permeated with God, and even to flow God out, so that he might be the living expression of God (Gen. 1:26; 2:8-10; John 7:37-39; Eph. 3:19; 1:22-23).

Although a priest is a person who serves God, this does not mean that he works for God and does something for God. According to the revelation of the Scriptures, to serve God is to receive God into us, to contact God, and to be filled with God, saturated with God, and permeated with God. Furthermore, to serve God is to flow God out and, in this flow of God, to be built up with others as a corporate expression of God. This is the proper meaning of serving God and of being a priest. A priest is simply a person who is filled with God, one with God, taken over by God, and even possessed by God in a full way and built up with others in the flow of the life of God to be a living, corporate expression of God on earth today. This built-up corporate entity is the priesthood.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE FLOW OF GOD

In Christianity there is the concept that if we love God and fear Him, we must work for Him. According to this concept we must consecrate ourselves to the Lord so that we may be His servants who do His will, serving Him by working for Him. But this is actually a natural, religious concept, not a revelation from the heavens. God has no intention whatsoever of calling us simply to work for Him or to do something for Him. Rather, God's intention is for us to open ourselves to Him. We should not do anything for God but should open ourselves to Him so that He may come into us, fill us, and even flood us. In this way God will saturate us, permeate us, take us over, and take possession of every part of our being. When our whole being is taken over by Him, possessed by Him, and saturated and permeated with Him, we will be one with Him. Indeed, we will be full of Him, not only by being outwardly clothed with Him as power but also by being inwardly permeated with Him as everything to us. We will be God-men, persons full of God, and spontaneously God will flow Himself out of us. Moreover, in this flow of God, which is the flow of life, we will be built up with others.

People who are swept away in a flood can never be independent. They are carried along in the one flow of the flood waters. If we are all on dry land, it will be very easy for us to be independent and individualistic. But if a flood comes and sweeps us away in its current, we will all lose our independence and individualism. We will

all be “one” in the flood, for we will be carried along in one direction. It will not matter whether or not we agree to go in the direction of the flood. We will have no choice but to go in the same direction. We may disagree with one another, but we will have no way to disagree with the flood. Likewise, when we are one with God and are in the flow of God, we will be one with one another and will be built up together in this one flow. The final picture in the Bible shows a river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing through the whole city of New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1-2). The whole city is in the one flow. This is a picture of the priesthood.

The Principal Service of a Priest

I must repeat that to be a priest is not merely to work for God. We must forget about this kind of concept. When I was young, I considered that a servant of the Lord was a priest who served the Lord full time, and I thought that a servant of the Lord should endeavor, struggle, and strive to do something for the Lord. One day the Lord opened my eyes to see that my concept was wrong. God has no intention to call us to do something for Him. His unique intention is for us to answer His call by opening ourselves to Him and telling Him, “Lord, here I am. I am ready not to do something for You or to work for You but to be filled and even be taken over by You so that I may be fully possessed by You and with You. I am ready to be one with You.” Until we are one with the Lord, we can do nothing for Him; we can neither work for Him nor be a genuine priest.

Furthermore, we must see that the main work and conduct of the priests is not to offer sacrifices but to spend time in the presence of the Lord to be filled, saturated, and permeated by and with the Lord until they are one with Him in the spirit. Before spending time with the Lord and being saturated with Him, they can never be adequate priests. A priest is not a person who does something for God but a person who is filled with God. This is a priest, and this is the man God planned to have. God planned to have a corporate man who would not be engaged in doing something for Him but who would be filled with Him. If we have this light, we will realize that every man should be a priest, one who receives God and opens himself to God to be filled with God and to be saturated, permeated, and possessed wholly, fully, and thoroughly by and with God.

Therefore, we all must be filled with God, taken over by Him, possessed by Him, and saturated and permeated with His shekinah glory. Then we will be one with Him, and we will be one with one another in His flow. This is the testimony, the recovery, and the building up of the church. This is also the service, and this must be the preaching of the gospel. All Christian work and service, the building of the church, and the reaching out to others must come forth from this priesthood. God has absolutely no intention in this age for us to do something for Him. His heart’s desire is that we would be fully open to Him and allow Him to fill us. For this we must spend adequate time in His presence, allowing Him take us over, possess us, and even saturate us with Himself. This is the priesthood, and this is the kind of person God planned to have and desires to have today. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1963, vol. 2, “The Living That Fulfills God’s Purpose,” pp. 295-298, 301*)