

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session One

The Vision Concerning the Church and God's Purpose for the Church

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:9-11; 1:22-23; 1 John 1:2; 5:1; Eph. 2:6; Rev. 21:9-10; Col. 3:1-3; Eph. 2:20; 5:25-27; Eph. 1:4-5, 9-11; 1 Pet. 1:2-4; 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:6; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; 4:16-18; 1 Thes. 5:16-18, John 2:19

I. God's eternal purpose is to dispense Himself as life into His chosen people to produce a corporate man for His expression and His representation—Gen. 1:26-27; Eph. 3:10-11, 16-19:

- A. Man was created after God's kind in the image of God inwardly, and with the likeness of God outwardly, to bear His image and express Him—Gen. 1:26a, 27, Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- B. Man was created to exercise God's dominion so that God could deal with His enemy, recover the earth, and exercise His authority—Gen. 1:26-28.
- C. God's eternal purpose is fulfilled by the way of life—Gen. 1:2-27:
 1. God is triune so that He can dispense Himself into man and be man's life, life supply and everything—Matt. 28:19; John 10:10b; Col. 3:4; 2 Cor. 13:14.
 2. Man is created with three parts—spirit, soul and body—so that man can use his human spirit to receive, experience, enjoy and express God—1 Thes. 5:23; John 4:24.
 3. Only God's divine life can express God.
 4. The way of life that fulfills God's purpose is called God's economy in the Bible—Eph. 3:9:

II. God's eternal purpose is fulfilled by a corporate man, the church—Gen. 1:26-27; Eph. 3:9-11:

- A. The Lord wants to build up His church to be the corporate man for His corporate expression—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:8-11.
- B. The church, as the Body of Christ, is being built up by the functioning of all the members—Eph. 4:16.
- C. Satan wants to frustrate the building of the church and destroy the church.

III. The vision concerning the church:

- A. God's eternal purpose is not just to create man, to rescue him from his fallen condition, and to bring him to heaven; God's purpose is not simply to have us be holy, spiritual, and victorious; God's eternal purpose is to have the church—Eph. 3:9-11; 1:22-23:
 1. The word purpose in the Scriptures is equivalent to the word plan; God's eternal purpose is God's eternal plan—3:11.
 2. God planned to have a corporate Body, a corporate vessel, with which he could mingle Himself and all that He is; this vessel is called the church—1:22-23.
- B. The church is a building, but the church is not a physical building; the building materials are the chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and transformed people of God—cf. 1 Cor. 3:9.
- C. We need to see that the church as the Body of Christ is altogether organic, absolutely of life, with nothing organizational; the body of Christ is the organism of the Triune God—cf. Eph. 4:4-6.
- D. The divine life, God's life, the eternal life, the uncreated life, the indestructible life, is the very essence of the church, and this divine life generates the church—1 John 1:2; 5:1.

- E. Since the source of the church is the Triune God, the nature of the church is of heaven and not of earth—Eph. 2:6; Rev. 21:9-10; Col. 3:1-3.
- F. The church's foundation is Christ, revealed and ministered through the apostles and prophets—Eph. 2:20; cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-11.
- G. God desires a church of glory; glory is the expression of God and it is altogether different from human morality and behavior—Eph. 5:27:
 - 1. The only way God can have a glorious church is through Christ's sanctifying, cleansing, nourishing, and cherishing—Eph. 5:25-27.
 - 2. As we experience these things in a personal and practical way, the church becomes glorious.

IV. God's purpose for the church:

- A. God's purpose for the church is that the church might have the sonship, and that God might be expressed through this sonship—Eph. 1:4-5; cf. Heb. 12:15-17.
- B. The second item of the purpose of God for the church is to deal with His enemy—Eph. 3:9-11:
 - 1. The church is composed of those who once were ruined, corrupted, and damaged; before we were saved, we were dead in trespasses and sins, and were scattered and divided, utterly unable to be one.
 - 2. Nevertheless, God in His wisdom is able to make us the church; now we are not only redeemed, saved, cleansed, freed, liberated, and regenerated—we are also united.
- C. The third main aspect of the church in God's economy is the heading up of all things in Christ—1:9-11:
 - 1. God's purpose with the church is to work Himself into us as life that we may be full of light; when we are controlled by this light, then we have oneness and harmony, which will be the real building.
 - 2. Without the building up of the church, God could never head up all things in Christ; it is by being life to the church, and the church being built up by this life, that the light of God shines out as the controlling factor.
 - 3. This will release all creation from confusion and bring it into a liberty under the shining of the sons of God; then Christ will be the Head of all things through the church—v. 10.

FOCUS:

The burden in this series of lessons is for the young people to see a vision of the church and then give themselves to the practical building up of the church. In this opening lesson we want to help them begin the process of seeing the church in God's economy and gaining an appreciation of the church for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, Chapters 1-2.
1. Life Study of Ephesians (Lee/LSM), pp. 565, 495, 270.
2. The Practical Expression of the Church (Lee/LSM), p. 7.
3. The Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), p. 10-11.
4. Organism of the Triune God in the Organic Union of the Divine Trinity (Lee/LSM), p. 7.
5. God's Purpose for the Church (Lee/LSM), pp. 3-20.
6. Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures (Lee/LSM), pp. 59, 83, 142, 144-146.

QUESTIONS:

1. Use several verses to describe how God's eternal purpose is the church.
2. Use different portions from the Bible to prove that the church is a building of people and is not physical.
3. What is the difference between an organism and an organization?
4. What does the term "glorious church" mean?
5. What is "sonship"? What does it include?
6. How does the church make known God's wisdom to His enemy?
7. What does it mean "to head up all things in Christ"?
8. Write a prophecy of about 200 words concerning God's purpose for the church. Make sure that you include the three key points with verses to back up your prophecy.

MEMORY VERSES:

Gen. 1:26-27

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

Eph. 3:8-11

- 8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- 9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
- 10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- 11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph. 1:10

Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

John 10:10

The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Two

The Status of the Church

(1)

The Assembly, the House Of God, the Kingdom of God, and the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2; Matt. 18:20; Gen. 28:12, 16-17; John 1:51; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 4:17; Eph. 2:22, 19; Rom. 14:17; Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23; 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 15, 21; Eph. 3:8, 19; Col. 3:11; John 6:48, 57, 63

I. The assembly of the called out ones—ekklesia—Matt. 18:17:

- A. The basic concept of the church as the assembly is that the church is a gathering of the called out ones—1 Cor. 1:2; Matt. 18:20.
- B. The first status of the church is that of the assembly of those who have been called out of the world by God to Himself for the fulfillment of His purpose—Gen. 1:26; Matt. 18:20.
- C. Because the church has the status of the assembly, the ekklesia, we need to gather together; we must assemble and meet in order to have a congregation for God to work and move among us.

II. The house of God—1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 4:17:

- A. As God's dwelling place, the church is both God's house and His household, His family; in the New Testament the dwelling place and the family are one; according to God's New Testament economy, God's house is His family—1 Tim. 3:15.
- B. In Old Testament times, the house of God was the house of Israel; today the house of God is the church; God is the Father and the church is His house—Heb. 3:6.
- C. God's house, or household, is the church composed of the believers; from this house, as His own house, God begins His governmental administration by His disciplinary judgment over His own children—1 Pet. 4:17:
 1. This is so that He may have strong ground to judge, in His universal kingdom, those who are disobedient to His gospel and rebellious to His government—v. 17.
 2. In speaking of the church as the house of God, Paul specifically refers to God as the living God; the living God who lives in the church must be subjective to the church and not merely objective—1 Tim. 3:15.

III. The dwelling place of God—Eph. 2:22:

- A. The church, the dwelling place of God on earth, is the place in which God can have His rest and put His trust; in this dwelling place God lives and moves to accomplish His will and satisfy the desire of His heart.
- B. Because the church is God's dwelling place, the church is where God expresses Himself; a house is always the best place for a person to express himself.

IV. The kingdom of God—to live in the kingdom of God is a matter of bearing responsibility and of being regulated—Eph. 2:19:

- A. The kingdom of God is the living of the Church; the kingdom life is the reality of the Body life—Rom. 14:17:
 1. As the believers live the kingdom life in the church, they will live righteously toward themselves; this means that we must be strict with ourselves and make no excuses for ourselves—v. 17.

2. To live the kingdom life in the church also means that we live peacefully toward others; our relationships with others must be characterized by peace.
 3. Living the kingdom life in the church also requires that we live joyfully to God in the Holy Spirit.
- B. The believers who develop and grow in the life of God in the church life shall be richly and bountifully supplied with the entrance into the kingdom of God—cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-11.

V. The Body of Christ—the organism of the Triune God is the Body—Eph. 4:4:

- A. Christ is the Head of the Body; being the Savior is a matter of love, whereas the Head is a matter of authority; we must be subject to Him as our Head—v. 23.
- B. The members of the Body of Christ are the God-chosen, Christ-redeemed, and Spirit-regenerated people.
- C. The Body receiving from the Head—The phrase “to the church” implies a continuous transmission from Christ the Head to the church His Body; all that He is, all that He has, all that He has accomplished, and all that He has obtained and attained is being transmitted into all the members all the time—Eph. 1:22.
- D. The church as the Body of Christ is the fullness of Him who fills all in all; through the enjoyment of Christ’s riches, we become His fullness to express Him—Eph. 1:23; 3:8.
- E. We are filled unto all the fullness of God; we are filled, resulting in an expression of God; fullness means expression:
 1. Paul prayed that the Father would strengthen us with power through His Spirit into the inner man that Christ might make His home in our hearts, and that we might know Christ’s dimensions—the breadth, length, height, and depth—that we might be filled unto, resulting in, the fullness of God, the expression of God—Eph. 3:14-19.
 2. The church today should be such an expression, issuing out of the rich enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ—v. 19.

FOCUS:

In their appreciation of the vision of the church the young people need to be impressed with the various statuses of the church: as the assembly for their meeting life; the house of God for the family life of the church, for the Dwelling place of God in our spirit; the kingdom of God with its rights and responsibilities; and as the Body of Christ with the Head and all the members. By seeing and appreciating these statuses, the young people can be brought into the experience and enjoyment of the church life in these various aspects.

REFEERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, Chapters 3-4.
2. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), pp. 2215-2218, 2225-2229, 2235-2241, 2243-2244, 2265, 2270.
3. The One New Man (Lee/LSM), pp. 7-9.
4. Organism of the Triune God in the Organic Union of the Divine Trinity (Lee/LSM), p. 8.
5. Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures (Lee/LSM), pp. 57-59, 61-62, 75, 83, 87, 93, 94, 127.
6. Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 23, 24, 30.
7. A Brief Definition of the Kingdom of the Heavens (Lee/LSM), pp. 9-16.
8. Completing Ministry of Paul (Lee/LSM), pp. 35, 42-45, 47, 49, 77.
9. Experiencing Christ as the Offerings for the Church Meetings (Lee/LSM), pp. 7, 22, 30, 134-135.

10. Life Study of Ephesians (Lee/LSM), pp. 156, 231, 624-625.

QUESTIONS:

1. How does the first status of the church show that the church is not a physical building, but the built-up believers?
2. In this age the church is the reality of the kingdom. What is God's requirement for us to be in this kingdom today?
3. What is required of us in this age to enter into the manifestation of the kingdom in the next age?
4. What is the significance of Christ being the Head of the Body?
5. We have seen that the Body of Christ is composed of organic members. Could you hire or fire anyone for a particular function in the Body? Why?
6. How do we as members of the Body of Christ become His fullness?
7. Write a prophesy (100 words) listing each status of the church. Write a brief explanation of each status.

MEMORY VERSES:

1 Cor. 1:2

To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours.

Eph. 2:19, 22

19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

Rom. 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 1:22-23

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

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

John 6:57, 63

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.

63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Three

The Status of the Church

(2)

God's Masterpiece, the New Man, the Counterpart of Christ, and the Golden Lampstands

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:10; 2:15; 4:22-24; Col. 3:10-11; Gen. 1:26-27; Eph. 6:12; 5:22-33; Gen. 2:21-24; John 3:29-30; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2, 7-9, 17; Exo. 25:31-40; Zech. 3:9; 4:2-10; Rev. 1:11-12, 20b; 4:5; 5:6; Col. 2:9; 1:15; 1 John 5:11-12; Rev. 21:18b, 23; 22:1, 5

- I. We, the church, the masterpiece of God's work, are the highest poetry, expressing God's infinite wisdom and divine design—Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 3:10.**
- II. The church is the corporate and universal new man—v. 15; 4:22-24; Col. 3:10:**
 - A. Christ created the one new man in Himself on the cross through His all-inclusive death—Eph. 2:15; 2 Cor. 5:17.
 - B. The new man in the new creation fulfills God's intention that man would bear His image for His expression—Gen. 1:26.
 - C. The new man is now fulfilling God's purpose to express God and to fight against God's enemy for God's dominion, God's kingdom—Eph. 6:10-17.
- III. The church as Christ's counterpart comes out of Christ, has the same life and nature as Christ, and is one with Christ—5:22-23; Col. 2:2; Gen. 2:21-23:**
 - A. The church is the corporate bride, the wife of Christ, who is the Bridegroom, the Husband—Eph. 5:32; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2.
 - B. God's economy in the New Testament is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His redemption and divine life; Christ and his counterpart, His bride, will be married at His coming back—Rev. 19:7-8; Eph. 5:24-25, 31-32.
 - C. The consummation of the church as the counterpart of Christ will be the New Jerusalem in the new heavens and the new earth for eternity—Rev. 21:2.
 - D. The consummation of the processed Triune God and the consummation of God's chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and transformed people will become one in a universal marriage and will be a couple in eternity—22:17.
- IV. The final aspect of the status of the church—the church as the golden lampstands—Rev. 1:12, 20b:**
 - A. The lampstand in Exodus 25 typifies Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God; God is in Him, and apart from Him no one can find God:
 1. Gold signifies the divine nature, the nature of God, in which is the essence of the divine Being; by this we see God the Father, the One whose nature is the substance of the lampstand—v. 31.
 2. The form of the lampstand signifies the Son as the embodiment of the Godhead in His humanity—Col. 2:9.
 3. The seven lamps signify God the Spirit being the seven Spirits of God for His expression—Exo. 25:37; Rev. 4:5; 5:6.
 - B. The golden lampstand signifies Israel as God's testimony in the Old Testament and in the millennium—Zech. 4:2:

1. The seven lamps of the lampstand are the seven eyes of Jehovah (Zech. 4:10) and the seven Spirits of God (Rev. 4:5); therefore, the lampstand in Zechariah 4 shines through the seven eyes, the seven Spirits, of Jehovah.
 2. The seven eyes, the seven Spirits, of Jehovah are the seven eyes of Christ, who is the Stone-Savior for God's Building—Zech. 3:9.
- C. The seven golden lampstands signify the seven local churches as God's testimony in the New Testament—Rev. 1:11-12, 20b:
1. As golden lampstands, the churches shine in the darkness and bear the testimony of Jesus; the function of the church is to shine out the glory of God in the dark night of this age—21:23; 1:2, 9; 20:4:
 - a. The substance, the material, of the lampstand is gold, which signifies the Father's divine essence; all the local churches are divine in nature; they are constituted with the divine essence.
 - b. The form, the shape, of the lampstand signifies the Son's human form; the church should have not only the Father's divine essence but also the Son's human form.
 - c. The golden lampstands as the testimony of Jesus have the Spirit's expression; the seven lamps of the lampstand shine for God's expression.
 2. The New Jerusalem, the aggregate of all the lampstands, the totality of today's lampstands, is a consummate, universal golden lampstand to shine forth God's glory in the new heaven and new earth for eternity.
 3. As the consummation of the golden lampstands, the New Jerusalem will be the triune expression of the processed Triune God in eternity—the expression of the Father as the source, the Son as the embodiment, and the Spirit as the realization and transmission.

FOCUS:

In their appreciation of the vision of the church the young people need to be impressed with the various statuses of the church: as God's masterpiece in His working on them; the new man for their taking Christ as their person and dropping all their differences; as the counterpart of Christ for their loving the Lord supremely and preparing themselves to meet Him; and as the golden lampstands to shine in this dark age as the testimony of Jesus. By seeing and appreciating these statuses, the young people can be brought into the experience and enjoyment of the church life in these various aspects.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, Chapters 5-6.
2. Completing Ministry of Paul (Lee/LSM), p. 37-39.
3. Life Study of Ephesians (Lee/LSM), pp. 186, 210-212, 223, 624-625, 722, 798, 814, 816-817.
4. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), pp. 2301-2303, 2321, 2327-2328, 2337, 2275.
5. The Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures (Lee/LSM), pp. 64-66, 68, 110, 113-114, 117-118.
6. Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 21, 24, 55.
7. Completing Ministry of Paul (Lee/LSM), pp. 9, 34, 38-40, 46-47, 74-75, 91.
8. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), pp. 2045-2100, 2293, 2305-2306, 2308-2321, 2329-2347, 2395-2396, 2399-2300.
9. The Glorious Church (Nee/LSM), pp. 46-71.
10. Life Study of Ephesians (Lee/LSM), pp. 210-212, 223, 612, 624-625, 722, 798, 814, 816-817.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the term “masterpiece” imply when referring to the church?
2. What is the difference between the old man and new man?
3. How did Christ’s death on the cross create the new man?
4. List as many parallels as you can between Eve as the bride of Adam, and the church as the bride of Christ.
5. Write a short essay about how the symbol of lampstand reveals the Triune God.
6. Why is the lampstand an appropriate symbol for the church?
7. Explain in detail the final stage of the church as the lampstand?

MEMORY VERSES:

Eph. 2:10, 15

- 10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.
- 15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.

Col. 3:10-11

- 10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- 11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

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.

Rev. 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

Rev. 1:20

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Four

The Two Aspects of the Church—Universal and Local

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-18; Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 18:17; Eph. 2:22; 4:4; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 13:1; Rev. 1:4a, 11; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17

- I. The church Christ is building is the universal church, the unique Body of Christ; the church in its universal aspect is uniquely one—Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:32; 12:12-13.**
- II. The one universal church expressed in many places on earth becomes the many local churches; the expression of the church in a locality is the local church in that particular locality—Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 1:2; 11:16.**
- III. The nature and principle of the universal church are the nature and principle of the local church; every local church is a representative of the universal church, representing the universal church in its locality by living out the proper life of the Body of Christ and thus expressing Christ:**
 - A. The universal church is heavenly (Eph. 2:6; Rev. 21:9-10); the local churches are also heavenly (Col. 3:1-3).
 - B. The universal church is the house of God (Eph. 2:20-22); the local churches are also the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - C. The universal church is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23); the local churches are also the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5).
 - D. The universal church is the expression of God (Rev. 4:2-3; 21:11); the local churches are also the expression of God (1 Cor. 14:24-25).
- IV. God's accomplishes His eternal purpose by coming into time, especially in the New Testament age, and by going to various localities through His Spirit to raise up groups of people who believe in His Son and to build these people into local churches—Rev. 1—3, 21—22.**
- V. The local church is the universal church in practicality because the local church is the reality of the universal church; the universal church is abstract; the local church is real and tangible:**
 - A. The Lord's building of the universal church is gained through His building of the local church; if the Lord did not build the local church, He would have no place to start His building of the universal church—Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9.
 - B. Matters related to administration and government or matters related to edification or leading must all be done locally; there must be a local church so that it is possible for the universal church to carry out its administration—Matt. 18:15-17.
 - C. The believers' corporate life and service in coordination are realized in the local churches—1 Tim. 3:15.
- VI. In the proper church life, the administration of the church is local, but the fellowship of the church is universal—Matt. 18:17; 16:18:**
 - A. The administration of each local church is separate from the administrations of all other local churches; furthermore, the administrations of all the local churches are on an equal level.

- B. The fellowship of the church is one universally, this universal fellowship is the fellowship of the Body of Christ, it is the fellowship passed on to us by the apostles—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4.

FOCUS:

The young people need to be equipped with this crucial truth of the two aspects of the church. This should become a controlling vision to them for their practice of the church life. The universal aspect is heavenly and intangible and is the goal of God's eternal economy. The local church is the church life on the earth in a locality, and is practical, and is the procedure to reach the goal of God's eternal purpose.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, Chapter 7.
2. Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life (Lee/LSM), p. 45.
3. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), p. 2139-2140, 2149.
4. Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life (Lee/LSM), pp. 47-57.
5. The Testimony and the Ground of the Church (Lee/LSM), p. 144, 172-178.
6. Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures (Lee/LSM), pp. 66-67.
7. Further Talks on the Church Life (Nee/LSM), pp. 11, 19-20, 22, 25, 123, 132-133.
8. Normal Christian Church Life (Nee/LSM), pp. 96-97, 105, 162.
9. The Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 16, 18, 50, 64.
10. The Practical Expression of the Church (Lee/LSM), pp. 24, 26.

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you know that the church mentioned in Matt. 16:18 is the universal church?
2. How do you know that the church mentioned in Matt. 18:17 is the local church?
3. Write a prophecy (approx. 150 words) on how the words “fellowship” and “administration” show both the universal and local aspects of the church.

MEMORY VERSES:

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. 18:17

And 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.

1 Cor. 10:32

Do not become a stumbling block, both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God.

1 Cor. 12:12-13

- 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.
- 13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

1 Tim. 1:3-4

- 3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things
- 4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

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.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Five

The Ground of the Church

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11; Eph. 4:4; John 16:13;
Deut. 12:5, 13-14, 18, 26; 1 Pet. 2:5

I. The first two main items for our practice and experience are the content of the church, Christ, and the standing, or ground, of the church—Deut. 12:5, 13-14:

- A. By the term *ground*, we refer to the lot, the site on which we build; a lot is the site, and upon this site we place a foundation; then upon the foundation we construct a building.
- B. The meaning of *ground* is different from foundation; the foundation is the basic part of the construction of a building, the ground, however, is not a part of the construction.
- C. The ground of the church is very important, in the Old Testament there was only one place, the place chosen and appointed by God, to build the temple in any other place would be illegal; it would be improper because it was not on the proper ground.

II. We must take care of the ground of the church in order to practice the proper church life, the matter of the church ground is extremely crucial:

- A. We must worship God at a definite center, at the place of His choice; we do not have the right to select a place according to our preference, going to a place of our own choosing is altogether prohibited by God's word—Deut. 12:5, 13-14, 18, 26.
- B. The temple had to be built on Mount Moriah, which was and still is the center of Jerusalem, the church is the fulfillment of the type shown by the temple; we have no right to build a church in any place we choose—2 Chron. 3:1.
- C. The place chosen by God as a worship center keeps God's people from being divided, if they had the freedom to choose a place according to their preferences, there would be division among them—1 Kings 12:26-30.
- D. The Old Testament temple is physical and its ground is physical—the New Testament church is a spiritual building, therefore, the ground of the church is spiritual—1 Pet. 2:5.
- E. In the Lord's recovery we are offering Christ in the place chosen by God, because we are standing on the unique ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ for the church life.

III. According to the divine revelation of the New Testament, the church ground is constituted of three crucial elements:

- A. The unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, which is called “the oneness of the Spirit”; this oneness has become the basic element of the church ground—Eph. 4:3-4.
- B. The unique ground of locality in which a local church is established and exists; such a unique ground of locality preserves the church from being divided by many different matters as different grounds in the way that divisive denominations are divided—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11.
- C. The reality of the Spirit, who is the living reality of the divine Trinity; it is by this Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living—1 John 5:6; John 16:13.

IV. The ground of the church:

- A. Every local church is the manifestation of the Body of Christ in that locality; all of the riches of Christ are vested in the local church, the authority of the Head is vested in the local expression of the Body—1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:4.

- B. The ground of locality—when this one universal church is manifested on the earth it takes the city as its unit, therefore, there can be only one church in one city—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11; Gal. 1:2.
- C. The practice of the ground of the church must be in the reality of the Spirit of oneness—John 16:13.

V. The church is unique and cannot be divided according to:

- A. Spiritual leaders—the Corinthian believers sought to divide church on the ground of a few leaders who had been specially used of God in their midst; it is wrong to divide the church according to the respective leaders by whom they had been helped—1 Cor. 1:12-15; 3:22.
- B. Instruments of salvation—some of the Corinthian believers proclaimed themselves to be “of Cephas,” “of Paul,” and “of Apollos”; this is common but contrary to God’s will—1 Cor. 3:4-8, 21-23.
- C. Spiritual condition—the ground of the church does not depend upon the condition of the church; the condition may fluctuate, but the ground, the standing, never changes—Rev. 2, 3; 1 Cor. 1:12-13.
- D. Doctrinal differences or practices—the purpose of God is that a church should represent the children of God in a locality, not represent some specific truth there—Eph. 4:13-14; Rom. 14:1-6, 17.
- E. Ethnic, national or social differences—in the church of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is no racial distinction there, and there is not national distinction either—1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11.

VI. How to discern whether a church is not a genuine local church:

- A. Having a special name—a name denotes a realm, a circle; a special name places a group of believers with the circle of that name, thereby separating them from other believers; whenever Christians have another name besides the Lord’s name, they divide the church.
- B. Having special articles of belief—we must have only the “one faith” and not care for anything else.
- C. Having a special fellowship—a fellowship outside of the fellowship of the church; everyone who is saved and has the life of Christ is in the church; therefore, they can take part in the fellowship of the church.
- D. Having a fellowship that is isolated and not universal—although the church is manifested individually in various localities, the church in each locality is not isolated; rather, it has fellowship with churches in different places which constitute the universal church.
- E. Having a separate administration in the same locality—a locality can have only one church, and there can be only one group of elders which represent one administration—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
- F. Having a background of belonging to some organization—the church in any locality must be a pure local church and should not belong to any Christian organization.

VII. The benefits of the ground of the church:

- A. The proper ground of locality is a protection which ensures that a church in a particular locality will always be preserved in oneness and helps the saints to experience the cross and grow in life.
- B. The sphere must not become wider than the sphere of locality:
 - 1. All authority is in the hands of the local elders, there is no scope for an able and ambitious false prophet to organize a “federation”, and then satisfy his ambition by constituting himself its head.

2. The spread of heresy and error will be avoided, for if a church is local, heresy and error will be local too.
3. The boundary of the churches precludes all possibility of sects, as long as the spiritual character of the churches are maintained, it is impossible to establish any church for the propagation of particular beliefs.

FOCUS:

This lesson is for the young people to see this crucial truth of the ground of the church and to understand why we meet the way we do, why we take this stand, and why we call ourselves “the church” in a city. This lesson will also equip them with this most important truth for them to stand against any opposition or questions concerning our stand. We must show them that the divinely inspired word of God is so consistent when it comes to this matter of the church ground and we have no choice but to meet on this ground for the Lord’s testimony.

TEXT

SIX TESTS OF A GENUINE LOCAL CHURCH

In the past several messages we have covered the reality and practicality of the church. We have seen that the church is one in substance, one in existence, and one in manifestation. The church is one substantially both universally and locally. Apart from God, nothing in the universe is more one than the church. The church is an entity of oneness.

THE UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

The church is one universally and locally. There is just one church. Universally, the church is one in existence, and locally the church is one in manifestation. The church in the universe is one, and the church manifested in a locality is also one. The Lord’s word, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18), is related to the universal church. Following this, in Matthew 18 the Lord spoke about the manifestation of the church in a locality. If two or three cannot solve a problem themselves, they should tell it to the church. This certainly is not the universal church, but the church in the locality where those believers live. In the four Gospels the Lord mentioned the church twice, once for the universal aspect and once for the local aspect.

THE CLEAR PICTURE IN THE BIBLE

In the book of Acts the church is not mentioned in a universal way, but in a local way. Acts 8:1 speaks of the church at Jerusalem, not the church in the universe. Acts 13:1 speaks of the church in another locality, the church in Antioch. We know from Revelation 1:11 that there were seven churches in seven cities in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Churches were also raised up in Europe. For example, there was a church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2). It is clearly portrayed in the Bible that the church is universally one in its existence and locally one in its manifestation. Wherever the church is, it is always one. Although there is just one universal church, in the many cities there are the many local churches, with one church in each city.

A PICTURE OF DIVISIONS

Although the picture regarding the church in the Bible is clear, the history and present situation of Christianity give us another picture—a picture of divisions. Instead of one church in a locality, there are numerous divisions. But according to the Bible it is wrong to say that there are many “churches” in a locality. This is against God’s economy. What are called the many “churches” in a locality are actually

divisions. Using other terms, we may say that they are denominations, sects, groups, or organizations. This is what we see everywhere in Christianity today.

As we stand here as the church in Anaheim, some say that we are merely another division. They claim that our coming here simply added another to the list of divisions. Someone might say to you, “I am a pastor of a certain group in this city. I have heard that you people say that you are the church and that we are not the church, but rather are Babylon or organized Christianity. I don’t agree with this. Am I not a real Christian? I was reborn before you were born. Since we all are Christian brothers, why do you say that you are the church and that we are not the church? It seems to me that you are simply another Christian group. You have added yourselves to the number of churches already in this city. Why did you come here? Why don’t you go to a place where there is no church at all and be the unique group there? Why do you come here to trouble us?” In order to answer questions like these, we must know what constitutes a sect, a division, or a denomination.

1. NO PARTICULAR NAME

A division is called a denomination because it has been denominated by a particular name. Hence, the first factor of a denomination is a special name. Neither the sun nor the moon has a particular name. The sun is the sun, and the moon is the moon. I have never heard of anyone giving a name to the sun or the moon. Neither the sun nor the moon needs a name. Wherever I am, in the United States, Europe, or the Far East, the moon is the moon, and the sun is the sun. At most I can speak of the moon in Sydney, the moon in Paris, or the moon in Anaheim. To give a special name to a certain group of Christians is to constitute them a sect, a denomination. It makes them a denominated sect, a divisive sect with a particular name.

Any Christian group that has a particular name is a division, a sect. We should have no name other than the name of the Lord Jesus. We have believed in His name, and we have been baptized into His name, and now we are meeting in His name. Never think that the matter of the name is insignificant. I must use my name in all I do. To use another name is deceitful. Never think that it makes no difference what you call yourself, whether you say that you are Jones or Smith. It is terrible to do this. My name is Witness Lee. You cannot call me Mr. Jones. The name means everything. If an inheritance were granted to me in my name, Witness Lee, but I call myself Mr. Jones, I would lose the right to claim and enjoy this inheritance.

Never neglect this matter of the name. To take any name other than the name of the Lord Jesus is a form of spiritual fornication. How wrong it would be for my wife, Mrs. Witness Lee, to go by the name of another man! For a married woman to take another name is fornication. Never think that this matter is insignificant. The Lord Jesus praised the church in Philadelphia because they did not deny His name (Rev. 3:8). All the denominations have denied the Lord’s name, because in addition to His name, they have taken names such as Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. In taking these other names, the denominations have committed spiritual fornication. If we honor the Lord and sincerely mean business with Him, we would certainly forsake every name other than that of the Lord Jesus. We have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. In addressing the contentious ones in the church at Corinth, Paul said, “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:12-13). Here Paul seemed to be saying, “Why do you say that you are of Paul? You must never say this. You were not baptized into my name—you were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must not be under any other name.”

We who are standing here as the church do not have a particular name. Do not think that the term “local church” is our name. This is not our name. It is right to say that we are the local church, but it is wrong to say that the “local church” is our name. This term describes the nature of the church. Do not give people the impression that our name is the local church. The local church in a city should consist

of all the believers in that city. But we say with sadness that many dear saints are far away from their home in the church. We do not have any name. For the sake of communication and for registration with the government we may say that we are the church in Anaheim. But not even this should be construed as a name. Do your best to avoid using terms that may be misunderstood as being our name. We do not need a name, and we do not want to have one.

2. NO PARTICULAR FELLOWSHIP

We have been baptized into the unique name, the name above every name, and we have also been called into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Cor. 1:9). This fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ has become the fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42). First John 1:3 says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The "we" and the "us" mentioned in this verse refer to the apostles. The apostle John seemed to be saying, "We, the apostles, have declared to you the divine life. In this life you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and the Son." This fellowship is also called communion or participation. The meaning is the same. Whatever term we use, there is something called fellowship, the common participation in Christ, which is common to all believers in Him. Whoever has believed into Him is now in the fellowship of our wonderful Lord. This fellowship is common to you, to me, and to every regenerated one. However, many Christians do not have this unique fellowship. Rather, they have a different so-called fellowship, a special fellowship. Every special fellowship constitutes a division. Some Christians may not be denominated; that is, they may not have a name for their group, but they do have a particular fellowship. Their fellowship is not as large as the common fellowship of the Son of God. Instead, it is small and particular.

Let me give some illustrations from my own experience. When I was young, my mother was a Southern Baptist. The Southern Baptist denomination she attended had communion only a few times a year. Whenever they had communion, they made a strong, serious, and solemn announcement to the effect that anyone who did not belong to the Southern Baptist denomination could not participate in their communion service. When some who were not members wanted to take communion, the pastor told them they had to wait, pass an examination, and be immersed by them. One man said that he had already been immersed, but the pastor said, "We don't care how many times you have been immersed. If you want to take the holy communion with us, then you must be baptized by us. If you are unwilling to do this, then you are not welcome to share holy communion with us." This illustrates the fact that those Baptists had a particular fellowship. Although the Southern Baptists in the United States make up nearly one fourth of the total number of regenerated ones, they still do not have the common fellowship. Their fellowship is particular, and it constitutes them a division.

3. NO PARTICULAR TEACHING

Some groups do not have a name, but they have a particular teaching that produces a particular fellowship. For example, some groups believe that all the saints will be raptured before the great tribulation. Anyone who does not hold this concept must repent of his doctrine before he can fellowship with this group. By this we see that the group insisting on the belief in the pre-tribulation rapture does not have just the common faith (Titus 1:4). In addition to the common faith, they hold to the belief in the pre-tribulation rapture. This particular teaching produces a particular fellowship, and this particular fellowship constitutes a division.

Other Christian groups insist upon foot-washing and head covering. When some Christians come to the Lord's table, they always wash one another's feet. If you are not willing to participate in this foot washing, you have no right to join them in their holy communion. Hence, they also are a division. Some Brethren groups insist that all women wear a head covering. For a woman to have her head uncovered indicates that she does not agree with their belief. These Brethren have the common faith

plus the belief in head covering. This results in a particular fellowship, a factor that makes them a division. Therefore, a name, a particular fellowship, and a particular teaching are causes of division.

Nearly every Christian group has a particular teaching or doctrine. The Baptists have a strong teaching on immersion; the Seventh Day Adventists, on the sabbath; and the charismatic groups emphasize the manifestation of gifts, especially speaking in tongues. All these special teachings constitute these groups sects, divisions.

Thus far, we have seen three causes of division—a particular name, a particular fellowship, and a particular teaching. Just one of these items is sufficient to constitute a group a division. As long as you have either a particular name, a particular fellowship, or a particular teaching, you are a division.

No Particular Teaching in the Lord's Recovery

In the Lord's recovery we do not have any particular teaching. Some may say, "Brother Lee, have you not emphasized the matter of the church over the years? Isn't your teaching about the church particular?" Certainly not. Although I have repeatedly ministered regarding the church, my teaching concerning it is not particular. My speaking about the church is like telling people that they must breathe—it is common and not particular. We only emphasize things that are common, not things that are particular. I could say over and over again that you must believe in the Lord Jesus and that you must live by Him. Although I may tell you a thousand times that you need to live by Christ, this is not a particular teaching. However, if I insist upon immersion and that only our immersion avails, that would be a particular teaching. Also, if I required you to speak in tongues and taught that unless you did so, you did not have the baptism of the Spirit, that would be a particular teaching. To say that we need the church is not to teach a particular doctrine. It is like saying that we all need a home. You cannot wander in the street—you must have a proper life in your home. To tell people that they all should have a home is not a particular teaching. However, to say that you must cut your hair in a certain way is to give a particular teaching. I hope that we all can make this differentiation.

No teaching in the Lord's recovery is particular. Rather, we say that the Bible is the holy Word verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. Is this a particular teaching? Of course not. We also say that our God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—that the Son of God became flesh to be our Savior, and that He died on the cross for our redemption. I have been preaching these things for more than forty-five years. They absolutely are not particular teachings. Furthermore, we tell people that today the Lord Jesus Christ is our life in our spirit and that we must love Him, live by Him, and walk according to Him. We also say that everyone who has been reborn has the life of the Lord Jesus and is a member of His Body. We teach that God's intention is to have a proper church life on earth to express His Son for His glory. These are not particular teachings. However, teachings such as foot-washing, head covering, immersion, and pre-tribulation rapture are particular teachings.

Receiving All Genuine Christians

In the church we receive all genuine Christians. We receive those who speak in tongues and those who do not speak in tongues; those who have been immersed and those who have been sprinkled; those who wear a head covering and those who do not wear a head covering; those who practice foot-washing and those who do not practice foot-washing. In fact, we would receive even Catholic nuns and priests who are true believers in the Lord Jesus. We receive all Christians, no matter what kind of Christians they are.

It seems that no two Christians are the same in opinion. They all have different opinions about various matters. Praise the Lord that in the church we do not touch these differing opinions. We all have locked our opinions away, knowing that if we bring them into the church, they will cause division. We only care that people believe in the Lord Jesus, are saved, and love Him. We would

encourage them all to go on by loving the Lord, by growing in His life, and by realizing the proper church life to satisfy the desire of God's heart.

4. UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP, NOT ISOLATED FELLOWSHIP

There may be some Christian groups who claim to have no particular name, fellowship, or teaching. They declare that they hate any name other than the name of the Lord Jesus and that they do not hold any particular fellowship or teaching. Rather, they receive all kinds of genuine Christians. If this is the case, then we must check three other matters, none of which is simple. Firstly, we must see what kind of fellowship they have. Although they may not have a particular fellowship, their fellowship may be isolated, not universal. Although they receive all true Christians, they do not fellowship with any other churches. Their fellowship is very limited and isolated in their own realm. It is not universal or even fully local. This makes them a sect. Such a group is not a local church—it is a local sect. This matter is very delicate, and few are able to perceive it. It is easy to see that those with a particular name, a particular fellowship, and a particular teaching are sects. But it is difficult to see that a group without these things may still be a sect if its fellowship is isolated. Although such a group claims to be the church in its locality, it is actually a local sect.

5. NO SEPARATE ADMINISTRATION

There may be a group that has no particular name, teaching, or fellowship, and whose fellowship is not isolated. Nevertheless, they may insist on having a separate administration, a separate eldership. This separate eldership constitutes them a division. No matter how many believers there may be in a particular church, the church in that locality must be under one eldership with one administration. The city of Anaheim has one mayor and one city hall. But the city of New York, which is vastly greater than Anaheim, still has just one mayor and one city hall. If the city of New York had more than one mayor, it would be a sign that the city had been divided. Although there were tens of thousands of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20) and although they met in various homes, they had only one set of elders. There was still just one eldership, one administration.

Suppose there is in Anaheim a group of Christians whose practice closely resembles ours. They have no particular name, fellowship, or teaching, and their fellowship is open to all, to the whole church throughout the world. Nevertheless, they insist on keeping a separate eldership with a separate administration. Because that separate administration is a cause of division, this group is also a sect. If there are two administrations in a city, then there are two “churches” in the city. It is like having two mayors and two administrations in one city. If this is the case, then that city must be divided. From all these points we can see that it is not a simple matter to know the church.

6. NO HIDDEN CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

One other factor is a test of a genuine local church. There may be a Christian group that has no particular name, no particular fellowship, and no particular teaching. Their fellowship is universal, not isolated, and they do not have a separate administration. Although they pass all these tests, do not be quick to say that they are a true local church. It is still possible that this group has a hidden connection with another organization. They are like a kite in the air: someone on the ground is holding the string. How high the kite flies does not depend upon the kite; it depends upon the one holding the string. In the past we were cheated by people like this, and we suffered as a result. One group said, “We are exactly the same as you. We have no particular name, particular teaching, or particular fellowship. Our fellowship is universal, and we do not insist upon having a separate administration.” When we heard this, we thought it was wonderful. However, we eventually learned that this group was connected to an organization in England. The kite was flying in China, but the one who held the string was in England.

The church is a pure golden lampstand, but any group that has a hidden connection with another organization is not pure. Rather, it is cloudy, opaque. The church, on the contrary, must be transparent and crystal clear. The New Jerusalem is a transparent city. Even the gold in the New Jerusalem is clear as glass (Rev. 21:18). In this city there is nothing opaque.

Whenever you meet a Christian group, you must check whether it has a particular name, a particular fellowship, a particular teaching, a fellowship that is not universal, a separate administration, or a hidden connection with another organization. If any group can pass all six tests, then the group must be all right. But if you apply these tests to today's Christian groups, every one of them would be exposed and fall short.

THOSE WITH THE PROPER STANDING BEING THE CHURCH

The church at Jerusalem had no particular name, no particular teaching, and no particular fellowship. The flow of the church eventually spread to Antioch. The church in Antioch also had no particular name, fellowship, or teaching. Their fellowship was open to all the churches universally, they had one set of elders, and they had no hidden connections. The church in Ephesus was the same in these matters as the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch. Eventually, the flow of the church went to Corinth. We have seen that in 1 Corinthians Paul dealt with the contentions in this church. Paul caught this matter in time, the Corinthians were helped, and the divisions did not actually take place. Let us suppose, however, that four divisions actually occurred. Thus, in addition to those standing as the church in Corinth, there would be the church of Paul, the church of Apollos, the church of Cephas, and the church of Christ. If you were a brother visiting the city of Corinth, to which of these "churches" would you go? Suppose the total number of Christians in Corinth was a thousand, with two hundred fifty in the church of Paul, three hundred fifty in the church of Apollos, one hundred twenty-five in the church of Cephas, one hundred in the church of Christ, and the remainder, seventy-five, in the church in Corinth. Of these five groups, four are divisions and one, composed of the seventy-five standing as the church in Corinth, is the church. Suppose one of the seventy-five in the church at Corinth would say that they are the church and that the others are not the church, and that the pastor of the "Pauline" church would say, "Don't you think that we believe in the Bible? We believe in the church just as much as you do. Why do you say that you are the church and that we are not the church?" A good answer would be this: "Brother, if you want to be the church, simply drop your title, and you will immediately become the church. If you find it impossible to drop the title, then leave your divisive circle and return to the proper standing. As soon as you do this, you will be in the church."

NOT ALL CHRISTIANS BEING THE CHURCH

Due to the division and scattering among today's Christians, not all Christians are the church. All Christians are the members of the church, but not all of them are the church. The nation of Israel is an excellent illustration. Although there are thirteen or fourteen million Jews on earth today, less than three million of them are the nation of Israel. Although the number of Jews in the city of New York is greater than the number in the nation of Israel, the Jews in New York are not the nation of Israel.

Recently a brother told us about a newspaper article written by a group of orthodox Jews. In this article they declared that they would not recognize the nation of Israel. Claiming to be bona fide Jews, those in this group say that if any were to be considered the nation of Israel, they should be considered as that nation. The United Nations, however, does not recognize this group as the nation of Israel. The United Nations will recognize as the nation of Israel only those who are a proper people, who are on proper ground, and who have a proper government to be a proper nation. Those orthodox Jews who are still in New York City cannot say that they are the nation of Israel. Perhaps they are members of

the nation of Israel, but they are not the nation of Israel because they are not on the right ground or under the proper government.

Likewise, not all bona fide Christians can say that they are the church. They must consider where they are. Are they on the proper ground? They need to consider the example of the Jewish people. There are millions of genuine Jews who are not the nation of Israel. Only those Jews who have returned to the land of their forefathers and who stand on the proper ground and under the proper government are the nation of Israel. Yes, you may be a genuine Christian, and as a true Christian you are a member of the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, you are not on the proper ground. You may be in the Catholic Church, in a denomination, or in a free group. Do not argue with us—check where you are. If you are a member of the family, then why are you not at home with the family?

A MATTER OF STANDING, NOT OF NUMBERS

Some may argue with us, saying, “The church in Anaheim includes all the believers in Anaheim. Since you are such a small number, obviously not including all the believers in this city, why do you still say that you are the church in Anaheim and that the other believers are not?” Consider again the example of the divisions in Corinth. Although less than a tenth of the total number of believers in the city of Corinth had the standing of the church in Corinth, they were still the church, and the majority of the other believers, those in the four divisions, were not. The majority were in the “Pauline church,” the “Petrine church,” the “Apollonian church,” or “the church of Christ.” But the small minority of seventy-five still remained on the ground of the church in Corinth. If they were not the church, then what were they? To be the church is not a matter of numbers—it is a matter of the standing, the ground. It is just like the nation of Israel, which has fewer Jews than New York. But the smaller number of Jews standing on the proper ground are the nation of Israel, and the greater number of Jews, having lost the ground of their nation, are not the nation of Israel. As long as you are in a division, you lose the standing of the local church. Thank the Lord that by remaining on the proper standing and by not being in a division, we may be part of the church in our locality.

A MATTER OF THE GROUND, NOT OF CONDITION

Let us consider another aspect of the church as revealed in this example of the divisions at Corinth. Suppose the believers in the “Pauline church” were very good, spiritual, heavenly, and lovely, but the seventy-five remaining in the church in Corinth were rather sloppy. If you were a believer visiting that city, to which group would you go? Perhaps you would say, “I love the holy, heavenly, spiritual saints in the ‘Pauline church.’ I don’t care about their ground or standing— I only care about their spiritual condition. Their standing is not right, but they, like Daniel, are very spiritual.” We need to make a clear distinction between the condition of the church and the ground of the church. The church may be correct in its ground, but poor in its condition. Of course, we look to the Lord that we may be right in both ground and condition. However, the decision concerning recognizing a church must not be made according to condition, but according to the ground. This is the way to discern what the proper church is. (*Young People’s Training*, pp. 185-198)

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4. The Genuine Ground of Oneness (Lee/LSM), pp. 12-13.
5. The Practical Expression of the Church (Lee/LSM), p. 70, 80.
6. A Brief Presentation of the Lord’s Recovery (Lee/LSM), pp. 28-29.

7. The Mystery of Christ (Nee/LSM), p. 61.
8. The Normal Christian Church Life (Nee/LSM), pp. 69-70, 84-95.
9. The Testimony and the Ground of the Church (Lee/LSM), pp. 137-141, 153-159.
10. The Ground of the Church (Lee/LSM)
11. Young People's Training (Lee/LSM), pp. 185-198.

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the universal and local oneness of the church.
2. List out the six tests of a genuine local church.
3. How can we say that the Lord's recovery has no particular teaching?
4. How is the standing of the church a matter of the ground and not the condition?

MEMORY VERSES:

Deut. 12:5, 12

- 5 But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.
- 12 And you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons and daughters, and your male servants and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no portion nor inheritance with you.

Acts 14:23

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

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.

Rev. 1:11

Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Acts 8:1

And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

John 16:13

But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Six

The Original Condition of the Church, the Failures in the Churches, and the Degradation and Recovery of the Church

Scripture Reading: Matt. 20:25-28; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; John 17:14-17; Acts 17:11; Rev. 1:11; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 3; Acts 13:1-2, 15: 28; Col. 3:11; Acts 2:26-47; Acts 5:1-11; 6:1; 15:1-2; Col. 2:8, 16, 20-22; 2 Tim. 1:15; Ezra 1:3-11; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; John 5:17

I. The original condition of the church:

- A. All believers were equal and were brothers—there was no position, class or rank in the church—Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-11; Rev. 1:9.
- B. All believers functioned in the church:
 - 1. All the believers were members of the Body and functioned in coordination—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:16; Acts 2:46.
 - 2. All believers were priests—1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:5, 6; 5:9,10.
- C. The church was separated from the world and forsook the idols—John 17:14-17; Acts 15:29; 19:19.
- D. The church treasured God's Word—listened to the speaking of the Holy Spirit—Acts 17:11; 15:15-16.
- E. All the churches stood on the ground of oneness—one city, one church—Acts 8:1, 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11; Acts 9:31; 15:41.
- F. All the churches had fellowship with one another—1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 16:1, 3.
- G. The church was under the headship of Christ and the authority of the Holy Spirit—Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:15; Acts 13:2; 15:28.
- H. The church had no distinction between race, nationality, or social classes—Col. 3:11; cf. Acts 13:1.
- I. Because their condition was according to the truth and the nature of the church, they received much blessing from the Lord—Acts 2:46-47; 6:7; 12:24.

II. There are no failures in the universal church; however, there are failures in the local churches:

- A. The first failure in the churches was that of hypocrisy seen in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; hypocrisy is a matter of pretending to be somebody in order to get a name that we may have vainglory—Acts 5:1-11.
- B. The second failure in the churches was related to culture and languages; at the very beginning of the practice of the church life, trouble was caused by language differences; proper care was taken to solve this—Acts 6:1-6.
- C. Another failure was that of bringing in the legal practices of the Old Testament; this type of teaching annulled the faith in God's New Testament economy, and was a real heresy; this failure annulled the believers freedom in Christ—Acts 15:1-2.
- D. A very serious failure in the churches was the compromise with Judaism led by the apostle James; this failure brought in the mixture of Judaism to contaminate God's pure grace and spoiled the purity of the church life—Acts 21:20-26.
- E. God's intention in recording these failures in the holy Word is to give us a warning concerning the possibility of such failures recurring in the church life.

III. There is a difference between the failures in the churches and the degradation of the church; the failures are not serious in a basic way while the degradation of the church is more than basic, for it cuts the root of the life, living, and growth of the church.

- A. The degradation as described during the time of the New Testament:
1. The first aspect of the degradation of the church was the church being taken over by the Gnostic philosophy and the elements of the world—Col. 2:8, 16, 20-22; Titus 1:14-15.
 2. Another aspect of the degradation of the church was the teaching of things different from the economy of God taught by the apostle, resulting in turning away from the apostle's teaching—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:4.
 3. The desire for material gain is another reason certain ones teach differently from the economy of God; because of pride and the desire for profit for riches, some are teaching differently—1 Tim. 6:5.
 4. In the degradation of the church, many turned away from Paul's ministry; those who turned away from Paul's ministry deviated from God's complete revelation—2 Tim. 1:15; Col. 1:25, 27:
- B. The church further degraded after the completion of the New Testament; Satan tried his best to destroy the church because he knew that the builded church would destroy him—Matt. 16:18:
1. He used the Roman Empire to persecute the church in an attempt to terminate her; but persecution did not terminate the Christians; it rather helped them.
 2. Then Satan changed his strategy; under the rule of Constantine the Great the Roman Empire made Christianity legal, and Christians had the full freedom of worship.
 3. This ruin progressed from the fourth to the sixth centuries, by which time the papal system was fully established; with this the Roman Catholic Church reached its full development.

IV. Because the church has become degraded through history, it needs to be restored according to God's original intention; the recovery of the church means that there is the need to bring the church back to its original state:

- A. The recovery of the church is typified by the return of the children of Israel from their captivity—Ezra 1:3-11.
- B. The recovery of the church is fully revealed in the New Testament even though the word recovery is not used; this recovery is revealed mainly in the later Epistles of the New Testament.
- C. We need to be recovered from the divisive and apostate ground with its deviation from the truth concerning the person of the Triune God and the person and work of Christ.
- D. We need to be recovered from every kind of division back to the unique and pure ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ with its truths concerning:
1. The New Testament faith and God's economy—1 Tim. 1:3-4.
 2. The person and work of Christ.
 3. The person and the dispensing of the Triune God—2 Cor. 13:14.
 4. The church, the Body of Christ, the Corporate Christ—Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12.
 5. The universal and local aspects of the church—Matt. 16:18; 18:17.
- E. In the recovery of the church, we are building the Body of Christ, the temple of God, the house of God—Eph. 4:12-17.
- F. The recovery of the church involves the establishing of the kingdom life—Rom. 14:17.

FOCUS:

As we come to the heart of this series of lessons we want the young people to see the original condition of the church at its beginning and the subsequent failures and degradation that came in. The purpose of this lesson is to impress the young people with the Lord's need for a recovery of the truth and of the proper church life where He can fulfill His eternal purpose and economy. We hope and pray that this lesson will give them a vision of the Lord's recovery so that they would give themselves to it for their whole life.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapter 10.
2. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), pp. 2349-2397.
3. The World Situation and God's Move (Lee/LSM), p. 12.
4. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), pp. 2447-2496.
5. The Economy of God and the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), p. 50.
6. The Glorious Church (Nee/LSM), p. 61.
7. The One New Man (Lee/LSM), pp. 7-8.
8. The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life (Lee/LSM), pp. 15-16.

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the difference between the failures of the church and the degradation of the church?
2. What are the items of degradation of the church revealed in the New Testament? Make a list and use verse references.
3. What are the major items we need to be recovered from and recovered to?

MEMORY VERSES:

Rom. 12:4-5

- 4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- 5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

2 Cor. 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

2 Tim. 1:15

This you know, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

Acts 2:46-47

- 46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,
- 47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Seven

The Seven Churches in Revelation Signifying the Seven Stages of the Church

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:3; 22:7; 2:1-29; 3:1-22

- I. The church in Ephesus depicts the end of the stage of the initial church during the last part of the first century; *Ephesus* in Greek means desirable signifying that the initial church was still desirable to the Lord—Rev. 2:1-7:**
 - A. The condition of the church in Ephesus was the losing of their first love toward the Lord indicating that the source of degradation of the church life is the fading of the first love—Rev. 2:4.
 - B. The Lord’s promise to the overcomers was to eat of the tree of life; eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life; the content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ—2:7.
- II. The church in Smyrna prefigures the suffering church under the persecution of the Roman Empire from the last part of the first century to the early part of the fourth century—Rev. 2:8-11:**
 - A. The condition of the church in Smyrna was that of suffering; in Greek *Smyrna* means “myrrh,” a sweet spice which signifies suffering.
 - B. To overcome in this epistle means to overcome persecution by being faithful unto death; because the overcomers have overcome death through their faithfulness unto death under persecution they have left nothing requiring further dealing by God—2:10-11.
- III. The church in Pergamos pre-symbolizes the worldly church, the church married to the world—Rev. 2:12-17:**
 - A. The condition of the church in Pergamos was of being married to the world; in Greek *Pergamos* means “marriage,” implying union, and “fortified tower”; as a sign, the church in Pergamos prefigures the church which entered into a marriage union with the world and became a high fortified tower—2:12.
 - B. To overcome here means specifically to overcome the church’s union with the world; the overcomers eat of the hidden manna, signifying the hidden Christ, a special portion reserved for His overcoming seekers who overcome the degradation of the worldly church—2:17.
 - C. While the church goes the way of the world, these overcomers come forward to abide in the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, where they enjoy the hidden Christ as a special portion for their daily supply—2:17, footnote 2.
- IV. The church in Thyatira pre-symbolizes the apostate church from the ordination of the papal system in the latter part of the sixth century to the end of the church age—Rev. 2:18-29:**
 - A. The condition of the church in Thyatira was that it is the church in apostasy; *Thyatira* in Greek means “sacrifice of perfume” or “unceasing sacrifice”; as a sign, the church in Thyatira prefigures the Roman Catholic Church, which was fully formed as the apostate church by the establishment of the universal papal system in the latter part of the sixth century.

- B. The Lord's promise to the overcomers is that they will be given authority over the nations in the coming kingdom; this strongly implies that those who do not answer His call to overcome the apostate church will not participate in the reign of the millennial kingdom—2:26.

V. The church in Sardis prefigures the protestant church, from the reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century to Christ's coming back—Rev. 3:1-6:

- A. The condition of the church in Sardis is that you have a name that you are living, and you are dead; *Sardis* in Greek means "the remains," "the remainder," or "the restoration"—3:1-2:
- B. In verse 5 we have the Lord's promise to the overcomers; to overcome means to overcome the deadness of the Protestant churches, that is, to overcome dead Protestantism; those who cooperate with God's supplying grace and mature in life in the church age will be given the prize of the entrance into the millennial kingdom.

VI. The church in Philadelphia prefigures the church of brotherly love, the recovery of the proper church life, from the early part of the nineteenth century to the second appearing of the Lord—Rev. 3:7-13:

- A. The condition of the church in Philadelphia is that of brotherly love; they had little power and were keeping the Lord's word and not denying His name; therefore the Lord set before them an open door that no one could shut—3:8.
- B. The Lord's promise to the overcomers in Philadelphia is the Lord "will make him a pillar in the temple of My God;" the Lord will also write on him the name of "My God" and "the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem"—3:12.

VII. The church in Laodicea foreshadows the degraded church life of the brothers from the latter part of the nineteenth century to the Lord's return—Rev. 3:14-22:

- A. The condition of the church in Laodicea is that of being lukewarm and about to be vomited out of the Lord's mouth; in Greek, *Laodicea* means the opinion, the judgment, of the people or of the laymen—vv. 15-17:
 - 1. The degraded recovered church boasts of her riches (mainly in the knowledge of doctrines); she does not realize that she is poor in life, blind in sight, and naked in conduct—v. 17
 - 2. The degraded recovered church needs to pay a price for the gold, the white garments, and the eyesalve, which she desperately needs; to buy requires the paying of a price—v. 18.
 - 3. The Lord, the Head of the church, is actually standing outside the degraded church, knocking at her door; this means that, in a very practical way, the degraded recovered church is Christless—v. 20.
- B. The promise to the overcomers is to sit with Him on His throne; to sit with the Lord on His throne will be a prize to the overcomer that he may participate in the Lord's authority in the coming millennial kingdom; this means that the overcomers will be co-kings with Christ ruling over the whole earth—v. 21.

FOCUS:

This burden of this lesson is a continuation of the previous lesson with its burden for a vision of the Lord's recovery. Through the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we see the degradation and recovery of the church life through the eyes of church history. This lesson should

impress the young people with the authenticity of the Bible as the word of God and how the two thousand years of church history are described in detail through these seven churches. This lesson should also impress the young people with the way to overcome the degradation of the church and what the Lord needs at the end of this age.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapter 11.
2. Conclusion of the New Testament (Lee/LSM), pp. 2497-2535.
3. The Orthodoxy of the Church (Nee/LSM), pp. 9-109.

QUESTIONS:

1. Write a prophecy, listing for each church, the time period it covers, the significance of its name, how their condition can be applied to us today, and what is the reward for each and how it relates to their condition.

MEMORY VERSES:

Rev. 2:4, 7, 17

- 4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
- 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it.

Rev. 3:8, 12

- 8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- 12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev. 3:18, 20

- 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Eight

The Indirect Building Up Of the Body of Christ by the Gifts to the Body and the Direct Building Up Of the Body of Christ by the Perfected Saints

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-18; Eph. 4:8-16; 2 Cor. 4:1; 3:8-9; Rom. 5:18b;
Jude 3b; Eph. 2:15b; 4:24; 4:1

I. The indirect building up of the Body of Christ by the gifts to the Body:

- A. The Lord prophesied in Matthew 16 that He would build His church, which is His Body, upon this rock—Matt. 16:16-18:
 1. On the one hand, the Body of Christ is built upon Christ Himself, with Him as the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11); on the other hand, it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets (Eph. 2:20).
 2. The Lord continued by saying, “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (the church)”; the gates of Hades is the authority of Satan’s darkness; it is also the authority of death—v. 18.
- B. The way Christ builds up the church—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:8-16:
 1. There are two kinds of building up, one is by the gifted persons and the other is by the perfected saints; the building up of the Body of Christ by the gifted persons is under the Head’s supply and is done indirectly:
 2. The intrinsic building up of the church is by the ascended Head giving the gifts to His Body; the ascended Head gave four kinds of gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers—4:8, 11.
 3. The first class is the apostles (Eph. 4:11); these apostles receive the revelation of God’s New Testament economy concerning Christ and the church—Matt. 16:16-18; Gal. 1:11-12, 15-16; Eph. 3:3-4, 8-11; 5:32:
 - a. The apostles are able to establish local churches and to appoint in them the elders for leading, shepherding, teaching, and overseeing—Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:2.
 - b. They are also able to determine doctrines, to release the truth, to perfect the saints, and to build up the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 2:7; Eph. 4:11-12.
 4. The prophets are the second class of gifts given by the ascended Christ; the prophets are those who through the Lord’s revelation, speak for the Lord, speak forth the Lord, and speak the Lord into others—v. 11.
 5. The evangelists are the third class of persons given by the ascended Head; they can preach Christ and the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel to save the desolate sinners, bringing them to Christ—v. 11; cf. Eph. 3:8.
 6. The shepherds and teachers are the fourth class of persons given by the ascended Head; the shepherds and teachers here refer to one class of gifted persons and know how to teach others and how to feed others—Eph. 4:11.
 7. Christ as the Head gave these four kinds of gifts to the church for the purpose of perfecting the saints that the latter may also be the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers.

II. The direct building up of the Body by the perfected saints:

- A. The Lord desires all the saints to be perfected, however, the Lord's call for the overcomers indicates that not all the saints will be perfected; just some of them will be perfected; the ones who are willing to be perfected will be the overcomers:
 - 1. I am concerned for some of the saints because they are still not willing or ready to be perfected; we need to be perfected to do what the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers do.
 - 2. We have to be perfected so that the entire Body of Christ functions in the same way that the gifted members do.
- B. The saints are perfected by the perfecting gifts with the life supply as the nourishment for the growth in life; we have to perfect the saints with some solid food supply that they may be nourished—1 Thes. 2:7:
 - 1. The gifted persons perfect the saints, not by Bible teaching, but by nourishing them; do not tell people what is right and what is wrong—1 Cor. 3:1-2.
 - 2. Only life counts; the saints need to be perfected not by something, but with something, that is, with the very life of God, with the very Christ whom the gifted persons enjoy.
- C. Ephesians 4:12 says that the gifted persons are “for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ”:
 - 1. The word *unto* in Greek means in view of, for the purpose of, resulting in, issuing in; the perfecting of the saints is in view of the work of the ministry, which is the unique ministry in the New Testament.
 - 2. The work of the ministry to build up the Body of Christ is directly by the perfected saints in the growth in life—Eph. 4:15-16.
- D. The saints are perfected unto the work of the ministry, the building up of the Body of Christ, until we (the gifted persons and the saints) all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—v. 13.

FOCUS:

In this lesson the series turns from the vision of the church to the building up of the church. We want to impress the young people with how the Lord builds His church. First it is Christ who will build His church indirectly through the gifts He gave to the church in His ascension. These gifts need to perfect the members to do what they do for the direct building up of the church. On our side we need to see that we need a lot of perfecting and should be willing to be perfected so the church can be built up through us.

REFERENCES:

- 1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapters 13-14.
- 2. Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 55-58.
- 3. Further Light Concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), p. 45.
- 4. The Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 40-45.
- 5. Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 59-63, 21-35.
- 6. Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 30, 41.
- 7. Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 12-35, 37, 46-50, 55.
- 8. Church Affairs (Nee/LSM), pp. 137, 139, 148.

9. The Economy of God and the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 38, 41, 59-60.
10. The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church (Lee/LSM), pp. 48, 68-70.
11. Further Light Concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 22, 38, 43.
12. Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures (Lee/LSM), p. 42.

QUESTIONS:

1. How is it possible for Christ to build up the church?
2. How does the church receive the gifts?
3. Describe what each of the following do:
 - a. The apostles.
 - b. The prophets.
 - c. The evangelists.
 - d. The shepherds and teachers.
4. Why do we say that those willing to be perfected are overcomers?
5. What does it mean to be willing to be perfected? Are you willing to be perfected?
6. How are the saints perfected?

MEMORY VERSES:

Eph. 4:8, 11-16

- 8 Therefore the Scripture says, "Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men."
- 11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- 12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- 13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
- 14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- 15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- 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.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Nine

The Building Up Of the Body of Christ in Oneness and the Increase and the Spread of the Church

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 8:4; Isa. 45:5; John 17:20-23; Eph. 2:15; Rom. 15:7; Phil. 2:2; 1 Cor. 12:25; Psa. 133:1-3; John 15:4-5, 7-8; Phil. 1:27; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 8:1

I. The Building up of the Body of Christ in oneness:

- A. By the intrinsic oneness and the outward practice of the one accord, Christ the Head, the perfecting gifts, and the perfected saints will build up the Body of Christ:
 - 1. There is only one God (1 Cor. 8:4; Isa. 45:5; Psa. 86:10). He has three aspects, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14); God is one in His essence, in His purpose to build up the church.
 - 2. God is also one in His economy to work Himself—the Father, Son, and Spirit—into His chosen, created, redeemed, and regenerated people so that they may be filled with Him, be transformed, and be built up into the one Body of Christ.
 - 3. The one God accomplished many things to work out His economy; you can see the principle of oneness, which is according to God's nature of oneness, in everything He did; in His acts.
- B. God is one in every respect; His expression must also be in oneness; as with one husband there is one wife, so also there is only one church as the full expression of the one God.
- C. The Lord's prayer in John chapter 17 shows His aspiration for the oneness of His Body; the organic oneness of the Body of Christ is the organic oneness in the Triune God—John 17:20-23:
 - 1. Verse 21 shows that the oneness of all the believers should be like the oneness in the Triune God; in the entire universe there is such a oneness, and this oneness is that the believers are mingled and wrapped up with the Triune God.
 - 2. The glory in verse 22 indicates that the oneness we have with the Triune God is the divine life, and by this divine life we can express the Triune God.
 - 3. For us to be perfected into one (17:23) is for us to have the growth in the divine life every day; the divine life has been given to us, and we need to live by this divine life; then our expression will be the divine oneness.
- D. Immediately after the Lord's prayer in John 17, He went to the cross and accomplished redemption for us; in His resurrection and ascension, He became the Spirit and breathed the Spirit into His disciples; this accomplished the oneness of the Body—John 20:22.
- E. The oneness of the Body was accomplished by the Triune God and we began to experience this oneness when we believed and were baptized; our baptism brought us into a mystical and organic union with the processed Triune God so that all of us, the believers in the Son, may be one in this organic union—Matt. 28:19.
- F. The practice of the oneness of the Body universally:
 - 1. The Lord sent the apostles to raise up churches by their gospel, teaching, and fellowship; then they continued in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles that they might grow in the Lord and be perfected to build up the church.
 - 2. All the local churches should remain in fellowship with one another; in this way, all the churches will maintain the proper relationship for the building up of the Body of Christ.
- G. The practice of the oneness of the Body locally:

1. In order to practice the oneness of the Body locally, we must stand on the ground of oneness.
2. In order to build up a proper local church, we need to be one with all the saints in the church—Phil. 2:2.
3. Submitting to the authority of the elders is essential to keep the oneness for the building up of the Body—Heb. 13:7, 17.

II. The Increase and Spread of the church:

- A. The increase of the church is to impart Christ to others and make them a part of Christ; the branches of the Vine bear fruit by imparting the life of the Vine to others and making them a part of the Vine—John 15:1-2, 4-5, 16:
 1. The need to increase—all the members must bear fruit; otherwise, there will be no increase of the local church—v. 6.
 2. In the gospel preaching, there are some wrong concepts: with some there is too much human effort and struggle; some say that we must wait and pray for a great revival; and those who say the fruit-bearing is the overflow of the inner life, yet never bear any fruit.
 3. The normal way is not to use our human effort; nor is it to depend upon a revival campaign with a giant preacher; fruit-bearing is the outflow of life; so we must grow in life and also take the responsibility of fruit-bearing—John 15:16:
 - a. We must abide in the Lord and enjoy the riches of His life; then we must be burdened for fruit-bearing—1 Cor. 9:16-17.
 - b. The brothers and sisters in the church should help one another in a mutual way in the matter of fruit-bearing; we should not do this just once in a while, but constantly.
 4. Going out to visit people is the most effective way to spread the gospel for the kingdom of God; in the Lord's new way we must be believing, assured, bold, and aggressive.
- B. The church increases locally and spreads universally; as a local church increases in life and number, we call it the increase; when a local church spreads to other cities to have more local churches, we call it the spreading of the churches—Acts 8:1:
 1. It is wrong for a church to exist in an area for 10 years without spreading to other cities.
 2. We need to spread the church life from city to city, from country to country, and from continent to continent until there are local churches everywhere on earth—Matt. 24:14.

FOCUS:

In this lesson we need to impress the young people that for the building up of the church we must remain in the oneness of the Body of Christ. The building takes place in oneness and must be the characteristic of our practical church life. The oneness of the church is a real test to us. We also need to enter into this up-to-date burden for the increase of the church through our gospel preaching and the spreading of the church through migration by seeing how this took place in the early church.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapters 15-16.
2. Practical and Organic Building Up of the Church (Lee/LSM), pp. 15-24, 29-30.

3. The Practical Expression of the Church (Lee/LSM), pp. 176-179, 181-182.
4. The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy (Lee/LSM), pp. 96-98.
5. Church Services One (Lee/LSM), pp. 9-10, 20-21.
6. The Economy of God and the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 77-79.
7. Further Light Concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 22-35.
8. Further Talks on the Church Life (Nee/LSM), pp. 164-165.
9. Vision of God's Building (Lee/LSM), pp. 162-165.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why must God's expression be in oneness?
2. How do we practice the oneness with the church universally?
3. How do we practice the oneness with the local church where we meet?
4. Why is the picture of fruit-bearing such a good illustration of the increase of the church?
5. It is wrong for us to preach the gospel using our human effort, however we must preach the gospel; how then do we do it?
6. What is the God-ordained way to increase the church?

MEMORY VERSES:

Eph. 4:3-6

- 3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
- 4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- 6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

John 17:21-23

- 21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- 22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
- 23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Ten

The Meetings of the Church for the Building up of the Church and the Prayer Ministry of the Church

Scripture Reading: Heb. 10:25; Col. 1:2; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20, 23-25; 14:23, 26; Matt. 18:19-20; Acts 2:46; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 5:18-19; Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 6:17-20; Ezek. 36:37; Isa. 62:6-7; 1 John 1:9; Acts 1:14; 4:31; 12:5; 13:2-4; 20:36

I. The meetings of the church for the building up of the church:

- A. God has ordained the way in which every living thing in the universe should exist; God's ordination is the very law by which a particular living thing lives; God's ordination for us, which becomes our law of existence and blessing, is the meetings—Heb. 10:25.
- B. The spiritual life we believers have received, being the life of God in us, also possesses many characteristics; one of the many characteristics of our spiritual life is to flock together, to meet together—cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.
- C. The purpose of the church meetings is multifaceted: to remember the Lord and worship the Father, for prayer, for preaching the gospel to save sinners, to care for one another in love, and for teaching the truth to perfect one another.
- D. The goal of the church meetings being to gather together to exhibit Christ; when we come together we should present the Christ whom we have experienced and offer Him to God to be His food.
- E. The types of church meetings:
 1. The first kind of regular meeting for us who have been redeemed by the Lord's death is the meeting to break bread—Acts 20:7.
 2. The second kind of meeting is the prayer meeting; this kind of prayer is more powerful than the prayer of an individual—Matt. 18:18.
 3. The next meeting mentioned is for the exercise of spiritual gifts and for mutual building up; in this kind of meeting everyone should exercise the spiritual gifts—1 Cor. 14:26.
 4. We may also need to meet together occasionally to read the word of God in the Bible—Acts 15:30-31.
 5. Sometimes we should also meet to listen to spiritual messages spoken for God by the Lord's minister of the word that we may be edified and established—Acts 20:7.
 6. God's ordained way for Christian meetings is to have two different sizes of meetings: small and large.
 - a. The smaller size is to be held or practiced in the believers' homes—Acts 2:46; 5:42.
 - b. The church should also have large meetings in a larger place for the whole church to come together—1 Cor. 14:23
- F. Two examples of the meetings in the New Testament:
 1. In the first meeting of the Lord with His disciples after His resurrection, we have the Lord's presence, the peace, the Lord's sending, the breathing, and the authority to bind and loose—John 20:19-23.
 2. On the day of Pentecost, after the outpouring of the Spirit, the disciples preached the gospel and 3,000 people were baptized; the church life in Jerusalem had begun—Acts 2:46.
- G. How the believers meet:

1. The most crucial thing in the believers' meeting is to be gathered into the Lord's name; this means that we have to meet in the name of the Lord—Matt. 18:20.
2. In all of our meetings there should be four basic factors and elements: the word, the spirit, praying, and singing; if we handle these four elements in a proper and living way, there will be a rich display and expression of Christ in all of our meetings.

II. The prayer ministry of the church:

- A. When God works, He does so with specific law and definite principle; in spite of His exceeding greatness and His ability to operate according to His will, God always acts along the line of the law or principle which He has laid down.
- B. Believers need to realize that the ministry of the church includes bringing down to the earth the will that is in heaven—Matt. 6:10; 18:18-19:
 1. The church carries this out by praying on earth; prayer is not a small, insignificant, non-essential thing as some would tend to think.
 2. After the church knows the will of God, she opens her mouth to ask for it; this is prayer; if the church does not have this ministry, she is not of much use on earth.
 3. Here lies a most important principle: God works through the church today; He cannot do whatever He desires to do unless He does it through the church.
- C. There are mainly two types of prayer, the prayer to have fellowship with God and prayer for God's work—Phil. 4:6; Eph. 6:17:
 1. The significance of the prayer of fellowship is that we use our spirit to contact God, to absorb God, and to have our entire being brought back to our spirit to have fellowship with Him.
 2. After having the proper fellowship with God in prayer, a foundation is laid for us to go on to petition God for His work.
- D. We need to pray individually and corporately; on one hand we need to enter into our private room to pray to the Father who is in secret and on the other hand we need to pray corporately for the Lord's work and move—Matt. 6:6; 18:18-19.
- E. Many times our prayers are ineffective because we are too general; we must pray in a specific way; we should persevere in prayer, to continue to pray—Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
- F. We need set times of prayer every day so that we will be strong in spirit to pray unceasingly—1 Thes. 5:17; cf. Dan. 6:10; Psa. 55:17; Acts 3:1; 10:9.
- G. The best way to pray is with the Word; we should also have a notebook with us when we pray—Eph. 6:17-19.

FOCUS:

In most places the young people have difficulty enjoying and participating in the meetings of the church. The burden of this lesson is to inspire the young people for their appreciation and participation in the meetings of the church. The meetings of the church are most crucial for the building up of the church. We also want to impress the young people with the prayer ministry of the church and help them enter into a prayer life both personally and corporately in the church and with their companions.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapters 17-18.
2. Scriptural Way to Meet and Serve for the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 15-16.
3. The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings (Lee/LSM), p. 74.

4. Life Lessons Vol. 2 (Lee/LSM), pp. 20-22.
5. The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy (Lee/LSM), pp. 52-55.
6. Life Study of John (Lee/LSM), pp. 298-310, 565-570.
7. Life Study of Acts (Lee/LSM), pp. 41, 91, 97-98, 120-121, 162-163, 293-294.
8. Speaking Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 7-8, 12.
9. Come Forward to the Throne of Grace (Lee/LSM), pp. 1-27.
10. Let Us Pray (Nee/CFP), pp. 23-36.
11. The Prayer Ministry of the Church (Nee/CFP), pp. 7-35.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why should Christians meet together?
2. List the different types of meetings and their purpose.
3. Explain how the word, the spirit, praying, and singing are the basic factors and elements in the meetings.
4. List the seven steps of the principle of God's work.
5. What are the two types of prayer? Explain why both are important.
6. Use Matthew 18:18 to explain the church's responsibility in its prayer ministry to God.

MEMORY VERSES:

Heb. 10:25

Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

Matt. 18:20

For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

1 Cor. 14:26

What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Eph. 5:18-19

18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
 19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord.

Isa. 62:6-7

6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, / I have appointed watchmen; / All day and all night / They will never keep silent. / You who remind Jehovah, / Do not be dumb;
 7 And do not give Him quiet / Until He establishes / And until He makes Jerusalem / A praise in the earth.

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Eleven

The Holy, Royal, and Gospel Priesthood for the Building up of the Church

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rom. 15:16; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:9; John 1:29; Eph. 2:14; 5:26; Col. 2:9; Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:17; Psa. 119:147-148

- I. A priest must contact God, be filled with God, and be possessed by God completely that he may be built up with others in the flow of the life of God; then the priesthood will be His living corporate expression—1 Pet. 2:5, 9:**
 - A. The main function of a priest is not to work, but to spend time in the presence of the Lord until he is one with Him in the spirit—Ezek. 44:17.
 - B. The priesthood that God plans to have is a corporate man who is saturated and permeated with Himself.

- II. The holy priesthood is typified by the priesthood according to the order of Aaron; to be holy is to be separated from the common things, the worldly things, unto the holy God—1 Pet. 2:5:**
 - A. We need to be separated positionally so that we may be filled with the holy God dispositionally.
 - B. The tabernacle and its furniture is a picture of our experience of coming to God as a holy priest:
 1. The altar signifies the cross where Christ died as our sacrifice; when we come to God, we first need to offer Christ as our spiritual sacrifice—Heb. 9:14; 1 Cor. 15:3; John 1:29.
 2. The laver, the show bread table and the lampstand signify three experiences in the Word; when we use our spirit to read the Word, the Spirit will wash us, feed us, and enlighten us—Eph. 5:26; Matt. 4:4; John 8:12.
 3. The incense altar signifies our prayer; as we use the Word to pray, we enter into the holy of holies—Rev. 5:8.
 4. The ark typifies Christ as the embodiment of God; this is where we fellowship with God, and where God fills us with Himself to transform us—Col. 2:9.

- III. The royal priesthood is typified by the priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec—Gen. 14:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:9:**
 - A. Melchisedec came from God to bless Abraham with bread and wine; he came from God to bless man with the Lord's table.
 - B. We need to go to God's people to bless them with God as the bread and wine; the Lord's table signifies Christ's death and resurrection for man's salvation and enjoyment; this is the gospel, the good news, for fallen, sinful man and what we share in the church meetings to build up the church—v. 9.

- IV. The gospel priesthood is to preach the gospel to save sinners, so that they may be offered to God as acceptable sacrifices; the gospel priesthood includes the holy and royal priesthoods—Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9:**
 - A. As a gospel priest we need to come forward to God to be saturated with Him first; then the Lord burdens us to pray for a certain friend, we bring God to that friend as a royal priest.

- B. We are built up as we perform our priestly duties; as we are being built up, more priests become saved and are added to the priesthood to be built up together with us; this is God's way to build up the church.

V. How to practice the priesthood—Rom. 15:16:

- A. In the Old Testament, the priests start to offer sacrifices to God in the morning; therefore, we also must enjoy the Lord in the Word every day early in the morning to have a new start each day; by having morning revival every morning, you will be filled up with God to perform your priestly duty—Psa. 119:147-148.
- B. Pray unceasingly to fellowship with the Lord and to pray specifically for your friends' salvation; praying refreshes us, strengthens us, and directs us in our priestly function—Rom. 1:9; John 15:16.
- C. Praying and going are two aspects of our co-laboring with God, go to visit people as God visited us, go and speak the word to convert them to the Lord; this the God-ordained way to function as a gospel priest.
- D. After ones receive the Lord, you must continue to pray for them and shepherd them into life, so that they may be established in the faith; help them to pray, to read the Word, and to live by the spirit.
- E. In Matthew 28:20 the Lord said that after we baptized people, we should teach them “to observe all things, whatever I commanded you”; the best way to teach the truth is in small groups, when you have a small group of saints meeting together, there are more riches of Christ.
- F. In the meetings, we practice as royal priests to speak for God and to speak God into all the saints; whatever you currently know and have enjoyed is your portion to build up the church.

VI. We should endeavor to be the holy, royal, and gospel priests in the one priesthood; if we are faithful, the life and number in the church will increase and the Lord will build His church through us.

FOCUS:

This lesson is to help the young people enter into the experiential and practical working out of the universal priesthood of bringing man to God (Holy) and God to men (Royal). The result of this priesthood is the New Testament priesthood of the gospel. This lesson stresses the practical working out of the God-ordained way to carry out our New Testament priesthood of the gospel.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapter 19.
2. Speaking Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 36-37.
3. The New Testament Priest of the Gospel (Lee/LSM), pp. 75-79; 95-110.

QUESTIONS:

1. With the teacher and the other students in your class, draw a picture of the tabernacle including all the furniture. Discuss the significance of the tabernacle and its furniture.
2. Discuss the function, similarities and differences of each aspect of the priesthood (holy, royal, and gospel).

3. In detail, describe the type of living needed to be a proper priest.

MEMORY VERSES:

1 Pet. 2:5, 9

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

Rom. 15:16

That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

1 John 1:7, 9

- 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
- 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Rom. 12:1

I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Heb. 9:14

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

THE CHURCH—THE VISION AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Session Twelve

Our Entrance into the Church and Our Attitude in the Church Life

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:3-5, 7; Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:5-6; Acts 2:4; 10:44-45;
1 Cor. 12:13; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 26:19; 2 Cor. 4:1; Phil. 3:13; Rom. 12:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27;
1 John 3:14; Heb. 13:17

- I. Our entrance into the church—we are in the church by life and because of life; we are in the church because of the work of the Triune God, we can never leave the church, we were destined to be in the church—Eph. 1:3-5, 7:**
- A. The Father's choosing and predestinating of us to be sons is for the church; because the church is made up of the many sons of the Father, we who were chosen and predestinated are the constituents of the church—Eph. 1:3-5.
 - B. God must redeem us, forgive us, and cleanse us from our sins to prepare us to be building material for the church; He accomplished redemption, as a man, on the cross for all mankind, once and for all—v. 7.
 - C. We were regenerated unto a living hope through Christ's resurrection; as a result, the eternal life of God came into us to make us divinely human qualifying us to be the constituents of the church; furthermore, we were raised together and seated in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus and have the authority to carry out God's desire—to build up the church—Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:5-6.
 - D. The Triune God's final accomplishment was the outpouring of the Spirit to form the one Body—1 Cor. 12:13:
 - 1. The Spirit was first poured out on the day of Pentecost for the Jewish believers—Acts 2.
 - 2. The Spirit was then poured out in the house of Cornelius for the Gentile believers—Acts 10.
 - E. Our entrance into the church is by believing and being baptized after hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of our salvation; by believing, we receive the Spirit of reality, who brings us all the divine realities; by being baptized, we are put into the Spirit once and for all to remain in the Body—1 Cor. 12:13.
 - F. Our entrance into the church is eternal; it is according to the divine and uncreated life of God; there is no going out, whether by our choice, by somebody else's choice, or by God's choice.
 - G. If you see the vision of the church and the building up of the church, your spontaneous reaction will be to give up yourselves absolutely to Christ for the building up of the church; you realize that there is nothing else to do in the universe but to build up the church:
 - 1. We need to pray for the Lord's mercy to keep us obedient to the heavenly vision so that we will continue to be absolutely consecrated until the end—Acts 26:19.
 - 2. We should not lose heart because we have the New Testament ministry to encourage and supply us for the building up of the church—2 Cor. 4:1.
 - 3. We must focus our attention on the goal—Christ and the church; therefore, young brothers and sisters, set your whole heart, whole mind, and whole soul to love the Lord Jesus for the building up of His church—Phil. 3:13; 1 Cor. 11:1.

II. Our attitude in the church—having the proper attitude helps to build up the church—Eph. 4:12-16:

- A. We were saved as members of the Body of Christ; therefore, we must be conscious of the Body.
- B. All of us who were born of God and have been baptized into the one Body of Christ cannot help but love one another; we must take care of one another's feelings by living in the spirit—1 John 3:14.
- C. One who has seen the Body of Christ and who thus possesses the consciousness of the Body feels unbearable inside when he does anything which may cause division or separate God's children; this consciousness of life can deliver all of us from any taint of division.
- D. If we have Body consciousness we will comprehend immediately that the Body is one; the instant God's children see that the Body is one, they are delivered from their individual endeavor—Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12.
- E. Fellowship means realizing the total inadequacy of my own self; in fellowship I acknowledge my insufficiency and incompetency, and I also acknowledge my need of the Body—1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 12:14-22.
- F. Because we are members of the Body of Christ and members each in its part, we must seek how to help the Body in gaining life and strength.
- G. Whoever knows the life of the Body of Christ and is conscious of being a Body member will invariably sense the authority of the Head, who is Christ Jesus the Lord; and will recognize those whom God has set in the Body to represent the Head—Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2:19.
- H. Ambition is the source of all the problems in the church life, the source of ambition is Satan; the Lord humbled and emptied Himself to be a slave unto death, the mind of Christ should be in us so we will always serve as a slave in the church life to build up the church—Phil. 2:5.

FOCUS:

In this concluding lesson we need to impress the young people with their need to enter into the practical church life in their locality. In order for all these lessons to be worked out on the earth we need to give ourselves to the church in a practical and experiential way. That means we need to enter into the church life practically. We also have to maintain a proper and balanced attitude toward the church to remain in the church life for the long run.

REFERENCES:

1. The Vision and Building Up of the Church, chapters 20-21
2. The Body of Christ (Lee/LSM), pp. 19-24.
3. The One New Man (Lee/LSM), pp. 47-61.
4. Organism of the Triune God in the Organic Union of the Divine Trinity (Lee/LSM), pp. 39-45.
5. Life Study of Romans (Lee/LSM), pp. 295, 303-305, 320-325.

QUESTIONS:

1. Use the Bible to write a prophecy regarding our entrance into the church.

2. We have seen in this lesson that it is possible to be disobedient to the heavenly vision, but is it possible to leave the church? Explain.
3. What role did the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, have in our entrance into the Church?
4. How does the “consciousness of life” deliver us from division?
5. When you visit with the brothers and sisters can you discern the difference between fellowship and chit-chat? What is the difference? Can you quote from memory a verse from the Bible referring to fellowship? If so, quote it to the other students in the class.
6. What is the difference between “power struggle” and authority? What is the source of each?

MEMORY VERSES:

Eph. 1:4-5, 7

- 4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,
- 5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.
- 7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace.

Phil. 3:13

Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before.

Acts 26:18-19

- 18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- 19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Heb. 13:17

Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.