

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GOD'S BUILDING

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

Christ as the Food, Clothing, and Dwelling of the Priests

Scripture Reading: Heb. 10:5-10; John 6:57, 63;
Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:14; 1 Pet. 2:5a; Psa. 27:4

I. Christ is the food of the priests—John 6:57, 63; Jer. 15:16:

- A. Christ's replacing of all the Old Testament offerings, taking away all the Old Testament types and establishing Himself as everything to us, is God's great will—Heb. 10:5-10.
- B. We need to live a life according to God's heart and will by daily enjoying Christ as the reality of the offerings for our food to arrive at the divine goal of the Triune God, which is to bring us all into Himself that we may take Him as our dwelling place and allow Him to take us as His dwelling place for His universal, enlarged, divine-human incorporation—John 1:14, 29; 14:23; Rev. 21:3, 22:
 1. The sin offering signifies that Christ was made sin for us that through His death on the cross, sin might be condemned—Lev. 4:3; 6:26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; John 1:29; 3:14.
 2. The trespass offering signifies that Christ bore our sins in His own body and was judged by God on the cross to deal with our sinful deeds that we might be forgiven in our sinful conduct—Lev. 5:6; 7:6-7; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Isa. 53:5-6, 10-11; John 4:15-18.
 3. The burnt offering, which was *wholly for God's satisfaction as food for God*, typifies Christ as God's pleasure and satisfaction, as the One whose living on earth was absolutely for God; it is *God's food* that God may enjoy it and be satisfied—Lev. 1:3; Num. 28:2-3; John 7:16-18.
 4. The meal offering typifies Christ in His humanity and in His human living, which was proper, even, tender, fine, balanced, pure, and sinless—Lev. 2:1, 3-4; John 7:46; 18:38; 19:4, 6.
 5. The peace offering typifies Christ as the Peacemaker, the One who became the peace and the fellowship between God and us by shedding His blood and dying for us, enabling us to enjoy Christ with God and to have fellowship with God in Christ for our mutual satisfaction with God—Lev. 3:1; 7:14, 31-34; Eph. 2:14-15; John 12:1-3; 20:21; Rev. 21:2.
 6. The wave offering signifies the resurrected Christ in love—Lev. 7:30; 10:15.
 7. The heave offering typifies the powerful Christ in ascension and exaltation—7:32; Exo. 29:27; Eph. 1:21.
 8. The drink offering signifies Christ as the enjoyment of the offerer, enabling the offerer to be filled with Christ as the heavenly wine and even to become the wine offered to God for His enjoyment and satisfaction—Exo. 29:40; Num. 28:7-10; Isa. 53:12; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6; Judg. 9:13; Matt. 9:17.
 9. The bread of the Presence, the face-bread, signifies that God's presence,

God's face, is the feast of God's priests to be their serving supply for His building—Exo. 25:30; Lev. 24:9; cf. 1 Sam. 21:6.

II. Christ is the clothing of the priests—Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:14:

- A. Although we have been baptized into Christ and are already in Christ (6:3; Gal. 3:27), we must still put Him on; to put on Christ is to live by Christ (2:20) and to live out Christ (Phil. 1:21), thus magnifying Christ (v. 20).
- B. Putting on Christ is the same as putting on the weapons of light (Rom. 13:12), indicating that Christ is the weapons of light for the warfare between the Spirit and the lusts of the flesh (6:13; Gal. 5:17).
- C. In typology garments signify expression (cf. Isa. 64:6; Rev. 19:8); the priestly garments signify the serving priests' expression of Christ; according to the Bible, no one was clothed more beautifully than the priests.
- D. The priestly garments, being mainly for glory and for beauty, signify the expression of Christ's divine glory and human beauty—Exo. 28:2:
 1. Glory is related to Christ's divinity, His divine attributes (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3), and beauty, to Christ's humanity, His human virtues.
 2. Christ's divinity, typified by the gold of the priestly garments, is for glory, and His humanity, typified by the blue, purple, and scarlet strands and the fine linen (Exo. 28:5), is for beauty; a life that expresses Christ with the divine glory and human beauty sanctifies and qualifies us to be the priesthood (Phil. 1:20; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Gal. 6:17; cf. Acts 6:15).
- E. All the priests wore linen trousers, a tunic, a girding sash, and a turban (Exo. 28:39-42; 29:8-9a); in addition, over the tunic the high priest wore the robe, the ephod, the shoulder pieces, and the breastplate, and on the turban he wore an engraved plate (28:36-37; 29:5-6):
 1. The tunic of fine woven linen signifies the covering of Christ as our perfect righteousness in a humanity that has been dealt with (Rev. 19:8); the turban of fine linen signifies Christ as the glory of perfect righteousness and Christ as our boast (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:31); the girding sash as the work of an embroiderer signifies the strengthening by the Spirit's constituting work (Eph. 3:16); these three pieces of the priestly garments, with the linen trousers (Exo. 28:42), all signify Christ as righteousness to cover the entire fallen being of the priests (Luke 15:22; 1 Cor. 1:30) that they might be preserved in life and kept away from death (Exo. 28:43).
 2. The long robe, with all its adornments, worn by the high priest signifies the church as the fullness, the expression, of Christ's divine attributes and human virtues—Eph. 1:22-23.
 3. Within the tabernacle there is gold, and on the breastplate of the robe of the priest there are twelve stones with the names of the twelve tribes, indicating that the tribes (signifying the church) are transformed into precious stones, held by the gold, and built up together; on the shoulder pieces of the priest's robe were two onyx stones with the names of the twelve tribes—Exo. 28:9-12:
 - a. The priests have Christ as their sanctification, signified by the gold, and Christ as their transformation, signified by the precious stones.

- b. The priests have Christ as their glorification, signified by the shining of the stones, and Christ as their building up, signified by the twelve stones built together in the gold settings.
- 4. The ephod is a type of Christ expressed in His two natures, divinity and humanity, with His attributes and virtues; it was a part of the priestly garments used for fastening, or binding—vv. 4-6:
 - a. The two shoulder pieces with the two onyx stones (v. 9) and the breastplate with the twelve precious stones (v. 15) were bound, fastened, to the ephod (vv. 12-28).
 - b. This signifies that Christ holds, binds, and fastens the church to Himself by His divine glory and human beauty, the components of the ephod—2 Cor. 1:21.
 - c. The gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen were threads of different colors; thus, the ephod signifies the composition of Christ’s divinity (gold), His heavenliness (blue), His kingliness (purple), His redemption (scarlet), and His fine humanity for the expression of His divine glory and human beauty (linen).
 - d. The two onyx stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod became a memorial, a pleasant remembrance, before God; the church is fastened to Christ, and Christ holds the church in the presence of God as an eternal memorial—Exo. 28:12.
- 5. The holy crown on the turban (29:6) refers to the engraved gold plate, worn on the turban of the high priest, that says “HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH” (28:36):
 - a. To be holy is a matter of having the divine nature wrought into our being to make us holy, as God is—2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; cf. Rev. 21:2.
 - b. The engraving “HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH” indicates that the entire priesthood is sanctified unto the Lord, separated to the Lord, and saturated with the Lord.

III. Christ is the dwelling of the priests—Psa. 90:1; 91:1; 27:4; John 15:5; 14:23:

- A. The garments of the priests were composed of the same material as the tabernacle:
 - 1. The curtains, the veil, and the screen at the entrance of the tabernacle were made with blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine twined linen, and the priestly garments contained these materials as well—Exo. 26:1, 5-6, 31, 36; 28:8.
 - 2. The tabernacle had many items made of gold, and the priestly garments were made with gold thread and gold settings for the precious stones—vv. 6, 11, 13, 20; 39:3.
 - 3. Thus, in principle, the materials of the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, were worn by the priests; this simply means that what the priests wore was their abiding place; their clothing was their housing—cf. 2 Cor. 5:1-4.
 - 4. In the Old Testament the priests’ clothing was the same as the tabernacle, and in the New Testament both Christ and the church as the tabernacle, the house of God (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:15-16), are the place where the priests dwell.

5. The new man is the Body of Christ, and to put on the new man means to put on Christ as the Body, which is to be clothed with the Body; in other words, we must “wear” the Body; the Body is our clothing and our covering—Eph. 4:22-24; 2:15-16.
- B. “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood”—1 Pet. 2:5a:
1. The holy priesthood, the corporate body of priests, is a spiritual house; when we are filled and saturated with Christ, expressing Him in an accurate and full way, we will become God’s dwelling place, the tabernacle, in reality.
 2. We must have the expression of gold, fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet; when we express Christ in such an adequate way, we have put on the new man; we are clothed with the Body of Christ.
 3. When we are filled with Christ and express all that He is in a proper way, the new man becomes our clothing, and this clothing is our housing, the reality of the tabernacle, which is the reality of the Body of Christ.
 4. In the New Testament God’s spiritual house, His dwelling place, the church, is the built-up priests; when we are filled with Christ and express Him, we become the church in reality; then we, together with God, have a place to rest, to dwell, and to abide—cf. Psa. 132:8, 13-18; Isa. 66:1-2.
 5. Every moment we must be found enjoying Christ so that an expression of Him may emanate from within us; Christ expressed from within us all is the church, the holy priesthood as God’s spiritual house, the mutual dwelling place of God and man—Psa. 90:1; 91:1; John 15:5; 14:23; Eph. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 21:3, 22.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

CHRIST AS THE FOOD, CLOTHING, AND DWELLING OF THE PRIESTS

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

EXPRESSION THROUGH ENJOYMENT

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

Second, we have seen that the Christ whom we have taken in becomes our manifestation. This is our clothing. The food we take in is the inner supply, and the clothing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the impression that we always have the realization that we are sinful, defiled, and dirty. We always need the cleansing of the blood and must give others the sense that we live by the blood. We can never enjoy Christ as our life without applying the blood to cleanse us and to cover us.

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

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

BUILDING THROUGH EXPRESSION

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

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

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

How do we consider ourselves? Do we consider ourselves to be a proper dwelling

place of God—a spiritual house? As we have mentioned, the tabernacle is an expression of gold, fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. If we say that we are God’s dwelling place, God’s tabernacle, do we express the gold? Do we have the purity? Do we express the blue, the purple, and the scarlet? If not, then what do we express? Is it something natural? Is it something of the flesh? If we express something natural, something of the flesh, we are not a suitable tabernacle of God. We must only have the expression of gold, pure linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. Then we are qualified to be God’s spiritual house—the tabernacle. When we express Christ in such an adequate way, we have put on the new man. That is, we have put on the church; we are clothed with the Body of Christ.

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

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

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

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

This is not doctrinal. To argue doctrine means nothing and brings us nowhere. We must check the reality. Do we really sense that we have a spiritual home all the time? Do we always have this sense? Praise the Lord, I have a spiritual home, and that home is the genuine church life of which I am a part. The new man becomes my clothing, and this clothing is my housing. When I wear this new man, I am just at home. Here I have rest, here I can dwell, and here I can abide. My whole life is

now at home. Where are you? Are you at home? Do you have a spiritual home? I can say that for so many years I have been enjoying the home life, and this home is the genuine church life. But whenever I express something of the self, something of the soul, or something of the flesh, immediately I am outside the church life. I just become homeless.

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the enjoyment of Christ is very basic. We all must learn how to enjoy Christ. This is why we have been stressing again and again that the church life does not merely come out of teachings or gifts. Regardless of how many teachings we learn or how many gifts we have, merely by these we cannot have a genuine church life. The real church life only comes out of the true enjoyment of Christ within. We must enjoy Him at all times in all things. We must not take this as a doctrine, but

as a daily practice. All day we must feed on the Lord and take Him as our nourishment. Out of this enjoyment we will have the “garment” as the expression of Christ. It is in this expression that there is the building up of the saints who are set into the divine nature. This is the only way for the building of the church.

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

Every moment we must be found enjoying Christ so that an expression of Him might emanate from within us. Then, in this expression, we will have the building up of the Body, and in this building of the church we will have the revelation of the Urim and the Thummim to tell us the right way to go on with the Lord. This is the light and the perfection. The enlightenment and the completeness come out of this building up of the saints who are transformed into the Lord’s image and set into the divine nature. May the Lord bring us into such a priesthood. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1966*, vol. 1, “The Priesthood,” pp. 504-511)