

Message Five

**The Tabernacle and the Priesthood**

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:8; 27:20—28:2;  
1 Pet. 2:5, 9

**I. Life and building are the basic and central revelation of the Bible:**

- A. Life is for building, the corporate expression of the Triune God, and the building is of life—John 11:25; 14:2; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9:
  - 1. Life is the content, and building is the corporate expression of the content.
  - 2. Life is God Himself, and building is the expression of the Triune God as life in a corporate organic entity—Matt. 16:18; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5.
- B. Life is the Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit dispensing Himself into us for our enjoyment, and building is the church, the Body of Christ, God's spiritual house, as the enlargement and expansion of God for the corporate expression of God—Gen. 2:8-9, 22; Matt. 16:18; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16.
- C. The Gospel of John reveals that the Triune God is dispensing Himself as life into His believers and that the believers, as the result of this dispensing, become the building of God, His expansion, enlargement, and corporate expression—1:4; 10:10b; 11:25; 14:2-3, 6.
- D. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of life and building for us to be built up to be the church as the house of God and the Body of Christ—Eph. 2:21-22; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 12:12, 27; Col. 3:4, 15; 2:19.
- E. The central vision of the Bible—the building of the house of God—can be considered the highlight of the Bible and also the essence extracted from the Bible—Exo. 25:8; 40:17-35; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 21:2-3.

**II. In the sequence of the divine record in Exodus, the priesthood follows the tabernacle—27:20—28:2:**

- A. Exodus 27:20-21 reveals that immediately after the tabernacle came into existence, there was the need of the priesthood for the lighting of the lamps; this indicates that, spiritually speaking, the priesthood and the tabernacle are one entity.

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- B. In typology the priesthood and the tabernacle as one entity signify the church composed of God's redeemed people as a spiritual house and a priesthood—25:8; 28:1.
- C. Through the pictures in the book of Exodus, God reveals that His redeemed people are both the tabernacle and the priesthood; with the fulfillment of the types in the New Testament, the tabernacle and the priesthood are put together—1 Pet. 2:5:
  - 1. In the Old Testament the house and the priesthood were separated, but in the New Testament the spiritual house is the priesthood, and the priesthood is the spiritual house—1 Pet. 2:5.
  - 2. We cannot have the priesthood without the tabernacle, and we cannot have the tabernacle without the priesthood.
  - 3. If we are not a spiritual house, we cannot be the priesthood; likewise, if we are not the priesthood, we cannot be a spiritual house.
  - 4. The twofold function of the church—that of the dwelling place and that of the priesthood—is typified by the tabernacle and the priesthood—Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

**III. The fact that the tabernacle is mentioned before the priesthood in Exodus emphasizes the need of the believers to be built up to be God's dwelling place so that they may serve Him as a corporate, coordinated priesthood—25:8; 26:1-30; 27:20—28:2:**

- A. The priesthood is a body of priests who are built together to live and serve as one entity—1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10.
- B. Apart from the building it is impossible to have the priesthood—Exo. 25:8; 28:1-2:
  - 1. The priests are not individualistic believers but a corporate body; the priesthood is composed of priests who have been built together—Rom. 12:5, 7.
  - 2. The service of the priesthood is a body service in coordination; this corporate service is what the Lord is seeking today—Exo. 19:6; Rev. 1:6.
  - 3. Without the building the priesthood will collapse; we cannot have the priesthood without the building.

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES

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- C. The priestly service is a work of being built up and of building—1 Pet. 2:5, 9:
1. One aspect of our work is to be built up, and another aspect is to build—Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; 14:26.
  2. We are building by being built up; this is to genuinely serve God as priests.
  3. To serve God as priests is to build the dwelling place of God, which is also to be built up.
  4. We cannot separate the priestly service from the building; we are proper priests carrying out the genuine building work only when we are built up.
  5. Being built up into a spiritual house is the basic condition for service; we cannot serve if we are not built up—Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:5.
  6. When we are built up into a priesthood, we can have work that is acceptable to God—v. 9.
  7. This is a tremendous light that we need to see: our priesthood must be the building and for the building.
- D. Since the priesthood equals the house, and the house depends on the building, the priesthood also requires the building up of the saints—vv. 5, 9:
1. The sequence of house and priesthood in 1 Peter 2:5 is based upon the sequence in Exodus.
  2. Because of the need for building up, the church must be the house of God before it can be the priesthood—Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
  3. Building involves coordination; only when we are built into and coordinated into the building do we have the ground to serve the Lord.
  4. Our unique need is to be built up—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:16:
    - a. The emphasis in the Bible is not on how to be holy or spiritual; instead, the emphasis is on God's building—2:21-22.
    - b. True spirituality is a matter of the building; without the building, the spiritual house, there is no sanctification, spirituality, or spiritual power.
    - c. The only way to be holy, spiritual, or powerful is to be built into God's building.

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- d. If we want to be protected, we need to be built into God's building; our protection is not our spirituality—it is God's building—Matt. 16:18.
- e. The shortcomings in the lives of even the most spiritual Christians are due to the lack of building up—Eph. 4:16.

**IV. God's unique goal is the building—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16:**

- A. God's goal has always been the building—Exo. 25:8; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22.
- B. For eternity God wants the New Jerusalem; today He wants the church—Rev. 21:2-3; Matt. 16:18.
- C. If we do not allow the Lord to have the building among us, we will be a failure as far as God's purpose is concerned—2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 3:11:
  - 1. The reason the situation among God's people is disappointing and discouraging is the lack of building.
  - 2. The Lord has not yet been able to gain His goal of the building—Matt. 16:18.
  - 3. If we are off from God's goal, we will not be able to do anything for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—7:21-23; Eph. 1:9; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9.
- D. God wants those who can dwell in oneness with His people, who can be coordinated into one entity, and who become His dwelling place—Psa. 133.
- E. We all need to see that the goal of the Lord's recovery is to recover Christ as life and everything to us so that we may be transformed and built up—Col. 3:4, 10-11; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:21-22:
  - 1. When we are built up together, God will have the building—Matt. 16:18; Rev. 21:2-3, 10-11.
  - 2. This building is the priesthood—1 Pet. 2:5, 9.