



LESSON FIVE

God's Desire to Build Himself into Us and to Build Us into Him to Produce a Mutual Abode

Scripture Reading:

2 Samuel 7:12-14a

7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

7:13 It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

7:14 I will be his Father, and he will be My son.

Isaiah 11:1

11:1 Then a sprout will come forth from the stump of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

Ephesians 3:17

3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

John 14:23

14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

1 Corinthians 3:10-12

3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation, and another builds upon [it.] But let each man take heed how he builds upon [it.]

3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

Revelation 21:2-3, 9, 12-14

21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

21:3 And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them [and be] their God.

21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

21:12 It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel:

21:13 On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. How can we tell that the divine relation is progressive in the Bible? Please illustrate it with some examples.
2. What is the 'highest standard' in the New Testament regarding the divine revelation?

Section 2:

1. What do we need to realize from Job's lesson regarding God's building Himself into us?
2. What is the result of God building Himself into man and man into Him?

Section 3:

1. What did God reveal to Job?
2. How do we see that the good land and the seed in God's promise to Abraham both signify Christ?
3. How is the prophecy in typology in 2 Samuel 7 related to the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1?

Section 4:

1. What is the particular work that Christ is doing today?
2. How do we see the matter of building in the New Testament?
3. What is the light that the Lord has shown us from 2 Samuel 7?

THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE BEING PROGRESSIVE

Man in Creation and in the Fall

The divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. At the very beginning, in Genesis, God created man with a good nature. This means that there was nothing sinful or evil in the man created by God. When God looked at what He had created, including man, He saw that it was “very good” (1:31). At the beginning of man’s history, God put man into a pleasant garden in front of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling him that in the day that he ate thereof he would die (2:17). This indicates that God wanted man to partake of the tree of life. However, man fell. The conscience was activated, and fallen man thus feared God and worshipped Him, realizing that he should do good and abandon evil.

Eventually, Abel received the revelation of God’s redemption. Redemption did not come at Abel’s time. Rather, it was anticipated in God’s foreknowledge, and this anticipated redemption was revealed to Abel. Later, a little more of the divine revelation was given to Enoch and to Noah.

The Case of Job

During the time from Adam to Job, the divine revelation was somewhat ambiguous. Job was a person who feared God, who worshipped God, and who endeavored to build himself up to the uttermost in his integrity, uprightness, and perfection. Job tried his best to practice his integrity. However, God stripped Job of everything to show him that his need was not integrity nor perfection nor the highest standard of morality; his only need was God Himself. God seemed to be saying, “Job, I do not want you to build yourself up in your integrity or perfection. I want you to build yourself up with Me. You should not be a man of integrity or perfection—you should be a man of God. Job, you need to realize that what you lack is Me. You do not need perfection or integrity—you need Me.”

At the time of Job, the divine revelation had not proceeded very far. What had been revealed was mainly that man needed God, that man had been created by God and for God, and that he needed to receive God as life. A man should be solely, wholly, and absolutely a man of God. Thus far, nothing had been revealed concerning God’s building. If we stop with the book of Job, we may think that it is sufficient for us to have God. However, to have God is not adequate, for, as we will see, God wants a building.

The Revelation Given to Abraham

After God gained Abraham, He gave him the promise of the good land and of a descendant to enjoy the land. Isaac, one who enjoyed the good land, was a type of Christ. The good land itself also was a type of Christ. The rich produce of the good land (Deut. 8:7-10) signifies Christ as our life supply. This life supply eventually becomes the life-giving Spirit, who is the reality of Christ. The blessing of the gospel that God promised to Abraham is actually Christ in reality as the Spirit (Gal. 3:14).

The Revelation Given to David

With David the revelation went further to show that man not only needs God but needs God to be built into him. God wants not only to be our life and our life supply; He wants to be built into us. God desires to build Himself into us and to build us into Him.

David wanted to build a house for God, but God stopped him and told him that He would build a house, a family, for David, and out of that building He would give him a seed. Here we see that God builds Himself into man to produce a house, and the issue of this building is a seed, which is Christ. After this Christ enters into us, He does a building work in us, making His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). Christ builds His home in our hearts with the elements of divinity and humanity.

This home is a mutual abode. In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me,...My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.” To “make an abode” is to build a house. This house, this abode, is for mutual abiding. Hence, the Lord Jesus went on to say, “Abide in Me and I in you” (15:4a).

In the New Testament the Divine Revelation Reaching the Highest Standard

In the New Testament the divine revelation reached the highest standard. This revelation includes the goal that had been revealed to David in 2 Samuel 7.

God wants a building, and the consummate issue of the Bible is a building. This building is the New Jerusalem as a wife, a counterpart, to match Christ (Rev. 21:2, 9). The New Jerusalem as the corporate wife of Christ is composed of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament believers (vv. 12-14), who have been built together with the Triune God. This building will become the wife of the Lamb, Christ, and will be a mutual abode for God and His redeemed (vv. 3, 22).

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OUR NEED FOR CHRIST, THE EMBODIMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD, TO BE BUILT INTO OUR BEING

We have pointed out that Job was mistaken in seeking to build up his integrity and perfection. Eventually, Job learned that what he needed was God. With Job, however, we cannot see the building. We need to realize, therefore, that it is not adequate simply to take God as our life and life supply. We today may say that Christ is everything to us: our life, our breath, our food and drink, our clothing, and our abode. Yet even to have Christ in all these aspects still is not adequate. We need Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, to be built into our being, to be constituted into us. This is what Christ is doing today.

Philippians 3:7-11 speaks of pursuing Christ and gaining Christ. When I was a youth, I heard that we should pursue Christ and gain Him. Later I discovered that it is not adequate even to pursue and gain Christ. We need the Christ who is dwelling in our spirit to build Himself into our heart, making our heart, with our humanity, His home.

Are you pursuing Christ? Are you gaining Christ? It is wonderful to be a person who is pursuing and gaining Christ, but this is not adequate. John 14 and Ephesians 3 both reveal that Christ comes into us not just to dwell, or abide, in us but especially for the purpose of

making a home for Himself in our inner being. This is building.

GOD'S ECONOMY AND GOAL ACCORDING TO HIS HEART'S DESIRE BEING TO BUILD HIMSELF INTO MAN AND TO BUILD MAN INTO HIM

Genesis 2 reveals the tree of life with a river and precious materials of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. These materials are for building, for after this, God built a woman, Eve. This corresponds to the entire Bible. Christ came into us as the Spirit to be life to us. On the one hand, He is working within us to transform us into precious stones; on the other hand, He is building with Himself (divinity) and with us (humanity) to produce a home, a dwelling place. Eventually, this dwelling place, which is a mutual abode, will issue in the New Jerusalem.

This view of God's building in the Bible indicates that God's economy and goal according to His heart's desire are just to build Himself into man and to build man into Him. We have seen that Athanasius said, "He [Christ] was made man that we might be made God." This means that as God's children, we are "baby gods," having the life and nature of God but not the Godhead. However, not even this is God's goal. God in Christ is within us to build Himself into our being and to build us into His being. He builds His divinity into our humanity and builds our humanity into His divinity in order to mingle and blend His divinity with our humanity into one entity. This is like the meal offering: fine flour mingled with oil for the satisfaction of both God and man.

THE MINGLING OF DIVINITY AND HUMANITY TO PRODUCE ONE ENTITY

At the time of David, the divine revelation reached the point where God showed David what He wanted. God revealed to David that He could not be satisfied simply to have a man who was according to His heart. Rather, God indicated to David that He wants to build Himself into the man who is according to His heart and to make this man His building as His house. Then out from this house would issue a seed of humanity, yet this seed would become the Son of God. This involves the mingling of divinity with humanity, a mingling that eventually produces the church, the house of God.

In this mingling God and man, man and God, are blended together into one entity. This entity is God's building, which is a mutual abode for God and man. This entity, possessing both the divine nature and the human nature, also is the wife of the redeeming Christ. This entity, the New Jerusalem, will remain forever and will be the centrality and universality of the new heaven and new earth. This is the entire and complete revelation of the Bible.

The Bible begins with the tree of life, the flowing river, the precious materials of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone, and a builded wife. At the end of the Bible, we see again the tree of life with the flow of the living water, three kinds of material—gold, pearls, and precious stones—and a builded wife, the New Jerusalem. The beginning of the Bible shows God's goal, and the end shows God's achievement and attainment. This is God's goal, and both God and we are heading toward it. With this revelation as our "road map," we can know where we are and where we will be for eternity.

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JOB'S NEED BEING GOD HIMSELF

Although there is no time element with God, nevertheless He has, in the course of time, gradually, bit by bit, released His revelation to man. For instance, He revealed something to Job that He had not revealed to Adam, Abel, Enosh, or Noah. God revealed to Job that what He wants is a man who has God, not a man of uprightness, integrity, and perfection. God seemed to be saying, "Job, you should forget about your integrity, your perfection, and your uprightness. You do not need these things—you need Me." God revealed to Job that his unique need was God Himself, but He did not reveal to him anything concerning building.

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM CONCERNING THE GOOD LAND AND THE SEED

When God appeared to Abraham, He promised to give him two things—the good land and a seed. The good land and the seed both typify Christ. This indicates that, in typology, God would give Abraham Christ as the good land and also give him Christ as the seed, the real Isaac. The genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 speaks of Christ as "the son of Abraham" (v. 1). Isaac is a

type of Christ as the son of Abraham, the One who inherits the promise and blessing God gave to Abraham (Gen. 22:17-18; Gal. 3:16).

According to Paul's interpretation in Galatians 3, both the good land and the seed are the Spirit. The blessing of the gospel is the promised Spirit (vv. 8, 14). The land signifies Christ, the seed signifies Christ (v. 16), and eventually Christ became the life-giving Spirit. Thus, in verse 14 Paul says, "In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The physical aspect of the blessing that God promised to Abraham was the good land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; 26:3-4), which was a type of the all-inclusive Christ. Since Christ is eventually realized as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), the blessing of the promised Spirit corresponds to the blessing of the land promised to Abraham.

When we believe in Christ, God gives us His Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the reality of the resurrected Christ, the very Christ in resurrection. The Spirit is the good land, and the Spirit is also the seed.

REDEMPTION AND SALVATION BEING FOR GOD'S DESIRE TO WORK HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US

According to the common understanding and view among Christians, God gave Christ to be our Redeemer and our Savior. He died for our sins, accomplishing redemption; He rose up from among the dead; and He has become our life. However, this does not tell us what God wants to do. God wants to work Himself in Christ into us. Redemption and salvation are for this. Christ's incarnation, Christ's human living, Christ's death and resurrection—they all are for God's desire to work Himself in Christ into us. Everything that Christ is and everything that Christ has accomplished are for this one thing. All the steps, big and small, that God takes in our daily life are to fulfill His intention of building Himself in Christ into our being.

THE PROPHECY THAT GOD WOULD BUILD A HOUSE FOR THE MAN WHO WAS ACCORDING TO HIS HEART

In 2 Samuel 7:2 David, a man according to God's heart, said, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains." This

indicates that David felt that he should do something for God, that he should build a house for God. God reacted by saying to David through Nathan the prophet, “Is it you who will build Me a house for Me to dwell in?” (v. 5). God went on to reveal to David, through a prophecy in typology, that His intention was not that David would build a house for Him but that He would build Himself into David. First, God told David that He would make him a house (v. 11b). Then He said, “I will raise up your seed after you...and I will establish his kingdom. It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he will be My son” (vv. 12-14a). Here God revealed to David something concerning building, a matter that had not been revealed to either Job or Abraham.

The prophecy in typology in 2 Samuel 7 is related to the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1, which tells us that a twig will come forth from the stem of Jesse and that a branch from his roots will bear fruit. This refers to Christ. The house of David, which was a flourishing tree at Solomon’s time, eventually was reduced to a stump consisting mainly of Joseph and Mary. Out of that stump the child Jesus came forth as a twig, a sprout. That was God’s building a house for David, and through this house God gave David a seed—Jesus Christ. Thus, the prophecy given to David in the way of typology was fulfilled in Christ’s incarnation and human living. Christ is the seed that is the issue of God’s building a house for David.

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CHRIST’S SOWING HIMSELF AS THE SEED INTO US AS THE SOIL FOR GOD’S BUILDING

Matthew 13 reveals that Christ has sown Himself as the seed into us as the soil. Christ is the seed, and we are the soil with the nutrients for the growth of the seed. Christ in resurrection, Christ as the life-giving Spirit, has sown Himself into us not simply to stay in us but to grow in us. The growth of Christ in us equals the building.

The Christ who has sown Himself into us is now doing a particular work in us—the work of making His home in our inner being, in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). This is building, and it is carried out through the mingling of divinity with humanity. Such a building is mentioned in John

14:23: “If anyone loves Me,...My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.” This abode is not only for the Triune God but is also for us. Hence, it is a mutual abode.

This thought regarding the building is strengthened in 1 Corinthians and in Revelation. In 1 Corinthians 3:10 Paul says, “According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation [Christ], and another builds upon it. But let each man take heed how he builds upon it.” Then he goes on to speak of building “upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble” (v. 12). Revelation 3:12 tells us that Christ will make the overcomer a pillar in the temple of God, which is the New Jerusalem. Eventually, the New Jerusalem, the consummation of the building, a composition of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament believers (21:12-14), will be the wife of the Lamb, Christ, and a mutual abode for God and His redeemed for eternity (vv. 2-3, 9).

GOD’S BUILDING—THE MINGLING OF DIVINITY WITH OUR REDEEMED, RESURRECTED, AND UPLIFTED HUMANITY

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus declared, “I will build My church.” How does Christ build His church? He builds the church not merely by saving sinners and making them believers and members of Himself but by building Himself into them. When we believed in Christ, He came into us and began the work of gradually building Himself into our being.

In the Bible there is the line concerning God’s building Himself in Christ into us. This matter of building is therefore mentioned strongly and repeatedly in the New Testament. According to the divine revelation in the Bible, God is building by working Himself in Christ into our being. This involves the mingling of divinity with our redeemed, resurrected, and uplifted humanity.

God is working Himself in Christ into us to make a house not only for us but to us. This house will be both God’s house and our house, a mutual abode. Eventually, the Triune God and redeemed humanity will be mingled, blended, and built up to be one entity, and this entity will be the New Jerusalem. If we see this, we will realize that all

our problems today are due to one thing—our shortage of having God in Christ built into our being. Thus, our need today is not merely to be holy, spiritual, and overcoming. Our need is for God to carry out His building work within us.

A SEED OF MAN BECOMING THE SON OF GOD

What a great light the Lord has shown us from 2 Samuel 7! God revealed to David that his seed, a seed of man (v. 12), would become the Son of God (v. 14). How can this be? The answer is that a human seed is designated the Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4). Humanity is designated in divinity, and divinity and humanity are blended as one. Today, we, seeds of humanity, are becoming sons of God in divinity through the process of God's building. We praise the Lord that in His recovery on the earth today, we are undergoing the work of God's building. God is fulfilling His desire to build Himself in Christ into our being, and eventually the outcome of this building will be the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity.