

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

A
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OF LIFE
AND
BUILDING

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LIFE AND BUILDING

In this booklet we will consider the revelation of John's Gospel, but first we need to have an overview of the Bible as a whole. The Bible covers two main matters—Christ and the church. However, considered from another angle, the Bible is a book of life and building. Christ is life, and the church is a building. When we speak of Christ and the church, we must realize that Christ is life and that the church is a building. If you fail to realize that Christ is life and that the church is a building, when you say these words, they will simply be doctrinal terms. What is Christ? Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). What is the church? The church is God's building.

IN GENESIS

The Bible is very consistent. If you read it with insight and with the heavenly vision, you will discover that it begins with life and building. We see life and building in Genesis 2. Immediately after the creation of man, life was introduced. After the Lord God created man, He placed him in a garden in front of the tree of life (vv. 7-9). Following

this mention of the tree of life, we see the flowing river and three precious materials: gold, bdellium, a pearl-like material, and onyx, a precious stone. According to the further revelation of the Scriptures, especially Revelation 21, these precious materials are for God's building. In Genesis 2:22 we find specific mention of the building: "Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man." God took a rib out of Adam's side and used it to build him a wife. Thus, the man was created, but the woman was builded. In Genesis 2 we see life, the materials that proceed out of the flow of life, and the building of a wife. Therefore, in Genesis 2 we have life and building.

IN REVELATION

The book of Revelation also speaks of life. Revelation 2:7 says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." This certainly is a reference to the tree of life in Genesis 2. Revelation 2:17 says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone." This verse speaks of a stone that, according to the Bible, has no purpose other than that of building. In the last two chapters of Revelation, which are the last two chapters of the Bible, we see the building of the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem the river of life flows and the tree of life grows in the waters of the river (22:1-2). Thus, it is

clear that the Bible ends as it begins, with life and building.

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Between Genesis and Revelation, the two ends of the Bible, there is a wide gap, a broad span. What bridges this gap? The bridge is the Gospel of John. The book of John opens with the words in the beginning. However, if you read this Gospel carefully, you will discover that the history recorded in it has no end. Hence, it starts from the beginning in eternity past, and it continues indefinitely into the future. Thus, it bridges the span between Genesis and Revelation.

We have seen that the Bible begins and ends with life and building. The Gospel of John, the bridge between the two ends of the Bible, also is a book of life and building. A few words from the first chapter of this Gospel will convince us of this fact. “In the beginning was the Word...In Him was life” (vv. 1, 4). The Gospel of John does not say, “In the beginning was doctrine, and in it was knowledge.” No, it says that in the beginning was the Word, that the Word was God, and that in this One, the Word who was God, was life. Therefore, we find life in the first chapter of John. Furthermore, verse 42 of the same chapter speaks of a stone. When Simon was brought to the Lord by his brother Andrew, He gave him a new name, Cephas, which means “a stone.” In the same chapter we are told that in the Lord was life and that

one of His disciples became a stone. What is the meaning of this? It means that life not only quickens, enlivens, and regenerates but also transforms. Life will transform the believer into a piece of stone.

The purpose and use of the piece of stone are revealed in verse 51. Speaking to Nathanael, the Lord said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” The ancient Jews knew the meaning of this word. It was the fulfillment of Jacob’s dream recorded in Genesis 28:10-22. In that dream Jacob saw a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reached to heaven and on which the angels of God ascended and descended (v. 12). Jacob called the name of the place at which he had the dream Bethel (v. 19), which means “the house of God.” During the night Jacob slept, using a piece of stone as a pillow. Early the next morning he awoke, set up the stone as a pillar, and poured oil upon the stone, calling the name of that place Bethel. The Lord Jesus was referring to Jacob’s dream as He spoke to Nathanael. Therefore, in the light of all these verses from John 1, we can see that this gospel is concerned with life and building.

LIFE

The Gospel of John also reveals that Christ came that man may have life (10:10b) and that He Himself is life (11:25; 14:6). Furthermore, this

Gospel shows us that Christ is the bread of life (6:35), that He has the water of life (4:14), that He gives life to man (5:21), and that He even lives in man as life (14:19).

BUILDING

Other verses from the Gospel of John also unfold the building. In 1:14 we see that Christ in the flesh was the tabernacle for God's habitation among men on earth: "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." Also, Christ's body was the temple before His death and after His resurrection (2:19-22). Before His death His body in the flesh was the temple, and after His resurrection His resurrected body remained the temple of God. This is the building.

We have seen that Genesis 2:22 speaks of the building of a wife, a bride for Adam. John also mentions the bride: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom" (3:29). Who is the bride? According to John 3, all the regenerated ones composed together become the bride.

Furthermore, this Gospel reveals that the believers are to be built as the abode of the Triune God. This is adequately and fully disclosed in John 14. John 14:2 says, "In My Father's house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." This verse tells us that the Lord was going to prepare a place of many abodes in the house of the Father. And if we love the Lord, He will come with the Father

and make an abode with us (v. 23). This denotes the building of God's eternal habitation, a building which has many abodes. Thus, as the Lord's last prayer found in John 17 indicates, all His believers must be built up into one (vv. 11, 21-23). The Gospel of John is altogether a Gospel on life and building. If you want to know the meaning of the Bible, you cannot stay away from the Gospel of John. The key to the whole Bible is in this book.

LIFE— CHRIST DISPENSED

We have seen that Christ is life and that the church is a building. But what is life? It is correct to say that life is Christ and that Christ is life. However, we must realize that life is Christ as God dispensed into our being. Although many Christians talk about Christ being life, not all have the experience of Christ as life. The genuine experience of Christ as life is in the realization that Christ is God Himself dispensed into our being. This is life. If you lack this realization, the word life may remain a mere term as far as you are concerned. Life is the Triune God dispensed and wrought into our being.

Although I do not drink alcoholic beverages, we may use the illustration of drinking a glass of wine. If I were to drink a tall glass of wine, after a short period of time my complexion would become colorful because of the effect of the wine

upon my system. I would be bold, happy, and blissful. That would be the result of wine becoming life to me. However, if I only learn the meaning of the word wine, discussing it night and day and acquiring a great deal of knowledge about it, I would experience nothing. The wine would be unrelated to me. On the contrary, if you forget about discussing the wine and drink a large glass of it each day, you will know what wine is, for it will be dispensed into you, making you happy and ecstatic. Although this example may be poor, it is nevertheless very illustrative.

Do not talk about life without the realization of life. What is the realization of life? It is the living Triune God being wrought into us. The Lord Jesus never told us to talk about life. He said that He is the bread of life and that we have to eat Him (6:48, 57). He also told us that He gives the living water and that we must drink it (4:10, 14). When you eat the bread, it will be wrought into you, and when you drink the water, it will be dispensed into you. No longer will you have only bread and water; you will have life. You will have Christ as the Triune God dispensed and wrought into your being. Do not put some artificial coloring on your face, but simply drink the heavenly wine, and you will have a colorful complexion. Do not pretend to be joyful when inwardly you are filled with sorrow. If you realize that the Triune God has been dispensed into you, you will be happy and your joy will be full. This is life.

BUILDING— THE ENLARGEMENT OF GOD

What is building? Many of you are familiar with the term building. Numerous times young people have told me, "O brother, in our single brothers' house we have very little building." Occasionally, I ask them what they mean by this, and they say, "We are all so independent. We lack the building among us." Thus, I ask you, what does building mean? Perhaps no one reading this booklet can give an adequate definition. According to your understanding, what does the word building mean? Some may find it easy to give a doctrinal answer, perhaps quoting a phrase from Ephesians or another biblical book, but it is difficult to answer in a practical way.

Building is actually the enlargement of God. Building is the enlargement of God to express God in a corporate way. We have seen that life is God Himself wrought into our being. If the Tri-une God has truly been wrought into us, the issue will be an enlargement and an expansion of God. As I have mentioned earlier in this booklet, God did not create a couple; He created only a man. The wife came out of the husband, becoming the enlargement of her husband. That was building. Eve, as the wife of Adam, was God's building, and that building was the enlargement of Adam. Adam was a figure and type of God becoming a man, and Eve was a figure and type of God's building. Since this building was a part of Adam, it was undoubtedly his enlargement and expansion.

We need to read the Bible carefully. In Genesis 1 God was alone. At the end of the book of Revelation, God is in the center of the holy city, New Jerusalem, which is His enlargement. In the beginning we find God Himself without any expansion or enlargement. However, throughout the ages and generations God has been working Himself into His chosen people. Eventually, we all will become His building, a building which is the enlargement of God Himself. Hence, this building will become God's expansion, and this expansion will express God in a corporate way. This is God's building. Building is not simply that I depend on you, that you depend on me, and that the brothers and sisters depend on one another. That is not an adequate understanding of building. The proper building is the enlargement of God, the expansion of the Triune God, enabling God to express Himself in a corporate way. This is exactly the revelation of the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John reveals that the Triune God is dispensing Himself into His believers and that all His believers, as a result of the transfusion and infusion of the Triune God into them, become His enlargement. This enlargement of the Triune God is the expansion, the building, and the expression of God. This is the revelation of the Gospel of John. Thus, when we speak of the building of God, we mean that the Triune God as life is being wrought into us continually and that under His transfusion and infusion we are becoming His one expression. This

expression is His enlargement and expansion. May this thought be written on our heart.

This booklet is compiled from *Life-study of John*
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