

THE FATNESS OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

GOD'S INTENTION FOR MAN TO ENJOY HIM AS FOOD

From the time that man was created, God presented Himself to man as the tree of life in the form of food. When we partake of food, that food becomes a part of us. This is the very intention God has toward us, that we may take Him as food so that we can be mingled with Him to express Him in this universe. The first mentioning of something in the Scriptures is always a governing principle, a principle which governs all the Lord's dealings with us. The basic principle of the Lord's dealings with His people is that they would enjoy Him as their food, their life supply.

The Gospel of John tells us that one day this very God, who in the beginning presented Himself to man as food, was incarnated as a man. God in the form of a man presented Himself to man again as food, as the heavenly bread of life (6:35, 57), that man might partake of Him. In Genesis 2, at the beginning, God presented Himself as the tree of life to man in the form of food. In John 6, after His incarnation, He did the same thing. He presented Himself as the bread of life to man that man might partake of Him. In John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me."

Before man partook of the tree of life, Satan came in, causing man to fall. After the fall, God still presented Himself to man, not as the plant life but as the animal life. This is because after the fall the shedding of blood is needed. After the fall we need redemption, so in Genesis 3 a lamb was prepared and provided by God for His fallen people (v. 21). Exodus 12 shows us that with this redeeming lamb there is still the enjoyment of eating. The shed blood of the lamb is for redemption, but the meat of this lamb is for the redeemed ones to feed on (vv. 8-9). The lamb brings us back to the tree of life. If man had not fallen, the plant life would have been good enough for him to enjoy. But after the fall, man needs not only the plant life, which is the nourishing, generating life, but also the animal life, which is the redeeming life. The animal life involves the shedding of blood for redemption, which can bring us back to the enjoyment of the nourishing and generating life.

John tells us that the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world is Christ Himself, who is the very God (1:1, 29). With the eating of the passover lamb there was also the unleavened bread. The bread signifies nourishment. After you have been redeemed, you have to feed on the Lord and be nourished by the Lord. Along with the unleavened bread the children of Israel were to eat bitter herbs. All these aspects of the passover were for the enjoyment of the Lord's chosen people.

In the wilderness the children of Israel went on to enjoy the heavenly manna, the living water out of the smitten rock, and all the different offerings related to the tabernacle. The book of Leviticus shows us the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. All these offerings typify different aspects of Christ for our enjoyment, and all of them except the burnt offering were for eating. Christ becomes our enjoyment by and through His redemption. In addition to these offerings there are the wave offering and the heave offering. The wave offering typifies the resurrected Christ. Christ is the "waving One" in resurrection. The heave offering typifies the ascended Christ. He is the One who has been uplifted to the height of the universe. The resurrected and ascended Christ has become our enjoyment in the fullest way.

THE FULLNESS OF THE ENJOYMENT OF THE LORD

With all the offerings there is the tabernacle, and with the tabernacle there is the priesthood. Eventually, the consummate item in the Old Testament is the temple. Many do not have a proper concept concerning the temple. We may have thought that the temple is only something for God, that it is merely the dwelling place of God. But we have to realize that the temple of God, the house of God, is not only something for God but also something for us. The temple is the fullest expression of God Himself being our enjoyment. God Himself as the temple becomes our dwelling place. This corresponds with the record of the Gospel of John. In John 15 the Lord told us to abide in Him (v. 5), indicating that He is our dwelling place. In John 14 the Lord Jesus said that in His

Father's house are many abodes and that He was going to prepare a place for us. John 14 and 15 both reveal that we are the Lord's abodes and that the Lord Himself is our abode. John 15:4a says, "Abide in Me and I in you." The Lord and we abide in one another mutually; this is a mutual abode.

God's intention is to make Himself our very enjoyment in many aspects that He may be thoroughly wrought into our being for us to be fully joined to Him and mingled with Him. The types, figures, and shadows of the Old Testament provide a clear picture that God's intention is to present Himself to us as our enjoyment. We need to learn how to enjoy Him. We need to enjoy Him as our life, our food, our drink, our light, our air, our dwelling place, and our everything. Psalm 90:1 says, "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." The Lord is not only our life, food, drink, light, and air, but He is also our dwelling place. We have to dwell in Him. Our enjoyment of Him in so many aspects depends upon our realization that the Lord is the tree of life.

THE FATNESS OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

Psalm 36:8 says, "They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures." We may say that we are satisfied with the Lord, but do we have some experience of being saturated with the fatness of the Lord's house? What is the fatness of the Lord's house? It is the fountain of life, which is the Lord Himself. The fountain of life is in the house of the Lord. Psalm 36:9 says, "With You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light." With this fountain of life there is the light. This absolutely corresponds with John 1:4: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The fatness of the Lord's house is the fountain of life with the source of light. Whenever you enjoy the Lord Jesus as your life, you sense that you are enlightened.

In the Holy Place of the tabernacle the serving priest first went to the table of the bread of the Presence, typifying the Lord as the bread of life, the life supply, to us. Then he would proceed to the lampstand, which signifies Christ as the light of life (8:12). When we enjoy the Lord as life, we enjoy the light of life and sense something within us shining. The more you enjoy the Lord as life, the more you sense that you are filled with light and enlightened within. From the lampstand the priest then proceeded to the incense altar to burn the incense. This typifies our prayer to the Lord ascending as a sweet savor unto Him. This shows us the fatness of the Lord's house which comes from the experience of the fountain of life and the source of light.

Whenever you experience the Lord in such a way as life and as light and as the sweet savor of incense in your prayer to God, you will immediately sense the need of the building up of the Body, of the Lord's house, of the corporate church life. The more you enjoy Christ as life, the more you will desire, hunger, and thirst for the church life. The more you enjoy the Lord, the more you will sense the need to fellowship with others. When you get into the church life, into the Lord's house, the house of the Lord will bring you back to all the many experiences of Christ and will enrich and strengthen these experiences. Then you will be satisfied abundantly with the fatness of the house of the Lord. You will see that the fountain of life and the source of light are in the house of the Lord. If you are not in the house of the Lord, it is possible for you to have a foretaste of the fountain of life and the source of light, and this foretaste will bring you and cause you to get into the church life. When you get into the church life, into the house of the Lord, you will say, "Here is the place where there is the fountain of life and the source of light." You will have a real sense of the sweetness, the fatness, of the Lord's house.