

Message 1

A Holy Marriage for God's Purpose

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18, 23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Heb. 13:4; Eccl. 9:9; Prov. 5:18; Mal. 2:14-15; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21a; Eph. 5:18-33; Col. 3:16-19

I. Married life is the foundation of the family life, and the family life is the basis of our daily life, and our daily life is the basis of the church life; this shows the crucial importance of our married life—Heb. 13:4:

- A. Marriage is a very important factor in the church life; whether a church is sound and healthy or loses its element and essence is very much dependent upon the marriage life; we should not consider the matter of marriage to be a light thing; we must hold it in honor—v. 4; cf. 1 Thes. 4:3-8.
- B. Paul's burden in Ephesians 5 was to cover both married life and the church life at the same time; Paul did not separate married life from the church life; rather, he blended the two together, for he knew that married life is actually part of the church life—vv. 22-33.

II. Marriage is ordained by God and is important to God—Gen. 2:18; Matt. 19:4-5:

- A. When God created man, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He determined to make a helper for man as his counterpart; this shows that marriage is according to God's divine and holy ordination—Gen. 2:18:
 - 1. Immediately after God created man, He charged man to be "fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," that is, to fill the earth with human beings—v. 28.
 - 2. This indicates that we need to be married properly according to God's purpose and for God's purpose; God's purpose in marriage is to use us to maintain the existence of mankind on earth—vv. 27-28.
 - 3. Man should enjoy God's provision for his living and the marriage life for man's existence and multiplication to replenish the earth that it may be possible for God to save some men in order to produce the church—the Body of Christ—which will issue in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal enlargement and expression according to God's eternal economy—Eccl. 9:7-9, and note 7¹; Prov. 5:18; Mal. 2:14-15, and note 15¹; Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 21:2, 10.
- B. God's enemy has a desire to destroy the accomplishment of God's goal, which depends upon human marriage—1 Tim. 4:1-3:
 - 1. Attacks on this divine matter of God's ordination come from enemies who have an intention to destroy God's goal by causing people to marry loosely or by forbidding them to marry—vv. 1-3; Luke 17:26-27.
 - 2. We should be aware that an ideology not to marry comes from demons, God's enemies.
- C. Marriage is a symbol of the union between Christ and the church—Gen. 2:18, 21-24; Eph. 5:22-32:
 - 1. Adam typifies God in Christ as the real, universal Husband, who is seeking a wife for Himself; Adam's need for a wife typifies and portrays God's need, in His economy, to have a wife as His counterpart, His complement (lit., his parallel)—Rom. 5:14; cf. Isa. 54:5; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 21:9.
 - 2. God desires to have both Adam, typifying Christ, and Eve, typifying the church; His purpose is to "let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26); it is to have a victorious Christ

plus a victorious church; God wants Christ and the church to have dominion—Rom. 5:17; 16:20; Eph. 1:22-23.

III. We need to live the life of a God-man in our married life—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21a; Eph. 5:18-33; Col. 3:16-19:

- A. We need to have a God-man living in our married life in order to have a God-man living in the church; if a husband and a wife are not vital at home in their married life, they have no way to be vital in the meeting; we need to live Christ at home with our husband or wife and with our children.
- B. Because we are short of the God-man living, we need a real revival to be God-men who live a life of always denying ourselves and being crucified to live Christ for the expression of God—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21a.
- C. In order to have the God-man living, we need to live and walk according to the mingled spirit—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4:
 - 1. A very important area in which to walk according to our spirit is our married life.
 - 2. If we can live according to our spirit in our married life, a great many difficulties will disappear.

IV. Isaac's marriage was not common nor merely for his human living; it was for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—Gen. 21:12; 24:1-4:

- A. God's eternal purpose is to express Himself in a corporate way; in order to have this corporate expression, God must have a people; this people is the seed of Abraham—1:26; 12:1-3; 15:5; 21:12.
- B. Isaac's marriage was not simply that a single man might have a happy, comfortable life; without marriage, Isaac could not have brought forth the seed; if this single man was to have the seed for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, he had to get married—24:1-4.
- C. "We long to see that all the marriages in the churches will be for the fulfillment of God's purpose. This kind of marriage requires a daily living in oneness with God. Young brothers, if everything you do is in accordance with God's economy, even your marriage will be the carrying out of His economy. You need to say, 'Lord, what I am doing here today must be in accordance with Your economy. I am single now, but one day I will be married. May my marriage be for Your economy.' This is the main point of Genesis 24"—*Life-Study of Genesis*, msg. 60, pp. 791-792.

V. We need to be deeply impressed with the best marriage in the Bible—the model marriage of Boaz and Ruth—Matt. 1:5, 16; Ruth 4:13-22:

- A. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth may be considered the best marriage recorded in the Bible.
- B. The particular striking point in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth is not anything concerning their living or career but something concerning an excellent matter, that is, to be one part of the lineage to bring Jesus Christ into humanity—Matt. 1:5.
- C. Through their participating in the lineage to bring forth Christ, God could accomplish His eternal economy by having an organic Body for Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the center of the new heaven and new earth to be God's divine expansion in humanity for His eternal expression in His divine glory—v. 16; Eph. 4:15-16; Rev. 21:1-2, 9-10.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

MARRIAGE

Marriage Being Ordained by God

“Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart” (Gen. 2:18).

When God created man, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He determined to make a helper for man as his counterpart. This shows that marriage is according to God's divine and holy ordination. Marriage was ordained by God when God first created man. Marriage did not come in after the fall of man, nor is it based on the lusts of man. Marriage was ordained by God for man in creation, and it is a primary matter in our human living. In our living, only creation is higher than marriage, and all other matters are headed up by marriage. The origin of man was through creation; the continuation of man is through marriage. In the beginning God created man, but the continuation and propagation of man is through marriage. Therefore, marriage is important to God, and He ordains that man marry.

God ordained man to have a helper as his counterpart because it was not good for the man to be alone. Being alone is not good for several reasons. It is not good in regard to reaching God's goal, and even more, it is not good in regard to man himself. Both physically and emotionally, in human living and human affairs, it is not good for man to be alone. Therefore, God determined to make a helper as a counterpart for man.

“He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh’” (Matt. 19:4-5).

In the beginning God not only ordained that man have a helper as his counterpart in marriage, He also created them male and female and ordained that the two should be one flesh. Man has an inward need for marriage, which comes from God's creation. God created this need in human nature. The Bible reveals that God's goal in the universe is with man. In order for God to accomplish His goal in the universe, He must gain man, and in order to gain man, He must ensure that the man He created for His purpose continues and propagates through marriage. Therefore, God not only ordained marriage; He also created a need for marriage within man.

God's creation of man was very special. He created man so that a male and a female would need each other in order to be a complete person by becoming one flesh. According to the teaching of the Bible, neither a female nor a male is a complete person. In order to be complete, a male and a female must join together as one. Just as two halves of a watermelon are needed in order to be a complete watermelon, only a man and a wife are a complete person from God's point of view. A brother once invited a couple over for dinner, but the husband came without his wife. The brother mentioned to his guest that only half of a person came. According to the Bible and God's original ordination, I felt that this word was correct. God wants male and female to become one flesh; therefore, He wants man to marry. Marriage is God's original ordination.

The Scripture quoted by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 19:5 was in response to a question concerning divorce. In His word the Lord acknowledged God's original ordination concerning marriage. Furthermore, the Lord indicated that man should honor God's original ordination concerning marriage. In the New Testament the Lord's consideration of the importance of human marriage matched God's consideration in creation.

Marriage Being a Symbol of the Union between Christ and the Church

“I betrothed you to one husband...as a pure virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2).

The marriage of a man and a woman is a symbol of the joining of Christ and the church. The apostle considers Christ as the Husband and the believers as His betrothed. Furthermore, he betrothed us as a pure virgin to Christ. Therefore, whenever we see a marriage, we should be reminded of our relationship to Christ and of Christ’s relationship to us.

“The two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31-32).

A husband and a wife, being one flesh, are a symbol of a great mystery, Christ and the church, and of the oneness between Christ and the church. Whenever we consider a husband and wife being one flesh, we should see the mystery of the oneness of Christ and the church.

“A husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church...But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph. 5:23-25).

A husband, as the head of the wife, is a symbol of Christ as the Head of the church. Therefore, a wife being subject to her husband is a symbol of the church being subject to Christ, and a husband loving his wife is a symbol of Christ loving the church. Every proper relationship between husband and wife is a manifestation of the story of Christ and the church. Therefore, as husbands and wives, we should be careful to be proper husbands and wives in order to properly manifest the relationship between Christ and the church. (*CWWL, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures,” ch. 33, pp. 603-614)

HOLDING MARRIAGE IN HONOR

Verse 4 says, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” Apparently this is unrelated to the church life. However, marriage is a very important factor in the church life. Whether a church is sound and healthy or loses its element and essence is very much dependent upon the marriage life. Do not consider the matter of marriage to be a light thing. We must hold it in honor. This means that we must possess our body, our vessel, in sanctification and honor (1 Thes. 4:3-4), that “no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter” (1 Thes. 4:6). In the church life, the brothers and sisters must contact one another in a holy way. This means that we honor our marriage and others’ marriage. To honor marriage means to possess our body in sanctification and honor and to flee fornication. (*Life-Study of Hebrews*, msg. 55, p. 613)

WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

Romans 8:4 is a verse that is parallel to Colossians 2:8 in the sense that it tells us to walk according to spirit. To walk according to spirit is to walk according to Christ. If you walk daily according to spirit, you will automatically walk according to Christ. If you walk in this way, you will do certain things or refrain from doing things, not because you are conforming to the practice of the local churches, but because you are walking according to Christ...

We need to apply the matter of walking according to spirit in every aspect of our daily living. For example, the brothers who live together need to apply this to their conversation with one another. One brother may be accustomed to speaking according to his mind, whereas another brother may talk according to his emotion. Both brothers must learn to talk according to the spirit. When they rise up early in the morning, they should exercise to talk not from the mind or from the emotion, but from the spirit. The brothers should pray, “Lord, grant me the grace to speak from my spirit.” However, instead of doing this, the brothers may live according to the tradition of men and the elements of the world. Although they may not quarrel with each other,

they may live according to their humanity which has been refined by the church life and not live according to Christ.

A very important area in which to walk according to our spirit is our married life. It is difficult for husbands to remain in the spirit with their wives. It is easy for them to be either in the mind, the emotion, or the will. One of the most difficult things for a brother to do is to turn to his spirit in the presence of his wife. But we brothers need to learn to walk according to spirit in relating to our wives. If a brother's wife treats him well, he may be happy. But if she is not pleasant to him, he may be offended. Instead of turning to the spirit, he may choose to stay in his emotion. But whether our wives are kind or unkind, we need to stay in our spirit. If your wife rebukes you, stay in the spirit. If she speaks well of you, stay in the spirit. If you stay in the spirit, you will walk according to Christ in your married life.

Wives also need to learn to be in the spirit when they are with their husbands. This is even more difficult than for a husband to be in spirit with his wife. Many sisters can be in the spirit with almost anyone except their husbands. When they are with their husbands, they are usually in the emotion, not in the spirit. We need the Lord's mercy and grace to be in the spirit with our husband or wife. We must confess that, to a large degree, our married life is not according to Christ. Let us look to the Lord that He would grant us the mercy and grace to have our married life according to the spirit. This is basic and crucial for the church life. The married life is the foundation of the family life, the family life is the basis of our daily life, and our daily life is the basis of the church life. This shows the crucial importance of our married life. If we can live according to our spirit in our married life, a great many difficulties will disappear. (*Life-Study of Colossians*, msg. 54, pp. 475-477)

LIVING THE LIFE OF A GOD-MAN IN OUR MARRIED LIFE AND IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Let us now consider the situation in the recovery. We all are believers. We believe in the Lord Jesus. We have repented and come back to the Lord, and we have been saved, even dynamically saved. Yet in our daily life we may not have the living of a God-man.

We have pointed out that for the children of Israel to keep the law was to live God and express God. However, they did not keep the law, and therefore they did not live God and express God. The situation is the same with us today. For the most part, we do not express God in our daily living.

We need to have a God-man living in our married life. If a married brother would live the life of a God-man in his married life, he would surely be a good husband, for he would be a real God-man in loving his wife. Likewise, if a married sister would live the life of a God-man in her married life, she would be a good wife, submitting herself to her husband.

We also need to have a God-man living in the church life, especially in relation to what we call the vital groups. How can we have a vital group if we ourselves are not vital? This is impossible. Suppose at dinner a brother and his wife are not happy with each other. They even exchange words and argue for quite a long time. Suddenly they remember that later that evening they must attend a meeting of their vital group. But how could this couple be vital in the meeting? Because they are not vital at home in their married life, they have no way to be vital in the meeting.

OUR NEED FOR A REAL REVIVAL

Because we are short of the God-man living, we need a real revival. The children of Israel had only an outward law, but today we have something much stronger and much higher than the law. We have the all-inclusive, life-giving, compounded, consummated Spirit in us, who is the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). We need to live Christ by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (vv. 20-21a).

We have such a Spirit within us, but what do we live and how do we live? Do we live Christ? In the church meetings we may live Christ, but do we live Christ at home with our husband or wife and with our children? We need a real revival to be God-men who live a life of always denying ourselves and being crucified to live Christ for the expression of God. (*Life-Study of 1 & 2 Chronicles*, msg. 11, pp. 76-77)

THE BEST MARRIAGE

The Bible unveils to us that God created man in His own image in His highest intention to carry out His eternal economy. Right after God created man, God ordained the marriage of man. According to the divine revelation in the Bible, the human marriage ordained by God is not merely for man to live and to carry out some career but for man to be one with God so that God can have a way to carry out His eternal economy through man.

The highest intention of God in creating man and ordaining man's marriage is that He desires to be one with man, even by becoming man, that man could be made like Him in His divine life and nature but not in His divine Godhead. Four thousand years after the history of mankind began, God came out of eternity into time to be incarnated, to become a man in the flesh, and this man was Jesus Christ as the embodiment of God. Jesus Christ is both God and man, a God-man who produced many believers through His death and resurrection to be His organic Body, the church. All this was done through man's marriage.

The best marriage as recorded in the Bible is the marriage of Boaz and Ruth. The particular striking point in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, as the Bible records, is not anything concerning their living or anything concerning their career but something concerning an excellent matter, that is, to be one part of the lineage to bring Jesus Christ into humanity so that God could accomplish His eternal economy by having an organic Body for Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the center of the new heaven and new earth to be God's divine expansion in humanity for His eternal expression in His divine glory. (*CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 1, "The Best Marriage," p. 489)

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-Study of Colossians*, msg. 54.
2. *Life-Study of Hebrews*, msg. 55.
3. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," ch. 30.
4. *Life-Study of Ephesians*, msg. 53.
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, "Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Volume 3," ch. 33.
6. *Life-Study of Matthew*, msg. 53.
7. *Life-Study of Deuteronomy*, msg. 23.
8. *Life-Study of 1 & 2 Chronicles*, msg. 8, 11.
9. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1993*, vol. 1, "Miscellaneous Fellowship," ch. 3.
10. *Life-Study of Genesis*, msg. 60.
11. *Life-Study of Ruth*, msg. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8.
12. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994-1997*, vol. 1, "The Best Marriage."

