Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (15)

The Father’s House

**Scripture Reading:**

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost. 2 And while supper was taking place, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he should betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going to God, 4 Rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself; 5 Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 He came then to Simon Peter. Peter said to Him, Lord, do You wash my feet? … 15 For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, A slave is not greater than his master, nor one who is sent greater than the one who sends him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, “He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” 19 From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe that I am. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who receives whomever I shall send receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. (John 14:1-20)

**Ministry Reading:**

The Gospel of John chapters fourteen through sixteen reveal life’s indwelling for the building of God’s habitation. Regardless of how much time you have spent reading or studying these chapters, I doubt that you have ever seen what is revealed here. Have you ever seen in these chapters the matter of the building of God’s habitation? In a very detailed way, these three chapters unfold that Christ, as the indwelling life, is for the building of God’s habitation.

The phrase My Father’s house is used twice in the Gospel of John. It is used the first time in 2:16, where it clearly refers to the temple, the dwelling place of God on earth. The temple is a type, a figure, of the body of Jesus (2:21), which, as we have seen, has in resurrection been enlarged into the Body of Christ. We must pay our full attention to this point. In 2:16 My Father’s house is the temple on earth. It does not denote a place in the heavens, but God’s temple on earth. Since the temple is the type of the body of Jesus, the body of Jesus is the tabernacle (1:14), the temple, for God’s dwelling place on earth. This interpretation of the phrase My Father’s house is clearly shown in chapter two. We must apply this definition to 14:2, where we have the same phrase. We should not take this phrase in 14:2 to have a different meaning from the same phrase found in 2:16, for that would be illogical. The second time that this phrase is used in the same Gospel it must have the same definition as the first time it is used. Thus, the Father’s house in chapter fourteen must also mean God’s dwelling place on earth. It cannot mean the third heaven. In chapter two the Father’s house is eventually the Body of Christ, and in chapter fourteen it must also be the Body of Christ. No one can deny this. Now we have the proper interpretation of the phrase My Father’s house: it is the Body of Christ, that is, the church. We need to adjust ourselves from the wrong teaching which says that the Father’s house here is heaven.

In the Epistles the revelation that the Body of Christ is the church and that the church is the house of God is fully developed. First Timothy 3:15 discloses that the church is the house of the living God. Hence, the Father’s house must mean the house of the living God on earth and not in heaven. First Corinthians 3:16 tells us that the believers, as a whole entity, are the temple of God. First Peter 2:5 says that we, as living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house. This spiritual house certainly must be the Father’s house, the house of God. Furthermore, Hebrews 3:6 says that we are the house of God, and Ephesians 2:21-22 says that the believers are being built together as God’s habitation, not in the heavens but in the spirit. Thus, the whole New Testament supports the interpretation, as found in the Gospel of John itself, that the Father’s house is eventually the Body of Christ. The Father’s house in the Gospel of John and in the whole New Testament is not heaven but the Body of Christ, which is the church as the habitation of God on earth.

Do you believe that in this universe God has two buildings—a mansion in heaven and a church on earth? God has just one building. It is illogical to say that He has two. Although you may love heaven, God is not satisfied with it. If you read Isaiah 66, you will find that God desires to have a dwelling place in man. He does not love heaven so much as He loves man to be His habitation. God wants to dwell in man. While so many Christians desire to go to heaven, God desires to come down from heaven and dwell with man on the earth. Many Christian teachers have told us that when the Lord said that He was going to prepare a place for us, He meant that He was going to prepare a heavenly mansion. But they all agree that the heaven about which they speak will be the city with foundations prepared by God as mentioned in Hebrews 11:10, the city which will be the New Jerusalem spoken of in Revelation 21. But the New Jerusalem is not going to remain in heaven; it is going to come down out of heaven (Rev. 21:2). You may desire to go up to heaven, but God desires to come down out of heaven.

God has only one building in the entire universe. In Old Testament times God’s building was with the children of Israel and was typified by the tabernacle and the temple. Both the tabernacle and the temple were symbols of God’s people being His dwelling place on the earth. In the New Testament times the church is built. In a spiritual sense the church is the continuation of the tabernacle and the temple. In the Old Testament we have the tabernacle and the temple, and in the New Testament we have the church as God’s temple. Today, we are God’s temple. Eventually, the building with the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints will ultimately consummate in the New Jerusalem which will be the eternal tabernacle, God’s habitation among men for eternity. This is God’s building. If you read Revelation 21 and 22 carefully, you will discover that the New Jerusalem is not a physical city. It is a living city composed of living persons. We know this because the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb will be there (Rev. 21:12, 14). We also shall be there as the jasper stone that is built into the wall (Rev. 21:11, 18). The New Jerusalem is a living composition of living persons built up together to be God’s habitation forever.

Do you believe that now, in the church age, God does not have a habitation among men on the earth? He certainly has! This habitation is the church. Where is the church? It is on earth. God’s habitation today is a living composition of living believers on the earth. Wherever we, the living believers, are built together, God has a habitation on earth. This is God’s building on the earth today. By being redeemed, washed in the blood, and regenerated by the divine life, we have been made a living part of this living building which is the place that the Lord was going to prepare for us as He said in John 14:2.

**Practice or Application:**

Praise the Lord that we have received Christ as our righteousness, the Spirit as the seal, salvation as the separating and strengthening power, and Christ as our inner life and life supply! Now we are no longer in the wilderness and no longer in the “house” of the self—now we are in the Father’s house, the church.

The parable of the loving father indicates that sinners should not be saved far away from the church. Sometimes the parable of the father and the returned prodigal is presented in such a way that the son is portrayed as kneeling before the father. This is not accurate. There is no indication in this chapter that the son ever knelt before the father. Instead, Luke presents the father embracing the son and kissing him affectionately.

Question for Discussion: At the end of the year, let us remember and pray for those who are still wondering outside of the Father’s house.

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 29-30