

Being Replaced with Christ by Enjoying Christ to Fulfill the Dream of God's Eternal Purpose

by Ed Marks

He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head [or, placed it as his pillow], and he lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it...And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it. And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head, and he set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel. (Gen. 28:11-12, 16-19)

Jacob had a dream, and his dream was God's dream, the dream of His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). Jacob's dream is the central revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. We must pray that the Lord would grant us such a dream so that God's dream can become our dream. The spiritual vision and spiritual experience of God's eternal purpose are the reality of this dream. God's eternal purpose is to have Bethel, which means "the house of God." In this universe God is doing only one thing—He is building His eternal habitation, His eternal dwelling place. Christ, the incarnated God, uttered the greatest prophecy in the Bible when He declared, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The Lord is fulfilling this great prophecy today by building us up to be His church, His spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5), His living Body (Eph. 4:16), for His corporate expression.

The Vision of Eternity, the Life of Eternity, and the Work of Eternity

The vision of the eternal Bethel, the house of God, is the vision of eternity—the vision of the eternal purpose and heart's desire of God. In order to live the Christian life

according to God's purpose, we must see the vision of eternity, live the life of eternity, and do the work of eternity. We need to pray that the Lord would grant us a spirit of wisdom and revelation and open the eyes of our heart to see the heavenly vision of His eternal purpose (1:17-18) so that we may live and serve according to this vision and be able to say with the apostle Paul that we were not disobedient to it (Acts 26:19).

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that when God created man, He put "eternity" in man's heart. The Amplified Bible says that eternity is "a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy." There is a God-created desire, longing, and aspiration for something eternal placed within man. This is why temporal things can never satisfy us. Anything other than the eternal God, the eternal Christ, the great "I Am," is "vanity of vanities" (1:2), and all of man's pursuit of things other than Christ is "a chasing after wind" (v. 14).

Haggai 2:7 prophesies that when Christ comes again to earth, He will come as "the Desire of all the nations."

Even though the nations do not know Christ, they still desire Christ. All people desire to have peace and a good life with virtues such as light, love, patience, humility, meekness, endurance, joy, and righteousness. Since Christ is the reality of all these things, for the nations to desire these things means that, unconsciously, they desire Christ. (Recovery Version, Hag. 2:7, note 1)

Without knowing it, all people truly desire Christ, because whatever people need and desire, Christ is. Christ is the truth, the reality (John 14:6). *Hymns*, #496 is a revelation of Christ as the reality of all that man truly desires:

- 1 Christ is the one reality of all,
Of Godhead and of man and all things else;
No man without Him ever findeth God,
Without Him man and everything is false.

- 2 All types and figures of the ancient time,
All things we ever need, both great and small,
Only are shadows of the Christ of God,
Showing that He must be our all in all.
- 3 All things are vanity of vanities,
Christ, the reality all things to fill;
Though everything we may enjoy and own,
If we're devoid of Christ we're empty still.
- 4 Christ is our real God, our real Lord,
Christ is our real life, our real light;
Christ is our real food, our real drink,
Our real clothing, and our real might.
- 5 Christ also is the one reality
Of all our doctrine and theology;
And all our scriptural knowledge without Him
Is just in letter and is vanity.
- 6 Christ, the reality of time and space,
Christ, the reality of every stage;
Christ is the one reality of all
Thru all eternity from age to age.

Christ as the reality came forth "from the days of eternity"

(Micah 5:2) to dispense Himself into us so that He could be the eternal treasure in us, His earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7). Christ, the One "who inhabits eternity" (Isa. 57:15), came out of eternity into time to build Himself into man and to build man into Himself so



that He and man can mutually indwell one another (John 14:2, 20, 23; 15:4). For eternity we will live in Christ, taking Him as our dwelling place, and He will live in us, taking us as His dwelling place; we will be His eternal tabernacle, and He will be our eternal temple (Psa. 90:1-2; Rev. 21:3, 22). We will be fully replaced with Christ so that to see us is to see Christ and to see Christ is to see us (1 John 3:2). To see the vision of eternity is to see the vision of Christ (Eph. 1:17), to live the life of eternity is to live Christ (Phil. 1:21), and to do the work of eternity is to minister Christ (2 Cor. 3:3, 6) for the building up of Bethel, which is the church as the house of God to consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal house of God, the eternal mutual habitation of God and man (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1 Tim. 3:15).

Christ as the Reality of Bethel, the House of God

Christ is the reality of God's eternal purpose, the reality of Bethel, the church as the house of God. He is the reality of all the crucial aspects of Jacob's dream, the dream of God's eternal purpose (Gen. 28:10-22). In this dream the stone is Christ, the pillow is Christ, the heavenly lad-

der is Christ, the pillar is Christ, the oil is Christ, and Bethel is Christ. Christ is the real stone for the building of God's house. He is the living stone (1 Pet. 2:4), the foundation stone (1 Cor. 3:11), the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20), and the topstone of God's spiritual house (Zech. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:5). When we received Him as our life, He came as the life-giving Spirit to dwell in our spirit, making us His duplication, the living stones of His building (v. 5). Thus, Christ is the reality of all the stones, all the material, of Bethel, God's eternal habitation. When the element of Christ as the stone is wrought into our inward parts (our mind, emotion, and will) for our transformation, Christ as the stone becomes our pillow to be our rest. He is our real Sabbath, our true rest, our perfect peace, and our absolute satisfaction. He said, "Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). When we turn our hearts to the Lord and give ourselves wholly to Him for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose, He has the way to dispense Himself into us to become our inward rest and quietness (our pillow)

Christ became a man to bring God into man and man into God. In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit, and He entered into our spirit as the reality of this heavenly ladder, bringing God into us and us into God, to make us a corporate God-man, the church as the one new man.

so that He may be our salvation and strength (our pillar) for God's building (Isa. 30:15).

The center of God's dream is Christ as the heavenly ladder. The Lord Jesus referred to this when He said to Nathanael, "Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Christ as the Son of Man is the ladder set up on the earth, bringing heaven to earth and joining earth to heaven. Earth signifies man, and heaven signifies God. Thus, Christ became a man to bring God into man and man into God in order to fulfill God's eternal purpose to have a corporate God-man for His expression. In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), and He entered into our spirit as the reality of this heavenly ladder (2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16), bringing God into us and us into God, to make us a corporate God-man, the church as the one new man (Eph. 2:15). When Christ was incarnated, He was the reality of the house of God, the temple of God, having God as His content. When Christ was resurrected, His crucified physical body was resurrected to become the divine and mystical Body of

Christ, the enlarged reality of the temple of God (John 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:16-17). We are “growing into a holy temple in the Lord” by “being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22). God’s dwelling place, the house of God, is also our spirit. Christ as God is the Dweller, and our spirit is His dwelling place. Thus, Christ is the individual house of God, the church is the corporate house of God, and our spirit is the experiential house of God. When we turn to our spirit, exercise our spirit, worship in our spirit, and live in our spirit (1 Tim. 4:7; John 4:24; Rom. 1:9; 8:4), we are living in Christ as the house of God and growing up into the corporate house of God. As Christ grows in us, we grow up into Him, and this growth in Christ is the building up of the Body of Christ, the building up of the corporate house of God (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16).

By the growth of Christ as the living stone within us, we are made pillars in God’s house (Rev. 3:12) to make us collectively a corporate pillar of Christ as the reality of God’s house (1 Tim. 3:15). The oil poured upon the pillar signifies the anointing of Christ, God’s anointed One (2 Cor. 1:21-22). Not only is He the anointed One, but also, as the indwelling Spirit, He is the ointment with which we are anointed (Exo. 30:22-25; Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18). Furthermore, He is the anointing One and the very anointing in our spirit. This anointing is God Himself in motion as the moving and working of the indwelling Spirit in our spirit. We have the Spirit of Christ in our spirit as the anointing from the Holy One (Rom. 8:16; 1 John 2:20, 27). We may use the example of paint to illustrate this. Christ is the divine “paint,” signifying the divine Spirit in our spirit. He is “painting” us, anointing us, with Himself as the divine “paint” to apply all that He is to the inward parts of our being, saturating our mind, emotion, and will with Himself. This divine application of Christ as the Spirit in our inward being transforms us into pillars to make us the eternal Bethel, the house of the living God.

Becoming the Reality of Bethel by Being Fully Replaced with Christ

In order to become the reality of Bethel, the house of God, we need to be fully replaced with Christ. We need to enjoy Christ as our all-inclusive, universal replacement so that He can replace us with His “stone” nature to transform us into living and precious stones for God’s building. We need to enjoy Him as the reality of the stone, the pillow, the ladder, the pillar, and the anointing oil in Jacob’s dream so that we may be fully replaced by and with Him for the fulfillment of the dream of God’s eternal purpose to make us the built-up church as the reality of Bethel, the spiritual house of the living God. Later in Jacob’s experience, he returned to the place in which he dreamed God’s dream, and he built an altar to God, consecrating himself to God for God’s ultimate purpose. He called the altar

that he erected El-bethel, which means “the God of the house of God” (Gen. 35:7). We all need such a consecration, a consecration that is not only for our individual Christian life but also for the corporate church life. We need to know, experience, and enjoy Christ, not for our individual spirituality or ourselves but for the building up of the church as the house of God. We need to consecrate ourselves to Christ in order to know, experience, and enjoy Him not only as *our God* personally but also as *the God of the house of God* corporately.

The Gospels tell us that in order to fulfill His eternal purpose, Christ brought His followers to the mount of His transfiguration to show them that God’s desire is for everything and everyone to be replaced by Christ for His eternal purpose (Mark 9:1-8). After He brought Peter, James, and John with Him to the mountain, He was transfigured before them, and they observed Him conversing with Moses and Elijah. Peter then proposed that they make three tents—one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elijah—but God interrupted Peter’s speaking and proposal. Mark 9:7 and 8 say that “a cloud appeared, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud: This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him! And suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone, but Jesus only with them.” Peter was so frightened by what he had seen that he made an absurd proposal to keep Moses (representing the law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) on the same level with Christ to replace Christ. But in God’s New Testament economy, His eternal plan, Christ is the reality and replacement of Moses and Elijah. He is today’s Moses, imparting Himself as the law of the Spirit of life into His believers (Heb. 8:10; Rom. 8:2; 10:4; Acts 3:22). He is also today’s Elijah, speaking Himself as the Word of life into His believers (Phil. 2:16; 1 John 1:1; John 6:63; Acts 5:20). It is possible for us as believing Christians to live according to the law and the prophets instead of living according to Christ. To be according to the law is to walk according to the “letter” of outward statutes and regulations, and to be according to the prophets is to walk according to what others say that we should do. However, in the New Testament age we are now according to Christ by walking in and according to Him as the anointing Spirit mingled with our spirit, the mingled spirit (Gal. 5:25; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9; 8:4). The outward principle of the law (a written code of what to do and what not to do) takes away our direct communication with God, and the outward principle of the prophets (other men telling us what to do and what not to do) takes away our direct fellowship with God. However, in the New Testament age Christ as the law of the Spirit of life inwardly causes us to know God subjectively and inwardly brings us into direct fellowship with God intimately (Heb. 8:10-11).

In God’s New Testament economy, now that Christ has

come, we should “hear Him” and see “Jesus only” (Mark 9:7-8). To “hear Him” is to hear what Christ as the speaking Spirit says in our spirit and to the churches for the testimony of “Jesus only” (Rev. 1:2, 10). “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7). To “hear Him” is to hear the voice of God in the present hour to meet God’s present need for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose in building up His church as the house of God. We must take heed to the way we hear the word of the Lord, because the measure of Christ that can be dispensed into us is determined by the measure of our hearing (Mark 4:23-25). Furthermore, our spiritual seeing depends upon our spiritual hearing. The apostle John was in his spirit to hear the Lord’s voice, and then he turned to see the voice that spoke with Him (Rev. 1:10-12). We must ask the Lord to grant us an open and circumcised ear (Isa. 50:4-5; Jer. 6:10) and a blood-cleansed and Spirit-anointed ear (Lev. 14:14, 17, 28) so that we may hear His voice, the voice of God’s Beloved and our Beloved, in order that we may see “Jesus only” (S. S. 2:8; 8:13; Mark 9:7-8). For the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose, we should look away unto Jesus by keeping our heart turned to Him so that we may behold and reflect His beauty (Heb. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:16, 18). As we look away from all the distracting things in our environment to gaze upon Jesus, He is infused into our being so that the beauty of His divine attributes is expressed through our human virtues for His magnification (Phil. 1:20). No one except “Jesus only” should remain in the New Testament age.



The oil poured upon the pillar signifies the anointing of Christ, God’s anointed One. Not only is He the anointed One, but also, as the indwelling Spirit, He is the ointment with which we are anointed. This anointing is God Himself in motion as the moving and working of the indwelling Spirit in our spirit.

When the apostle Paul was converted to Christ, he cried out, “Who are You, Lord?” The heavenly voice responded, “I am Jesus” (Acts 9:4-5). It was as if the Lord was saying, “Saul of Tarsus, you are finished; you are over. I am Jesus, and you are not. I am the One who is, and you are nothing.” The divine light flashing into Paul’s heart was the killing light that caused Saul of Tarsus to be terminated and the resurrecting light that caused the apostle Paul to be germinated. This is why Paul said “I [Saul of Tarsus] am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I [the apostle Paul] now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). The old “I,” the natural person, was crucified, and the new “I,” the resurrected person indwelt by Christ, came into being.

In speaking of the example of Enoch, Hebrews 11:5-6 reveals that to live by faith, to walk by faith, is to believe that “God is” and “we are not.” Enoch walked with God

for three hundred years until eventually “he was not, for God took him” (Gen. 5:22-24). For us to walk with God is for us to walk by the Spirit so that we are the ones who are nothing in everything and Christ is “the One who is,” the “I Am,” in everything (John 8:58). Through the process of transformation we will eventually be raptured like Enoch, and Christ will be the “I Am,” “the One who is,” in our entire being, making us exactly like Him in life, nature, and appearance for His glory (1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:21).

Christ is God’s Beloved, God’s Favorite, the One who replaces everyone and everything in the New Testament age. Therefore, He should have all the ground in our living so that we may enjoy Him as the empowering One to live Him for His magnification in all environments, in all circumstances, and in all things (Phil. 1:20-21; 4:11-13). In this way, when others hear us, they will hear “Jesus only,” and when others see us, they will see “Jesus only.” “Jesus only” is the unique constituent of God’s spiritual house, the church as the corporate new man (Col. 3:10-11). He is the unique reality, centrality, and universality of Bethel, the house of God, as the eternal purpose of God.

Isaiah 22:15-25 presents a marvelous type of Christ as the Steward in God’s house, dispensing Himself into God’s chosen ones to become their universal replacement for His expression (Lee, *Life-study* 86-89, 289-294). In this portion of Scripture, Eliakim is the steward in God’s house, the one who typifies Christ, and Shebna typifies all of us, the ones who are replaced by Christ. God told Isaiah to go to Shebna, the steward over God’s house, and say to him,

Jehovah soon throws you far away, O mighty one, / And He grasps you firmly; / He will wind you up tightly; / Like a ball He will toss you into a wide land... / And I will drive you from your position, / And from your standing He will pull you down. / And in that day / I will call to My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, / And I will clothe him with your [Shebna’s] tunic, / And I will strengthen him with your girding sash, / And I will put your dominion into his hand; / And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem / And to the house of Judah. / And I will set the key of the house of David upon his shoulder— / When he opens, no one will shut; / When he shuts, no one will open.” (vv. 17-22)

In this passage of Scripture we see that Shebna, the steward over God's house, was "fired" by God, being driven by God from his position and tossed by God like a wound-up ball into a distant land of death. Shebna was "fired" by God, but Eliakim, typifying Christ, was "hired" by God. We know that Eliakim typifies Christ, because Revelation 3:7 says that the ascended Christ in His heavenly ministry is "the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens." The key being set on Christ's shoulder is for opening the treasury of God's house in order to dispense the untraceable and eternal wealth of Christ into us for our transformation into precious stones for God's building. We are all "Shebnas" who need to be "fired" by Christ and replaced with Christ as the real Steward in God's house so that we may enjoy Him as the life-giving Dispenser of all His untraceable riches into our being (Eph. 3:8).

We may say that when God created us, He "hired" us, creating us in His image and according to His likeness with the view that we would contain and express Him for His glory (Gen. 1:26). However, because man chose Satan and received the poison of sin and death, Christ came and died on the cross to take away the sin of the world and turn our death into life. Also, when Christ was crucified, God crucified us with Christ and "fired" us (Gal. 2:20). When God resurrected us together with Christ (Eph. 2:6), He "re-hired" us by making us a new species, God-men, a new invention of God as His corporate masterpiece, the new man (vv. 10, 15), bringing us back to His original intention of creating us for His glory (Isa. 43:7). The real church life revealed in the New Testament is a life in which all the believing saints are "fired" and replaced with Christ, making Christ everything in the church as the reality of the one new man for the glory of the Triune God. In the Body of Christ as the one new man, Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11). Because we have been crucified with Christ and replaced with Him, there is no room in the new man for any natural persons. There is room only for one person—Christ. This wonderful person replaces us by dispensing Himself into our being.

In the New Testament, Christ's replacing us is not our being "exchanged" with Him but our being "grafted" into Him (Rom. 11:17, 24). We once were the branches of the uncultivated tree, which may signify the first man Adam, who became fallen. Now that we have been crucified with Christ, we have been cut off from this uncultivated tree and grafted into the resurrected Christ as the cultivated tree. He is the vine, and we are His branches (John 15:5). We are united with Christ organically, and in this organic union Christ replaces us. Now in our organic union with Christ through our faith in Him, He replaces us by living in us, with us, by us, and through us. We live, yet not we, but Christ lives in us, and we live by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20), into whom we

have been grafted. Because we are the branches of Christ, He charges us, "Abide in Me and I in you...He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). Apart from Christ, we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing, but it is a marvelous fact that "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The Lord as the Spirit has been mingled with our spirit, and He and we are now one spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16). Our spirit has been joined to and grafted into the Lord Spirit to become one mingled spirit. In order to be replaced with Christ for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose, all that we are, all that we have, and all that we do for God must be in, according to, and by this mingled spirit.

The reality of all spiritual things depends on the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God is in our spirit. Hence, the reality of all spiritual matters depends on our spirit, not on anything apart from our spirit. Whatever is in us is vanity unless it is in our spirit. Everything that God is to us is in our spirit. (Recovery Version, Rom. 2:29, note 2)

When we live and walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), living and walking according to our spirit (Rom. 8:4), and when we serve by the Spirit (Phil. 3:3), serving in our spirit (Rom. 1:9), it is no longer we who are living and serving, but Christ is the One who replaces us to live and serve through us for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose.

Being Replaced with Christ by Enjoying Christ

We need to be gradually replaced with Christ as the eternal God day by day by enjoying Christ. As the Spirit indwelling our spirit, He is the "oil of exultant joy" (Heb. 1:9). Augustine said that "enjoying God is the only thing that can make us ultimately happy" and that trying to find our ultimate happiness by enjoying something other than God makes us miserable (Cary 28). When God created man, He placed him in the garden of Eden; *Eden* means "pleasure." This signifies that God wants to be man's pleasure, entertainment, joy, and happiness. Psalm 36:8 says that God causes His people to drink of the river of His "pleasures" (Heb. *Edens*). Augustine also spoke of the need for us to have a "beatific vision," which is "the seeing that makes happy," the seeing of God (27). Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8). To Augustine, God was beauty itself, the ultimate beauty (see *On Christian Doctrine* chapter one and *Augustine of Hippo* chapter fifteen). This is why David said that the one thing he desired was to dwell in the house of God all the days of his life so that he could behold God's beauty (Psa. 27:4).

Even though we do not see Him physically, we can turn our heart to Him so that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to see Him spiritually for our enjoyment (2 Cor. 3:16, 18; Eph. 1:17-18). "Whom having not seen, you love; into

whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). Like Moses we can refuse the temporary enjoyment of sin (Heb. 11:25) and enjoy Him as our perseverance for His eternal purpose by “seeing the unseen One” (v. 27). “We do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

We need to be those who consecrate every part of our being and every area of our life to God for the building up of His eternal dwelling place, the church as the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem. To consecrate ourselves to God for His eternal building, His eternal purpose, is to say with David, “I will go to the altar of God, / To God, my exceeding joy” (Psa. 43:4). When we consecrate ourselves without reservation to God for His eternal purpose, He becomes our exceeding joy for us to express Him.

Even the Lord Jesus Himself, in His human living on earth, enjoyed God the Father to express the Father. The work that the Father gave the Son to do on earth was the work of expressing the Father. This is why the Lord Jesus, at the end of His human life, told the Father, “I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4). The Son’s glorifying the Father was His expressing the Father, and His expressing the Father was His being replaced by the Father to such an extent that He could declare, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (14:9). To see the Son was to see the Father, because the Son was in the Father, taking the Father as His dwelling place, and the Father was in Him, taking the Son as His dwelling place (vv. 10-11).

The Lord Jesus said in John 6:57, “As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.” The Lord Jesus lived *because of* the Father to express the Father so that we might live *because of* Him to express Him. For the Lord Jesus to live *because of* the Father means that He enjoyed the Father as His supplying and energizing factor to empower Him to carry out the Father’s perfect will and eternal purpose. Isaiah prophesied concerning this when he said, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a son, and call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good” (7:14-15—Darby’s New Translation). Verse 14 of Isaiah 7 speaks of the birth of the Lord Jesus as Immanuel—“God with us.” Verse 15 goes on to speak

of His human living and the power of His obedience to the Father. Watchman Nee points out that the Lord Jesus was able to choose the perfect will of God (“the good”) and refuse anything other than this (“the evil”) because He ate butter and honey all the days of His life. He enjoyed the Father continually as the “heavenly butter,” typifying the richest grace, and as the “heavenly honey,” typifying the sweetest love. This is why He was able to obey the Father and choose His will. His enjoyment of the Father as His butter and honey became the supplying factor for Him to live the Father and the empowering factor for Him to obey the Father, to choose the Father’s will for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose (Nee 111-120).

Just as the Lord Jesus lived *because of* the Father by enjoying the Father as His energizing supply, He now wants us to eat Him and live *because of* Him by enjoying Him as our energizing supply. To live because of Christ as our food, we must eat Him as our “heavenly butter,” enjoying Him as the richest grace, and as our “heavenly honey,” enjoying Him as the sweetest love, so that He can be our supplying and energizing factor to live in us and through us for the building up of His Body as the perfect



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will and eternal purpose of God. Grace is the resurrected Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit to be everything to us and to do everything in us, through us, and for us (1 Cor. 15:10, 45b). Love is the nature of God’s essence and the expression of God as life; God Himself is love (1 John 4:8, 16). To eat the Lord Jesus is to enjoy Him as grace upon grace and to be constrained by and infused with Him as love in order to live Him for the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose (John 1:16; 2 Cor. 5:14).

In order to be replaced with Christ for the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose, we must eat Him day by day. Dietitians say that we are what we eat. This is because what we eat is digested and metabolically assimilated by us to become our cells. In the same way, the “cell structure” of our soul (our mind, emotion, and will) is replaced with Christ by our eating Him as our spiritual food (1 Cor. 10:3). To eat Christ as our butter and honey is to receive Him as the richest grace and the sweetest love into our being so that He may be “digested” in our spirit and “assimilated” in our soul for our transformation in the divine life. This transformation is a spiritual metabolism and metabolic change in which the new element of Christ

is supplied to our inner being and the old element of our natural man is replaced with the new element of Christ to make us His new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). By daily enjoying Christ as our richest grace and sweetest love, we are transformed from being natural men of clay into living and precious stones for His eternal building to accomplish His eternal purpose.

We must be those who daily enjoy Christ as the reality of the good land “flowing with milk and honey” for the building up of the church (Exo. 3:8), the Body of Christ, as the house of God. When we feast on God’s word, receiving His word by means of all prayer, we are eating Christ as our spiritual butter and honey, enjoying Him as our richest grace and sweetest love, to be replaced with Him for His spiritual building (Eph. 6:17-18). “The guileless milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2) is received and assimilated by our inner man to become butter and honey to us for our enjoyment of Christ in His sweetness. “How sweet are Your words to my taste! / Sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psa. 119:103). “Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). To eat Christ is to eat His words, and the words that He speaks to us are spirit and life (John 6:57, 63). “He is now the life-giving Spirit in resurrection, and the Spirit is embodied in His words. When we receive His words by exercising our spirit, we get the Spirit, who is life” (Recovery Version, John 6:63, note 3).

We must daily feast on the Lord as our spiritual bread, typified by the “bread of the Presence,” which was the food of the priests in the Old Testament. God’s presence, Christ as the Spirit, is our food. Note 2 of Exodus 25:30 in the Recovery Version says that *the bread of the Presence* literally means “the face-bread.” This indicates that

God’s presence, God’s face, is the life supply to the serving priests (cf. 2 Cor. 2:10; 4:6-7; 3:18). In our experience the reality of God’s presence is the Spirit in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17), who is also the reality of Christ as the bread of life (John 6:33, 51a, 63).

By eating Christ as the reality of the bread of life, we are replaced with Christ to fulfill the dream of God’s eternal purpose. We may say that the principle of a dream is that in it something impossible happens to us. It is impossible in the natural realm for someone like Jacob, a supplanter, to be transformed into Israel, the prince of God, for the building up of Bethel, the house of God. But in the divine and mystical realm, all things that are not possible with man are possible with God. Our being regenerated with Christ’s life is a dream, and our being transformed with Christ as our life supply is also a dream. This is the dream of God’s eternal purpose, the dream of our enjoying Christ by eating Christ to be transformed by Christ so that we can be “Christified” to become the ultimate building of Christ, the reality of Bethel, the eternal house of Christ in us and us in Christ for the eternal glory and kingdom of Christ. We need to consecrate ourselves to El-bethel, “the God of the house of God” (Gen. 35:7), to enjoy Christ day by day so that we can be replaced with Christ to fulfill the dream of God’s eternal purpose. **AFC**

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Footnote from the Recovery Version of the Bible

“And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the **Son** of Man ” (John 1:51).

Son: This chapter...introduces Christ as both the Son of God (vv. 34, 49) and the Son of Man. Nathanael recognized Him as the Son of God and addressed Him as such (v. 49), but Christ said to Nathanael that He was the Son of Man. The Son of God is God; as such, He has the divine nature. The Son of Man is man; as such, He possesses the human nature. For the declaring of God (v. 18) and for the bringing of God to man, He is the only begotten Son of God. But for the building of God’s habitation on earth among men, He is the Son of Man. God’s building needs His humanity. In eternity past Christ was only God, only the Son of God, and had only divinity; but in eternity future Christ, as God and man and as the Son of God and the Son of Man, will have both divinity and humanity forever.