

The Church *as the Household of God in Ephesians*

by Witness Lee

In this article we shall consider the status of the church as the house of God. In the Bible there is the principle that the house of God is closely related to the kingdom of God. In fact, the house of God and the kingdom of God cannot be separated.

The first mention of the house of God in the Bible is in Genesis 28. One night, when Jacob was escaping from his brother, he had a dream. In his dream he saw “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” (v. 12). When he awoke from sleep, he said, “Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it” (v. 16). Jacob 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” (v. 17). Then Jacob “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” (vv. 18-19), which means “the house of God.”

This first mention of the house of God in the Bible is a seed that grows and develops elsewhere in the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus referred to Jacob’s dream in His word to Nathanael in John 1:51: “Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” This is the fulfillment of Jacob’s dream, for Christ as the Son of Man with His humanity is the ladder set up on the earth and leading to heaven, keeping heaven open to earth and joining earth to heaven for the house of God—Bethel.

Jacob poured oil (a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the ultimate expression of the Triune God reaching man) upon the stone (a symbol of the transformed man) that it might become the house of God. In chapter 1 of John we have the Spirit (v. 32) and the stone (v. 42) for the house of God with Christ in His humanity. It is significant, therefore, that according to the record of John 1, when Simon was brought to Jesus, the Lord looked at him and said, “You are Simon, the son of John; you shall be called Cephas (which is interpreted, Peter [a stone])” (v. 42). The Lord referred to this word of His when He spoke to Peter in Matthew 16:18 about the building of the church. Peter never forgot what the Lord said to him in John 1:42. It must have been from that word that Peter obtained the concept of living stones for the building of a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5), which is the church.

In the Old Testament the house of God, the temple, was in the city of Jerusalem. The holy temple was in the holy city. In two of the recovery books, Ezra and Nehemiah, this is emphasized. Ezra’s return to Jerusalem was for the rebuilding of the temple, but Nehemiah’s return was for the rebuilding of the city. God first has a house, and then this house is expanded, enlarged, into a city. In the Bible a city signifies a kingdom. The temple is a symbol of God’s house, and the city of Jerusalem is a symbol of God’s kingdom. Hence, the temple and the city, the house and the kingdom, are inseparable. Eventually,