

THE CONTENT OF THE CHURCH

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Gen 2:23

Long ago in the garden of Eden, God created man. And from this man, the scriptures tell us, He made (Heb. "builided") a woman. This woman was fashioned entirely from ingredients that came out of the man. While the man himself was formed from the dust of the ground, the woman, his wife to be, was made only from materials that came from him. When this woman was completed, she was given to the first man as his bride. Thus, in the beginning of the Bible, we have shown to us a type of something that will be happening at the end of time. This event is that of another man, Jesus Christ the Son of God, receiving His bride, the Church.

Although these two events are separated by much time, there are many similarities. The one similarity that we would like to emphasize here is that the Church, the bride of Christ, is also made entirely of what has come out of Jesus Christ. He is the origin of all that she is. There is nothing outside of Him that God is using to build the Church of God today. Only that which originates in Jesus Christ is good for God's building. This truth should carry for us a very important message and meaning. We must be careful when we are building the church today that we are using the right material. We want to be building with a kind of substance that will last for eternity.

Practically speaking, Jesus Christ is apprehended or known by us today through the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to know Him. He Himself has ascended into the heavens and is seated on the right hand of God. Yet He has shed forth, or poured out, His Spirit upon us. It is through this same Spirit that we know Him, experience Him, and follow Him. So it is also through the leading of the Holy Spirit that we are building the church today. This means that, in order to be genuine, our church experience must come from the Holy Spirit.

To become members of the Church initially, we had to have an experience of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. To continue to experience the church, we must continue to know and follow this same Holy Spirit every day. This is the only way that we can see and know the reality of the church. Without the Holy Spirit, there can be no church. Any works that we do, no matter how good they may be, cannot qualify as being really "church." We may visit the sick, give all our money away, perhaps sing many hymns, attend many meetings, and hear many sermons. Yet if all our activity is not led of and prompted by the Holy Spirit, it is not really "church." All our efforts can amount to outside of the Holy Spirit are quasi-religious activity. How we need to learn to know the Holy Spirit! We need to walk in the Spirit; move in the Spirit; and let our

actions, deeds and words be prompted by Him. By so doing, we can begin to experience the church in a real way.

This principle of the Holy Spirit being the originator and the builder of the Church is of foremost importance. It is one of the main tenets of the New Testament. Ephesians 2:22 plainly states that we are being "built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." If we do not understand this principle, we will have great difficulty knowing and enjoying the body of Christ. Without Him we can only grope our way along blindly, occasionally stumbling across the will of God or any kind of real church experience.

On the other hand, once we grasp this spiritual reality, a whole new vista of the church will be open to us. We can become a vital part of what God is doing. Our efforts no longer need to be misdirected or futile. Simply by following the leading of the Holy Spirit and being obedient to Him we can be building up the church today. This is one of the singularly most important aspects of the church which we need to see. If we grasp nothing else—if you understand nothing else from this reading—this is the main point to receive. That is, the church is composed only of what comes out from Jesus Christ; and this is conveyed to us today through the Holy Spirit.

This truth may have a profound effect upon us as we continue on with the Lord. If our church experience to this date has been highly organized and structured, perhaps the essential element of the Holy Spirit has been left out. Perhaps much of what we have known as the "church" has only been the ideas, programs and organizations of men. It is possible that many of you have not found your church experience satisfying. This could well be the reason. The church is actually one of the most rewarding, satisfying things in which a believer can participate. After Jesus Christ, she should be our main priority. Building her up in various ways—by evangelism, pastoring, teaching, by all the different workings of the body of Christ—should be our goal. Helping her grow and mature in the Lord, seeing her being purified and made ready to someday marry Jesus Christ the Son of God, is our privilege. Someday we will be a part of that wedding. May we spend our time here on earth preparing.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a supernatural entity. Though the visible church is made up of men in human bodies, inwardly there is divine glory. She is a great spiritual reality which is waiting to be manifested when God is ready. The Bible teaches us that the whole creation groans in travail until now, just waiting for the manifestation, or the unveiling of the sons of God (Rom 8:19,22). This is our destiny. This is what we have to look forward to. May we turn our eyes to see what God is doing, and become a part of what He is doing. Let us work together with Him to produce the Church which He will inhabit for eternity.