

## **THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURES**

In this series of messages, we want to cover the enjoyment of the Lord. Among today's Christians there is a real shortage of the adequate knowledge of God as our enjoyment. We may have heard many things about God, but we have to see that the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, shows us that God is our enjoyment. God also has His fullness (Eph. 3:19b). He is full for us to enjoy. His fullness is the expression of the riches of Christ, and the reality of Christ is in the Spirit. We know this by the revelation of the Word. The riches of Christ are revealed in the Word. Furthermore, we can realize God as our enjoyment in our spirit (John 4:24).

### **THE ENJOYMENT OF THE LORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The first major thing revealed to us about God in the Scriptures is that He is our enjoyment. Right after God created man, He presented Himself as the tree of life to be eaten by man (Gen. 2:7-9). Thus, God is the tree of life to be enjoyed by us. He presented Himself to man as life in the form of food for man to enjoy.

After the fall of man, God presented Himself to man in the form of a lamb (Exo. 12:4). Through this passover lamb, fallen man could be redeemed back to God. The redeemed people of God ate the meat of the lamb for their enjoyment.

Following the eating of the meat of the passover lamb, the children of Israel were also to eat the unleavened bread with bitter herbs (v. 8). This is the enjoyment of God by His redeemed people.

Then in the wilderness the children of Israel enjoyed the manna (16:14-15) and the living water (17:6). These are two other aspects of Christ as our enjoyment.

When the people entered into the good land, they enjoyed the riches of the produce of this land (Deut. 8:8-9). The produce of the good land is the different aspects of the riches of Christ for the redeemed ones to enjoy.

Also, with the tabernacle there were all the offerings for the priests to offer and enjoy by feasting (Lev. 6:8—7:34). All the different items of the offerings typify different aspects of Christ for our enjoyment.

Psalms 23 says that the Lord is our Shepherd (v. 1). He is also the green pastures and waters of rest (v. 2). He is the table before us in the presence of our adversaries (v. 5). This means that we enjoy Him as our feast on the battlefield. This psalm also speaks of the dwelling place of God (v. 6). God Himself is our dwelling place for us to enjoy Him. Psalm 90:1 says that the Lord is our habitation, our dwelling place, in all generations.

Psalms 34 says that we can taste the Lord (v. 8). To taste the Lord is to enjoy Him. Psalm 36 says that we can enjoy the fatness of the Lord's house and drink of the river of God's pleasures (v. 8). We can drink of the river of the joy of God (46:4).

Jeremiah 17 says that we can be like a tree planted by the waters. We are the tree, and God is the living water to us (vv. 7-8). We can enjoy God just as the tree enjoys the water of the river. All these passages from the Old Testament show us how God is our enjoyment in many aspects.

### **THE ENJOYMENT OF THE LORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Now we come to the New Testament. In Matthew the Lord Jesus likened Himself to the bread on the table. He told the Canaanite woman that it was not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. She responded by saying that even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table (15:21-28). As a Gentile dog, the Canaanite woman could still enjoy the Lord as the crumbs for her portion. Even in Matthew we can see that the Lord is our enjoyment. We must enjoy Him as the bread.

Matthew 22 says that the gospel is a feast (vv. 1-14). Luke 15 tells us that when the prodigal son returned home, he not only was clothed with the best robe but also sat down at the table to feast on the fattened calf with his father (vv. 22-23).

*Hymns*, #187 has twenty-six stanzas which speak of all the items of Christ as our enjoyment in the Gospel of John. The twenty-one chapters of the Gospel of John are full of the riches of Christ for our enjoyment. Christ is the tabernacle (1:14), the Lamb (v. 29), the ladder (v. 51), the living water (4:14), the bread of life (6:35), the light (8:12), the way, the reality, the life (14:6), the door (10:9), and the Shepherd (v. 11). One of the first items of Christ in John is that Christ came as the Lamb. This was the first testimony given to Him by John the Baptist, who said, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (1:29). Eventually, John testified in the book of Revelation that this One will be the Lamb of God on the throne for

eternity (Rev. 22:1). The Lamb is the opener for us to enter into the enjoyment of God. If fallen man wants to enjoy God, he needs to pass through the entrance of redemption. He needs the redeeming Lamb as the entrance into the enjoyment of God.

In John the Lord told us that He is the great I Am. The Lord referred to Himself in this way three times in John 8. In verse 24 He said, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." In verse 28 He said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am." Finally, in verse 58 He said, "Before Abraham came into being, I am." As the great I Am, He is what we need. It is as if the Lord were saying, "I am what you need." We can fill in the blank after the phrase *I am* for whatever we need. The Lord said, "I am the light, I am the way, I am the life, I am the truth, I am the door, I am the Shepherd, I am the ladder, I am the bread of life, I am the living water, etc." The Gospel of John reveals the wonderful fact that Christ is the great I Am. This means that He is everything to us for our enjoyment. The message of the Gospel of John is that God in Christ through the Holy Spirit is our enjoyment.

The first verse of this book says, "In the beginning was the Word,...and the Word was God." In this Word, who is God Himself, is life, and this life is the light. The Word became incarnated to tabernacle among us, so He is also the tabernacle. The tabernacle is not only God's dwelling place but also the place where the priests dwell. We cannot exhaust all the aspects of God as our enjoyment.

The same thought is in the Epistles of Paul. First Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of Christ (see footnote 2 on 1 Corinthians 1:9, Recovery Version). Chapter 5 speaks of Christ as our Passover and our unleavened bread (vv. 7-8). Chapter 10 speaks of Christ as the manna and the living water (vv. 3-4). It also speaks of the Lord's table (vv. 14-22). The table is for our enjoyment. Chapter 11 speaks of the bread and cup of the table for us to enjoy (vv. 23-26).

In Peter's first Epistle, we see that as newborn babes, we have to long for the Lord as the milk of the word (2:2). The Lord Himself is milk to us for us to drink and grow by.

In the book of Revelation, Christ is the tree of life promised by the Lord to the overcomers (2:7). He is also the hidden manna for the overcomers' enjoyment (v. 17). In chapter 3 He is the feast for the enjoyment of the overcomers (v. 20). The Lord will dine with us and we with Him. In chapter 19 is the wedding feast, the feast of the Lord's marriage (vv. 7-9). Finally, in chapter 22 there is the living water flowing and the tree of life growing for us to enjoy (vv. 1-2). Actually, we need to have meeting after meeting for many days to see all the items of God as our enjoyment from Genesis through Revelation.

We need to read and study the Bible from the beginning to the end with this point of view. We need to realize from the Bible how God is our enjoyment. No doubt, the Bible tells us that we have to worship and serve God. But the first point in our contacting God is not for us to worship or serve Him but to enjoy Him. We have to enjoy Him first; then we can worship Him. We have to eat Him first; then we can serve Him.

Our human concept is contrary to God's concept that He wants us to enjoy Him. When the prodigal son returned to his father, he intended to say, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:19). Once he has repented, a fallen sinner always thinks of working for God or serving God to obtain God's favor, not knowing that this thought is against God's love and grace and is an insult to His heart and intent. God's desire is for us to enjoy Him. According to human principles, we work first and then we receive payment for our work. The prodigal son also wanted to ask his father to take him as a servant so that he could work for his father and then have something to eat, something on which to live. But the father brought his son to the table right away. This means that the father wanted his son to enjoy first and then work.

In today's Christianity much is said about serving, worshipping, and working for God. But we must see that we need to enjoy God. Some may even criticize us by saying, "These people do not go out to work for the Lord. They just talk about eating and enjoyment. This is too selfish. They are just for themselves and do not care for others. They do not have the outreach for the salvation of sinners." We need to see that we can have much service with many programs and activities without much result. The work must be the fruit of the enjoyment of God. In John 15 the Lord said, "Abide in Me and I in you"; then you will bear fruit (vv. 4-5). The work comes out of the full enjoyment of God. We must be brought back to the realization and understanding that we need God as our enjoyment. We have to know the items of God as our enjoyment and the way that we can enjoy Him. We also have to help others to know how to enjoy God. Then we will all be filled with Him, and some fruit will be produced. That will be the proper work, the proper activity.

*(The Enjoyment of Christ, Chapter 1, by Witness Lee)*