

WEEK 4 — OUTLINE

The Corporate Thornbush

Scripture Reading: Deut. 33:1, 16; Exo. 3:2-6a; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Luke 12:49-50; Acts 2:2-4

<<DAY 1>>

I. In the eyes of God, Moses was a thornbush burning with the Triune God (cf. Deut. 33:1, 16); as individuals, we all are today's Moses, but we are also a part of the church as the corporate thornbush (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15-16):

- A. When God called Moses, he saw the great sight of a burning thornbush; once we were thorns under the curse in Genesis 3, but in Exodus 3 we are a redeemed thornbush; this burning thornbush is both the children of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament.
- B. In the church today there are still “thorns”; the church is not yet precious stone; nevertheless, we praise the Lord that we are undergoing the process of transformation (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).
- C. In Deuteronomy 33:16 Moses spoke of God as the One who dwelt in the thornbush; this word was uttered when Moses was one hundred twenty years of age, forty years after he had seen the vision of the burning thornbush:
 - 1. Moses never forgot that vision, even after the tabernacle had been built and God had come to dwell in it.
 - 2. How marvelous that a thornbush can be God's dwelling place on earth today!

<<DAY 2>>

II. God's ultimate goal is to obtain a dwelling place; this means that God's eternal purpose is to build up His habitation:

- A. In Genesis we have the revelation of the house of God at Bethel (28:10-22), but we do not have the actual building of the house of God.
- B. At the beginning of Exodus God dwelt in the thornbush, but at the end of the book He dwelt in the tabernacle (3:2-6a; 40:34-38).
- C. The tabernacle with the Ark thus became the focal point of the history of the children of Israel; eventually, the tabernacle was enlarged into the temple.
- D. The Lord Jesus came both as God's tabernacle (John 1:14) and as God's temple (2:19); the church today is also the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16);

ultimately, this temple will consummate in the New Jerusalem, which will be both God's tabernacle and God's temple in eternity (Rev. 21:3, 22).

E. In the beginning God's dwelling place was a redeemed thornbush, but gradually this thornbush is being sanctified, transformed, conformed, and even glorified; the tabernacle is an illustration of transformation:

1. In the tabernacle there was acacia wood overlaid with gold and also linen embroidered with gold thread; both the acacia wood and the linen signify humanity, and the gold signifies divinity (Exo. 25:10-11; 26:15, 29; 36:34; 37:1-2; 28:6; 39:3).
2. In Exodus 3 God's dwelling was a thornbush, but in Exodus 40 His dwelling was the tabernacle made of humanity overlaid by and interwoven with divinity; such an overlaid and embroidered humanity is a transformed humanity.

«DAY 3»

F. Both the thornbush and the tabernacle are symbols; God's actual dwelling place was neither the physical thornbush nor the tabernacle; it was His people:

1. After the children of Israel had been dealt with by God, they became acacia wood overlaid with gold and also linen embroidered with gold thread; the church today is the fulfillment of this type.
2. At present, the church may be a redeemed thornbush; however, the day is coming when we shall be gold, pearl, and precious stone (Rev. 21:18-21).
3. Praise the Lord for this marvelous vision of God's dwelling place! This vision covers God's habitation from the initial stage, the stage of the thornbush, to the consummate stage, the stage of the New Jerusalem.

G. When Moses was called by God, he saw the holy fire burning within the thornbush; when Paul was called, he saw the same vision in principle (cf. Acts 9:4-5):

1. Paul saw the Triune God burning within His redeemed ones; through this divine burning, the holy fire was one with the thornbush, and the thornbush was one with the fire, which is the Triune God Himself.
2. The Lord Jesus once said that He came to cast fire on the earth (Luke 12:49-50); on the day of Pentecost the Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire (Acts 2:2-4).
3. Today the Lord is still casting fire on the earth; this holy fire, this divine burning, has captured us, and now we are part of the thornbush that is burning with the Triune God.
4. The Triune God is burning within and upon the church, which He has chosen and redeemed; thus, the church is the Triune God burning within a redeemed humanity; this is the divine economy.
5. This economy was revealed to Paul (Eph. 3:3-5, 9), and it is the focus of the divine

revelation; Moses saw this in symbol, but Paul saw it in reality.

6. How we praise the Lord that His economy has been unveiled to us! Every local church is a thornbush burning with the Triune God.
7. In Ephesians 1 and 3 we have the divine economy, the dispensing of the Triune God into His redeemed people so that they may become His expression; this dispensing brings into being the church as the burning thornbush today.

<<DAY 4>>

III. Because of God's redemption, the excluding flame of Genesis 3 has become the visiting and indwelling flame of Exodus 3 (Gen. 3:24; Exo. 3:2-3; Gal. 3:13-14; Rom. 12:11; 2 Tim. 1:6-7):

- A. The thorns in Genesis 3 indicate that fallen man is under a curse (vv. 17-18).
- B. Sin brought in the curse, and the curse brought in the excluding flame of fire (v. 24).
- C. In Exodus 3 the cursed thorn becomes the vessel of God, and the flame of fire becomes one with the thornbush (vv. 2-4):
 1. Through redemption, signified by the lamb slain and offered to God for fallen man (Gen. 4:4), the curse has been taken away, and the fire has become one with the thorn.
 2. Galatians 3:13 and 14 reveal that the redeeming Christ has taken away the curse and that the Spirit as the fire has been given to us (cf. Luke 12:49-50; Acts 2:3-4).
- D. The very God Himself, the Holy One whose holiness excludes sinners from His presence, can come to visit us, stay with us, and even dwell in us through the redemption of Christ.

<<DAY 5>>

IV. The church is a corporate thornbush burning with the God of resurrection:

- A. The children of Israel were a corporate thornbush; as such a thornbush, they were redeemed (Exo. 13:14-16), sanctified (v. 2), transformed, and built up; this is a type of the church as a corporate thornbush.
- B. Do not say that the church is poor, low, or dead; the more you say this, the more you put yourself under a curse, but if you praise the Lord for the church life and speak well concerning it, you will put yourself under God's blessing:
 1. "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (Num. 23:21).

2. “How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your tabernacles, O Israel!” (24:5).
3. “Blessed is everyone who blesses you, / And cursed is everyone who curses you” (v. 9b).

<<DAY 6>>

- C. From the time that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem until now, every nation, people, race, or individual who has cursed the Jewish people has received a curse, and whoever has blessed the Jewish people has received a blessing (Gen. 12:3); it is the same with our attitude toward the church—if we curse the church, we will be cursed, but if we bless the church, we will be blessed.
- D. In spite of all the division, sin, confusion, abuse of gifts, and heretical teaching in the church in Corinth, the apostle still called it the church of God because the divine and spiritual essence which makes the assembled believers the church of God was actually there (1 Cor. 1:2).
- E. Being a corporate thornbush as God’s dwelling place today is a matter altogether in resurrection:
 1. The church is “Christly,” “resurrectionly,” and heavenly (cf. Gen. 2:22; Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6).
 2. Resurrection is the life pulse and lifeline of the divine economy (1 Cor. 15:12).
 3. Our labor for the Lord in His resurrection life with His resurrection power will never be in vain, but will result in the fulfilling of God’s eternal purpose through the preaching of Christ to sinners, the ministering of life to the saints, and the building up of the church with the experiences of the processed Triune God as gold, silver, and precious stones (v. 58; 3:12).
- F. Individually we are a thornbush, and together we are a corporate thornbush burning with the God of resurrection; this is a picture of the church life today.

<< WEEK 4 – DAY 1 >>

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 3:17-18 ...To Adam He said...Cursed is the ground because of you....Thorns and thistles will it bring forth for you...

Exo. 3:3-4 ...Moses said, I must turn aside now and see this great sight, why the thornbush does not burn up. And when Jehovah saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the midst of the thornbush...

The thornbush in Exodus 3 is a symbol of Moses as God's called one....No one has much appreciation for a thornbush. Although Moses had been rejected by man, he was accepted by God, and the fire of God's glory burned within him and upon him. Therefore, Moses was a thornbush burning with the glory of God.

The burning thornbush in Exodus 3, however, refers not only to Moses as an individual but also to the children of Israel as a corporate entity. God's people, the children of Israel, included those who were weak and those who were strong. Moses was only one among God's corporate people. To the Lord, the thornbush burning in chapter three was not only an individual but also a corporate people....As individuals, we all are today's Moses. But we are also part of the church as the corporate thornbush. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 73)

Today's Reading

God's goal in dealing with His people, the children of Israel, was to obtain a proper dwelling place. Deuteronomy 33:16 speaks of God as the One who dwelt in the thornbush. This word, written by Moses, indicates that God possessed that burning thornbush as His house, His dwelling place. Who would ever have thought that God's habitation on earth would be a thornbush?

Moses must have realized that the burning thornbush he saw when God called him was a symbol of himself. At the time of Deuteronomy 33, Moses regarded himself as a thornbush, but to God he was "the man of God" (Deut. 33:1). In the individual aspect Moses was a thornbush, and in the corporate aspect the children of Israel were a thornbush. Nevertheless, the God of blessing dwelt in such a bush. If God does not dwell in us, we are finished....Although we may be cultured ladies and gentlemen or well-trained professionals, we still are thornbushes because our fallen nature is related to thorns and to the curse.

In referring to God as the One who dwelt in the thornbush, Moses' heart must have been full of thanks to God. During the last forty years of his life, Moses knew that he was just a thornbush. But he knew also that God was with him. We all need to have such a realization. Whenever we have a proper spirit before the Lord, we know that we are a thornbush. We know that even our natural virtues, such as kindness, humility, and patience, are "thorns."...As he was blessing the children of Israel, Moses must have had such a sense about himself.

We have pointed out that the burning thornbush refers to God's redeemed people. Once we were thorns under the curse in Genesis 3, but in Exodus 3 we are a redeemed thornbush. Now God is burning within us and upon us. This burning thornbush is both the children of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. In the church today there are still "thorns"; the church is not yet precious stone. Nevertheless, we praise the Lord that we are undergoing the process of transformation.

In Deuteronomy 33:16 Moses spoke of God as the One who dwelt in the thornbush. This word was uttered when Moses was one hundred twenty years of age, forty years after he had seen the vision of the burning thornbush. Moses never forgot that vision, even after the tabernacle had been built and God had come to dwell in it. In Deuteronomy 33:16 why did not Moses speak of the good will of "Him who dwelt in the tabernacle"? I believe that for Moses to speak of God dwelling in the tabernacle would not have been as sweet as it was for him to speak of God dwelling in the thornbush. I believe that even when we are in the New Jerusalem we shall recall how we once were a thornbush indwelt by God. How marvelous that a thornbush can be God's dwelling place on earth today! (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 73-74, 110)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 7

<< WEEK 4 – DAY 2 >>

Morning Nourishment

Deut. 33:1 ...This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death.

16 [May Joseph be blessed] with the choicest things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, and the favor of Him who dwelt in the thornbush...

Exo. 40:34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

God's ultimate goal is to obtain a dwelling place. This means that God's eternal purpose is to build up His habitation. In Genesis we have the revelation of the house of God at Bethel, but we do not have the actual building of the house of God. At the beginning of Exodus God dwelt in the thornbush, but at the end of the book He dwelt in the tabernacle. The tabernacle with the Ark thus became the focal point of the history of the children of Israel. Eventually, the tabernacle was enlarged into the temple. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 110-111)

Today's Reading

The Lord Jesus came both as God's tabernacle (John 1:14) and as God's temple (John 2:19). The church today is also the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16). Ultimately, this temple will consummate in the New Jerusalem, which will be God's temple in eternity.

In the beginning God's dwelling place was a redeemed thornbush, but gradually this thornbush is being sanctified, transformed, conformed, and even glorified. The tabernacle is an illustration of transformation. In the tabernacle there were acacia wood overlaid with gold and also linen embroidered with golden thread. Both the acacia wood and the linen signify humanity, and the gold signifies divinity. Such an overlaid and embroidered humanity is a transformed humanity. In Exodus 3 God's dwelling was a thornbush, but in Exodus 40 His dwelling was the tabernacle made of humanity overlaid by and interwoven with divinity.

If we are like Moses, the man of God, we shall have a twofold consciousness. On the one hand, we shall be conscious of the fact that we are thornbushes; on the other hand, we shall be conscious of God's glory dwelling within us as a burning flame. Moses became a man of God, but he still considered himself a thornbush. In the same principle, God's glory dwelt among the children of Israel and made them His glorious dwelling place, but they were still a thornbush, even a corporate thornbush.

According to Deuteronomy 33:1, Moses was a man of God. This indicates transformation. Apart from the process of transformation, how could Moses, a man so strong and active in his natural life, become a man of God? Only through transformation could he become such a person. One example of Moses' transformation was his experience with the Lord on the mountaintop. After Moses had been with the Lord on the mountain for forty days, his face was shining because the flame of God's holy fire had been burned into him. Moses was like steel that is thrust into fire and kept there until the steel glows with the fire that has been burned into its very essence. When Moses was on the mountaintop, God's glory was burned into his being. When he came down from the mountain, his face was shining [Exo. 34:30]....Was that not a sign of transformation? It was a sure indication that Moses was being transformed. According to his training in the palace, Moses could have become an expert in all the Egyptian knowledge. But because he had been redeemed, called, sanctified, and transformed, instead he eventually became a man of God.

In the Lord's recovery we do not care for a large number; we care for the genuine experience of transformation. I am happy that we are under the divine burning, the burning that transforms us and makes us dispositionally different from the worldly people. Because the element of God is being burned into our nature, we are becoming men of God. This is what it means to be a burning thornbush in an individual sense. According to our nature, we are still a thornbush, but according to God's burning within us, we are transformed people. On the one hand, we are a thornbush; on the other hand, we are men of God. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 111, 76-78)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 10

<< WEEK 4 – DAY 3 >>

Morning Nourishment

Exo. 40:38 For the cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel on all their journeys.

Rev. 21:10-11 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

Both the thornbush and the tabernacle are symbols. God's actual dwelling place was neither the physical thornbush nor the tabernacle; it was His people. After the children of Israel had been dealt with by God, they became acacia wood overlaid with gold and also linen embroidered with golden thread. The church today is the fulfillment of this type. At present the church may be a redeemed thornbush. However, the day is coming when we shall be gold, pearl, and precious stone. Praise the Lord for the marvelous vision of God's dwelling place! This vision covers God's habitation from the initial stage, the stage of the thornbush, to the consummate stage, the stage of the New Jerusalem. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 111)

Today's Reading

When Moses was called by God, he saw the holy fire burning within the thornbush. When Paul was called, he saw the same vision, at least in principle. He saw the Triune God burning within His redeemed ones. Through this divine burning, the holy fire was one with the thornbush, and the thornbush was one with the fire, which is the Triune God Himself. Today God the Father in the Son and the Son as the Spirit have come down upon us as fire. The Lord Jesus once said that He came to cast fire upon the earth (Luke 12:49). On the day of Pentecost the Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire. Today the Lord is still casting fire upon the earth. This holy fire, this divine burning, has captured us, and now we are part of the thornbush that is burning with the Triune God. The Triune God is burning within and upon the church He has chosen and redeemed. Thus, the church is the Triune God burning within a redeemed humanity. This is the divine economy (1 Tim. 1:4).

This economy was revealed to Paul (Eph. 3:3-5, 9). It is, in fact, the focus of the divine revelation. Moses saw this in symbol, but Paul saw it in reality...We boldly proclaim that we have seen the vision of the burning thornbush. Every local church is a thornbush burning with the Triune God.

Moses and Paul could not forget the vision they had seen. Paul's Epistles reveal that nothing, including imprisonment and martyrdom, could turn him from the vision. Paul was steadfast unto the end because he had been captured by the heavenly vision. The death of those martyred for the Lord can only cause the thornbush to burn more than ever.

Thousands of us today have seen the vision of the burning bush, and no one can change us. We cannot even change ourselves. If we try to turn away from the vision, the vision does not let us go. We have been "wrecked" by the vision we have seen...Many have testified that they cannot turn away from the vision of the church in God's economy. The opposers should realize that it is too late to stand against the Lord's recovery because so many have seen the vision of the burning thornbush. Hallelujah for the vision of the Triune God burning within the church!

Every aspect of God's calling of Moses can be found in the writings of Paul. In Paul's Epistles we see the vision of the burning thornbush. In Ephesians 1 and 3 we have the divine economy, the dispensing of the Triune God into His redeemed people so that they may become His expression. This dispensation brings into being the church as the burning thornbush today. How glad I am to be part of this burning bush! Because we have seen this vision, we could never go back to religion. Rather, the vision causes us to press on. Even many of the young people can bear witness that they have seen the vision of the burning thornbush, the vision of God's economy in today's church. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 111-113)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 10

<< WEEK 4 – DAY 4 >>

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 3:24 So He drove the man out, and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Exo. 3:2 And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thornbush. And when he looked, there was the thornbush, burning with fire; but the thornbush was not consumed.

We need to see that there is a connection between Genesis 3 and Exodus 3. In both chapters we have the thorn and the fire. The thorn in Genesis 3 indicates that man is under a curse (vv. 17-18), and the flame of fire indicates that man is excluded from God as the tree of life (vv. 22-24). According to Genesis 3, thorns came from the curse due to sin. Hence, thorns are a symbol of fallen man under the curse. Immediately after the curse was pronounced, a flaming sword was placed at the east of the garden “to guard the way to the tree of life” (v. 24). Thus, sin brought in the curse, and the curse brought in the flame of fire. The function of fire in Genesis 3 is to exclude sinners from the tree of life, that is, from God as the source of life. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 74-75)

Today's Reading

If the Bible had ended with Genesis 3:24, our situation would be forever hopeless. According to chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, we were created specifically to receive God as life. The man created by God was placed in front of the tree of life. Then in chapter 3 sin came in, man fell under the curse, and the fire of God's holiness excluded the cursed sinners from any direct contact with God as the tree of life....Man's situation in Exodus 3 is much different from that in Genesis 3. In Exodus 3 the cursed thorn becomes the vessel of God, and the flame of fire becomes one with the thornbush. Through redemption, signified by the lamb slain and offered to God for fallen man (Gen. 4:4), the curse has been taken away, and the fire has become one with the thorn.

The reality of this picture is seen in Galatians 3:13 and 14. Verse 13 says, “Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf.” This means that through the death of Christ on the cross the curse has been taken away. Verse 14 continues, “That the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Therefore, according to these verses the curse has been taken away, and the Spirit, the fire, has been given to us.

Acts 2:3 and 4 indicate that the outpoured Spirit is symbolized by tongues of fire. This outpouring of the Spirit as fire was predicted by the Lord Jesus in Luke 12:49: “I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled!” On the day of Pentecost the promised Spirit, given through the redemption of Christ which took away the curse, came upon the disciples in the form of fire. This fire no longer excludes us from God; instead, it is the flame of God's visitation.

Considering this in the light of the picture in Exodus 3, we see that the thorn and the flame are one. In Genesis 3 fallen man was under the curse signified by the thorn. There the flame of fire excluded this fallen man from God as the tree of life. In Exodus 3, however, the thornbush, which can be considered a type of vessel, and the fire are one. In Genesis 3 the fire keeps the man who is under the curse away from the tree of life, away from God as the source of life. But in Exodus 3 the flame of fire visits the thornbush and indwells it. This indicates that through the redemption of Christ the very God Himself, the holy One whose holiness excludes sinners from His presence, can come to visit us, to stay with us, and even to dwell in us. Hallelujah, Christ has taken away the curse and has cast down to earth the fire of the Holy Spirit! Now that the curse has been taken away, we are no longer excluded from God as life. Praise the Lord that the excluding flame of Genesis 3 has become the visiting and indwelling flame of Exodus 3! Now the once-cursed thorn can become God's dwelling place. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 75-76)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 7

« WEEK 4 – DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

Num. 23:21 He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen trouble in Israel; Jehovah their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them.

24:5 How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your tabernacles, O Israel!

9 ...Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you.

The children of Israel were a corporate thornbush. As such a thornbush, they were redeemed (Exo. 13:14-16), sanctified (v. 2), transformed, and built up. Perhaps you find it difficult to believe that the children of Israel were transformed....A prayer meeting in Shanghai in the early 1940s...helped me to see God's people as He sees them....An experienced sister co-worker,...as she prayed,...sighed and groaned because of the poor condition of the church. When she finished praying, Brother Nee broke forth in praise to the Lord and gave Him thanks that the church is never weak or low but always high. The congregation was shocked. Then Brother Nee helped us to understand the significance of Balaam's prophecy regarding the children of Israel. Balaam was hired by Balak to curse the children of Israel. But instead of cursing God's people, Balaam blessed them....According to [Numbers 23:21 and 24:5], God did not see iniquity or perverseness in Israel. Instead, He saw only goodness, fairness, and beauty. The same is true regarding the church today. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 78-79)

Today's Reading

Do not say that the church is low or dead. The more you say this, the more you put yourself under a curse. However, if you praise the Lord for the church life and speak well concerning it, you will put yourself under God's blessing. During all the years I have been in the church life, I have not seen one person who spoke negatively about the church who was under God's blessing. On the contrary, all who have said that the church was poor, low, or dead have been under a curse. Those who speak positively about the church, declaring that the church is lovely and that it is God's house, receive the blessing.

The children of Israel could be a corporate thornbush because they had been transformed and built up. God believed this, and we need to agree with Him. The tabernacle signified the children of Israel as God's dwelling place. Do not regard the tabernacle as something apart from the children of Israel. Actually, it was the children of Israel who were God's dwelling place. The tabernacle was merely a symbol.

After the tabernacle was erected, it was filled with the glory of the Lord (Exo. 40:34-35). At night, the cloud of glory had the appearance of fire (Num. 9:15-16). The fire burning upon the tabernacle signified that the people of Israel were a corporate burning thornbush.

When Moses spoke of God as the One who dwelt in the thornbush, it is difficult to tell whether he was referring to the actual thornbush he had seen forty years before or to himself and to the children of Israel respectively as an individual and a corporate thornbush. I believe that his word includes all this. On the one hand, we are still a thornbush; on the other hand, through redemption, sanctification, transformation, and building, we are God's dwelling place. Hallelujah, today God has a dwelling place on earth! Satan might say to God, "Your people are merely a thornbush." But God would reply, "Satan, get behind Me. Don't you know that this people has been redeemed, sanctified, and transformed? They have also been built up, and now they are one. Therefore, I am dwelling among them. You say that they are a thornbush, but I declare that they are My dwelling place." The church today is God's dwelling place. You may think that the church is uncomely, but to God it is lovely. You may criticize the church for its shortcomings, but God says that He sees no iniquity in His people. Regarding His people, God says, "I find no fault in them. I am in their midst, and they are My dwelling place on earth." This is the church as the corporate thornbush. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 79-82)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 7

<< WEEK 4 – DAY 6 >>

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

1 Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours.

From the time that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem until now, every nation, people, race, or individual who has cursed the Jewish people has received a curse, and whoever has blessed the Jews has received a blessing. (Gen. 12:3, footnote 1)

The church of God! Not the church of Cephas, of Apollos, of Paul, or of any practice or doctrine, but of God. In spite of all the division, sin, confusion, abusing of gifts, and heretical teaching in the church in Corinth, the apostle still called it “the church of God” because the divine and spiritual essence which makes the assembled believers the church of God was actually there. Such a spiritual address by the apostle was based on his spiritual view in looking upon the church in Christ. Such a simple address alone should have eliminated all the division and confusion in both practice and doctrine. (1 Cor. 1:2, footnote 1)

Today’s Reading

The very God in the thornbush, the One who called Moses, was the God of resurrection. This is proved by the Lord’s word to the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27. As the Sadducees were arguing with Him concerning resurrection, the Lord said, “But concerning the dead, that they are raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the section concerning the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Here the Lord pointed the unbelieving Sadducees to the section in the Scriptures concerning the thornbush. The title, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” implies the God of resurrection. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have all died. If God were the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and there were no resurrection, then God would be the God of the dead. But God is not the God of the dead; He is the God of the living, the God of resurrection.

The fact that the God of resurrection dwelt in the thornbush indicates that being a corporate thornbush as God’s dwelling place today is a matter altogether in resurrection. The holy One can visit us and dwell among us because He is in resurrection. He is the God of resurrection, and we, His people, are in resurrection.

As those who are still in the flesh, it may be difficult for us to believe or to realize that we are in resurrection. If I were to ask you whether you are in the natural life or in the resurrection life, you would probably say that, for the most part, you are in the natural life. However, if you say this, you do not have faith. We need to be strong in faith and declare that we are in resurrection because our God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. In myself, I am in the flesh and in the natural life, but in my God, I am in resurrection....In resurrection He is the great I Am. We all need to say in faith that we are in resurrection. The more we speak this in faith, the more it will become our experience.

What we say is what we experience. If we say that we are in the flesh, then we shall be in the flesh. But if we say that we are in resurrection, then we shall be in resurrection. Because the very God who indwells us is the God of resurrection, we have a basis for declaring that we are in resurrection. Here, in resurrection, the thornbush can be blessed to be God’s dwelling place.

We realize that, at best, we are just a thornbush. Nevertheless, the great I Am, the God of resurrection, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, dwells within us, and we enjoy Him. Individually we are a thornbush, and together we are a corporate thornbush burning with the God of resurrection. This is a picture of the church life today. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 82-84)

Further Reading: Elders’ Training, Book 2: The Vision of the Lord’s Recovery, ch. 3

<< WEEK 4 — HYMN

Hymns, #352

1

In the wilderness for God!
Just a common bush aflame!
Thus may I be, blessed Lord,
For the glory of Thy Name.

2

Just a common bush to be,
Something in which God can dwell,
Something thru which God can speak,
Something thru which God can tell,

3

All His yearning over men,
All His purposes of love,
Flaming with no light of earth,
But with glory from above:

4

God Himself within the bush,
Nothing seen but just the flame;
Make me that, just that, O God,
For the glory of Thy Name.