

The Life the Church Should Have

1. Looking at Life from Types in the Old Testament

I think brothers and sisters all know the theme of this conference. It is in Matthew 6:13, 'For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever'. Perhaps brothers and sisters may wonder why there would be two additional topics – The Prayer the Church Should Have and The Life the Church Should Have – besides the main theme. These two topics are not unnecessary because last year when brothers gathered to determine the theme for this conference, we all felt whether we can share a little more on the practical aspect of the theme. So we added these two topics. These two topics are not unrelated to the theme. Rather, they are related to the theme. The brothers entrusted Brother Wong to share on 'The Prayer the Church Should Have'. I am to share on 'The Life the Church Should Have'. This time I have two sessions and this morning we are going to look at how the Church gives the kingdom, the power and the glory to God through life. Or we can say, how the Church through life can testify the kingdom is His; the power is His; the glory is His. Therefore we need to manifest in our life the kingdom, the power and the glory. This is the responsibility of the church.

First we will look at this matter from the work of God on His Types in the Old Testament. We will read a few bible verses.

Genesis 12: 1 – 3. *Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed'.*

Exodus 3: 7 – 8. *The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

Exodus 16: 4. *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.*

Exodus 16:35. *The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

Exodus 17: 6. *Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.*

Exodus 40:38. *For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.*

I Corinthians 10: 1 – 4. *For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.*

Types in the Old Testament

We can clearly see from the Bible that this Kingdom, authority (power) and glory primarily belongs to God all along. However, the Lord taught us to pray this prayer in Matthew 16:3. By His teaching, even though all these belong to Him, He also hopes the church can manifest this kingdom, power and glory. That is to say, through the church life, the church can testify the kingdom is His, the power is His and the glory is His.

Our brothers already shared that the verse Matthew 6:13 is not only a proclamation because there is a reality to it. We know God has a kingdom; the kingdom is His but He also calls us to enter into His kingdom. We also know the power is His but He also enables His children to experience what the power of God is. Glory is His but He also empowers the church to manifest His glory. Thus today, we hereby proclaim that the kingdom is Yours, the power is Yours and the glory is Yours. This cannot be in words only; this should be an outpouring of its reality in life. The way to accomplish this reality in life is important in the heart desire of God. We know it is a reality only when the church enters into such a life. We know from the revelation in God’s words that He has a glorious will. We can say this kingdom, power and glory is a significant part of the content of God’s will.

In His will, God not only has plans, revelations and principles but more importantly, a life that can be put into practice. God wants us to testify all these in our life. Thus the church needs to pray. And what is that prayer? We pray that God makes all these to be a reality in church life. Apart from prayer, we also need to have practical experiences in our life. Life is reality and reality is life. So brothers and sisters, even though God uses types as a way to speak to us in the Old Testament, yet a lot of matters like kingdom, power and glory are comparatively hidden. However, the heart desire of God is very clearly expressed. So brothers and sisters, we will look at how God uses types in the Old Testament to speak to

us. Of course God uses many lives of individuals in the Old Testament to speak to us. The Old Testament recorded the lives of many people and from their lives we can see how God led them. From all these lives, there is an important principle we need to take note of today. That is, God for the sake of His will, He has to change man's way of living. This change is very important because we cannot achieve at God's will unless we have these changes. We can enter into God's blessings only when we are changed. Among all these individuals, I can only choose one or two to share so we can learn of God's will from their lives.

Abraham

We will first look at Abraham. Thank God that Brother Kaung has already given us a simple account of his life yesterday. Abraham was a very important figure in the Old Testament. We can also say Abraham was the first person to enter into God's will. So there are some incidences in his life that can be our examples. Abraham originally resided in Ur of Chaldea. Because of the glorious appearing of God to Abraham, we see there was a very important change in his life. God not only appeared to him; God also revealed to him. In Genesis 12:1, God said to Abraham 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you'. We know there was an inward change in Abraham before the outward change. That is to say, something happened within Abraham that led to the change on the outside. This is also true for Christians. On the day that we are saved, some stories took place within us, and these inward stories affect the rest of our life. Thus because of the appearing of God and of His revelation, we see there was a very significant change in Abraham's life. And God led him out of Ur of Chaldea into Canaan.

Perhaps we may ask why is it that God could not carry out what He wanted to do in Ur? Why was it necessary for God to bring Abraham out of Ur? It was because God was using Abraham's life in the Old Testament as a type to speak to us. He foretold us that for His will to be accomplished in us, we need to change our way of life. It was as if Abraham acted out God's will as a preview for us to see.

We know after Abraham left Ur and settled in Canaan, his life completely changed. Today we understand very well that Ur was the world in those days. Canaan was the designated land by God. Today we also understand God called Abraham to come out of the world and to live in Christ. So Abraham left everything he had in Ur. After he entered into Canaan, we see there is a complete transformation in his life. Of course, the story of Abraham's entire life was very rich. I do not think we need to go over his whole life. What I want to share is the two important points in his life that stand out.

The first point is he built altars. The second point is that he pitched tents. We know this way of life was completely different from his way of life in Ur. These two distinctive ways of life had a very significant

meaning. And these two points were the result of Abraham's response to God's calling to live for His glorious will.

Building Altars

Throughout Abraham's life, he built four altars. Our focus is not on the process of the building of these altars. I will just explain a little the meaning of the altar. Brothers and sisters, the first meaning of the altar is that it had an important proclamation. What was the proclamation after Abraham erected the altar? He was proclaiming only Jehovah is God; in the entire universe, there is no other God besides Him. The land of Canaan was full of idols at that time. In this land of idols, Abraham built an altar proclaiming that only Jehovah is God. And not only proclaiming that Jehovah is God, but also proclaimed all things belong to Him; He is the Lord of all; and He is the center of all. Not only does heaven belong to Him, the earth also belongs to Him. Brothers and sisters, this is an important proclamation. Today, every one of us who has been saved by grace understands what that means. It means that we need to have the life of the altar when we are living in this earth. We should proclaim to this rebellious universe that only our Lord Jesus Christ is God; all things belong to Him.

The second meaning of the altar is consecration. We know the first foundation of a spiritual life is consecration. Brothers and sisters, you all know the importance of a consecrated life. But the altar tells us the true meaning of consecration which is He is all in all; we are nothing. The sacrificial offering of our Lord Jesus on the cross speaks of the fact that in our taking up the cross, we are proclaiming that there is no self; everything is for the will of God. Thus in building the altar, Abraham was proclaiming that from then on he no longer lived for himself; he lived only for the will of God. I think this is an important meaning of consecration. Not only that, but in a consecrated life, this altar proclaimed He is Lord; let Him be Lord; He is my Lord; He rules over all. Thus David said in Psalm 16, 'You are my Lord; I have no good besides You'. Brothers and sisters, the second meaning of the altar is consecration.

The meaning of the third aspect of the altar tells of his fellowship with God. We know that in the Old Testament, only Abraham was called the friend of God. He had a very intimate fellowship with God. Whatever God does, He would tell Abraham. You remember when God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, God said, 'shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?' His position was that of a friend. Thus the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, 'No longer do I call you servants but I have called you friend'. Thus the altar also speaks of a fellowship of Abraham with God.

The meaning of the fourth aspect of the altar tells of Abraham's total dependence on God. He called upon the name of the Jehovah. He believed that God is a God Who provides everything. So Abraham demonstrated his faith in this matter. We know the birth of Isaac was of great importance in Abraham's life. He was already one hundred years old when he had Isaac. Even though there was a little misstep in

this matter, yet because he believed in God's word, God still established him. Thus the Bible said, 'Abraham believed in God and God reckoned him as righteous'. He depended on God and he experienced the amazing deeds of God in the birth of Isaac. And in Genesis chapter 22, we see the pinnacle in the life of the altar in Abraham. God said to him, 'You have to offer your son to me, the one whom you love'. Brothers and sisters, we feel it is an easy thing to do when we read this story. But in real life, it is not easy to go through with it. You see Abraham was already one hundred years old when he had this son and indeed, truly it was the son he dearly loved. The Chinese have a saying that a child born to one in old age is especially precious. That was why God particularly mentioned to Abraham 'the son whom you loved'. We see at that time, Abraham's faith had reached maturity. He indeed was God's good friend and he had no doubt whatsoever in this friend. We do not see any hesitation in Abraham. He brought his son to the mountain in Moriah and was prepared to sacrifice his son. Brothers and sisters, we are familiar with all these stories. We see that building altars was the first important thing in the life of Abraham in Canaan. We know this way of life was for the will of God.

Pitching Tents

Not only did Abraham build altars, we see that he also pitched tents. This pitching of tents had a very important spiritual meaning. The author of the Book of Hebrews explained the meaning of 'pitching tents' in Hebrews chapter 11. Verses 9 – 10 say, 'By faith, he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God'. When the Book of Hebrews talks about this matter of Abraham pitching tents, it explains that he lived as an alien in a foreign land. We understand it means that he did not establish his root on this earth. Actually, in the Book of Hebrews, there is a higher meaning to it. Abraham lived in tents to proclaim one thing. And that was everything in time was temporary; limited and would come to an end. His living in tents means he did not live for the things of this world but he lived for the eternal will of God. At that time, he came to realize that only God and His will are eternal. Thus he lived in tents to demonstrate that he had to live for that glory.

Dear brothers and sisters, we can so easily fall bondage to the world. We see not only the people laboring the whole day for the life on this earth. But also within the church, we see many people also place their hearts and minds on earth. We comprehend a little of the meaning of a life in tents. But in practice our life does not represent a life living in tents. We know one who led a life in tents understands what eternity is and thus he willingly lives the life of tents. We also know living a life of tents enables us to follow our Lord more easily. He can follow the Lord any time; if the Lord wants him to get up and leave,

he can immediately do so. In the past if he was living in Ur, his abode would not be that easy to move at all. But now that he lived in tents, it would be easy for God to lead him.

I know a brother and a sister who are a couple. They had followed the Lord since their youth. In their early days, it was very simple for the two of them to follow the Lord. All they had were two pieces of luggage. Whenever the Lord commanded them to go, they just picked up the two pieces of luggage and followed. They also had a strong desire to consecrate themselves. But gradually as they moved to a place, their work started to get stabilized; their fellowship group grew and their lives began to change. Thus the two of them frequently asked each other, 'Have our desire to consecrate ourselves decreased? If the Lord wants us to move today, can we still just pick up the two pieces of luggage and leave?'

Brothers and sisters, you look at Abraham's life in the tents and we see he had a simple life. He wholeheartedly lived for God's kingdom, for God's power and for God's glory. Thus God uses Abraham to speak to us. Today we need to change our way of life, so as to let God's kingdom, God's power and God's glory be manifested in the church. Every Christian needs to change. We need to return to a simple life. Today we feel God's church has been dragged down to the ashes because of the materialistic enjoyment and the hectic lives in this world. We see it is not easy for the children of God to follow our Lord because we have lost the reality of the life of tents.

Being Tempted

Brothers and sisters, we know Abraham had been tempted in similar ways in his life. In Genesis 12, there was a severe famine in the land of Canaan, so Abraham and his wife went down to Egypt. When they were near Egypt, Abraham began to worry because his wife, Sarai, was very beautiful. He said to Sarai, 'You are very beautiful, when we get there, if the people in Egypt asked, please say you are my sister'. Pharaoh liked Sarai and treated Abraham well for her sake. He gave Abraham many sheep and oxen and donkeys and all of a sudden, Abraham became wealthy. We know that later God intervened in this matter. Pharaoh then knew Sarai was Abraham's wife and sent them away. Even though they were sent away, Abraham became wealthy.

Brothers and sisters, if we do not love the Lord, we will admire this incidence. Not only did Abraham become rich, his nephew also became rich. Brothers and sisters, we can see the enemy always has this intention. Abraham wanted to live a simple life. But the king of this world made him wealthy. This became an enticement and a temptation to Abraham. After they became rich, Abraham and his nephew could not stay together. Their servants started to argue and fight. In the end, they had to separate and each went their own way. Brothers and sisters, when you look at the church, you can see similar situations. It seemed brothers and sisters could easily love and support one another in the beginning when life was simple and there were hardships. Once brothers and sisters became rich, they started to argue and

fight; they cannot gather together and eventually they have to part with each other. Thus God speaks to us through Abraham. We have to return to the simple life.

Brothers and sisters, thank God that He has kept Abraham. In the end, the uncle showed his broad-mindedness by telling his nephew to choose first. So Abraham did not choose. What did that tell us? It told us even though outwardly Abraham was wealthy, yet his desire to have a simple life had not change. He still believed in God; he still was willing to follow God. This is an encouragement to us who live in a prosperous environment. Prosperity is not a sin. But if you love wealth, then it is a sin. The Bible tells us, 'Do not love the world'. You can use things but do not love the world. But where is our difficulty? It is that once we use something, we love it and we fall bondage to it. So what was the decision in the heart of Abraham? Even though he had all these possessions, yet he still decided to follow God. We ask the Lord to keep us so we can have this kind of heart desire.

A few decades ago, I heard a testimony from an elderly sister. She said something that stayed with me until now. She was a very gifted sister, very famous and she was in her eighties. Her hair was all white and her health weak. And in her testimony, there was something she said that I cannot forget. She said, 'Today, if the Lord still asks of me for anything, I surely will not disappoint Him'. Brothers and sisters, this kind of heart desire is precious. We need our Lord's grace to keep us. The cause of the weakness of the church today is due to the fact that you and I are no longer leading a life of tents. The bondage and influence of the world on us are indeed severe. Thus, each of us needs to change our way of life so the will of God can be manifested in our life.

We know God also warns us through the wife of Lot. When the angel led the family of Lot out of the cities that God was going to destroy with fire, even though they were already outside of the cities, the bible recorded that the wife of Lot turned back to look and she turned into a pillar of salt. This 'turning back to look' is a solemn warning for us. This 'turning back to look' showed that she still loved the world; she was mindful of the world and could not let go. Today if we live in such a condition, it will be very difficult for us to testify God's will in our life. Thus God uses Abraham to speak to every Christian because the life of the church is built upon the life of each brother and sister. If there is no change in our individual, personal life, we cannot expect the condition of the church to change. Thus God through Abraham tells us that if God's will was to be manifested by Abraham, he had to change his way of life. May the Lord speak to each one of us through this matter.

Moses

We see that God not only had to change an individual, He had to change the way of the life of the house of Israel. God also has to work on the corporate life. We know the ultimate heart desire of God is in the corporate church. Actually speaking, God cannot be satisfied with just the love of an individual. He has

to gain a corporate body. Thus we see there was the story of the exodus from Egypt. God had to remove Israel from one situation to a different situation. But we discover in Exodus when God wanted to change the corporate body, He first directs our attention to Moses. Why was that? It was because Moses was the leader chosen to be used by God. He used Moses to lead the people of Israel. So this tells us one thing and that is before God works on the corporate church, He has first to change the leaders of the church. We know each local church is influenced by the leaders. If the condition of the leader is not right, the whole congregation will be affected. So if God is to transform a corporate body, He has to transform the leaders of this corporate body first. Moses is a good example of this; he was a good leader. And we see how God first worked on him. Let us look at how God first worked on him. I believe many brothers and sisters in this conference are leaders in their church. May the grace of the Lord be upon us. Let us be the first to experience the transformation by our Lord's hand, so the church will know how to lead God's people. We know this is an important arrangement in the will of God. So let us look at the transformation of Moses in Exodus.

Knowing the Kingly Authority of God

We are all familiar with the story of Moses. God first put him in the palace of Egypt for forty years. Moses entered into the family which had the greatest power in the world in that generation. He enjoyed all the wealth and fame of Egypt. There he also acquired all the learning of Egypt because he had the best education. We feel the world of Egypt had so much more than the world of Ur that Abraham dwelt in. Moses lived in that environment for forty years. Later, he thought he could save his own people. He never thought he had to escape for his life after he killed an Egyptian. This was a tremendous change. We know that it was a glorious work of God on Moses.

On the outside, it seemed that Moses fell into adversity at that time. He fell abruptly from a life of wealth and fame to a life in the desert. But looking back, we clearly see God had a higher purpose for him. God wanted to take Moses out from the greatest earthly authority so he would come to know God's supreme kingly authority. Later we see when God sent Moses back to Egypt, with God's staff in his hands, he went with a superlative power than that of the Pharaoh; it was a power from a higher kingdom. This was the first change God brought about in Moses. Today for all who are leaders in the church, we need understand this fact. Brothers and sisters, we need to know that in this world, even a greater dominion than that of Pharaoh can never be greater or higher than the dominion of God.

Knowing the Power of God

God let Moses experienced His infinite power when Moses was eighty years old. God sent Moses back to Egypt, bringing about the ten plagues on Egypt. Brothers and sisters, God revealed His own power

through Moses. And not only that, in the end we see Moses led the house of Israel out of Egypt. When they came to the Red Sea, Moses lifted the staff and stretched out his hands over the Red Sea. The Red Sea divided and turned into dry land. And two to three million Israelites crossed the Red Sea. There Moses saw the glorious work of God; which was God's power at work. Not only that, when the pursuing Egyptian army came close to them, we know within the night, the chariots and horsemen and Pharaoh's choicest army were all swallowed up by the Red Sea and drowned. Brothers and sisters, such was the formidable power of God that Moses experienced.

Thank God after the forty years in the desert, Moses' natural self had been refined. We see the humility of Moses before God when God entrusted this great power to him. Moses wrote a song in Exodus chapter 15, and in this song, he proclaimed that strength belongs to God and not to Moses himself. Today, within the entire Christianity, we see some people, after they had experienced a little power of God, they feel they are the powerful servants. What a mistake this is! Brothers and sisters, power is His. Through Moses it was proven that power is His. What tremendous power it was that God led Moses to experience when Moses had to lead two to three million Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years.

Knowing God's Glory

When we talk about God's glory, it seemed like Moses and God's glory were almost inseparable after Moses was eighty years old. Not only did Moses see the vision of the burning bush on Mount Horeb, but after he led the people of Israel out of Egypt, he entered into glorious fellowship with God many times on Mount Sinai. Later when he erected the tabernacle at the foot of the mountain, God's glory filled the tabernacle. Later in his life when others attacked him and murmured against him, brothers and sisters, we see Moses never defended himself. He only did one thing; he prostrated himself on the ground. And every time he prostrated himself on the ground, God would appear to him in glory. God in His glory defended Moses and God in His glory executed judgment.

Brothers and sisters, today, as a servant of God, we who serve the Lord, if we cannot see God's glory, then we will be deceived by the vain glory of this world. We should not treat this matter lightly. Today, many of God's servants love the vain glory of the world; they like to have fame and like to exalt themselves. These servants are those who have not seen God's glory. So we see before God led all Israel out of Egypt, He first worked on the leader so the leader could have experiences. Moses knew the kingly power of God; Moses recognized God's great power; Moses knew God's glory. Brothers and sisters, only this kind of leaders can lead God's people towards God's glorious purpose. I think today we may not have experiences like that of Moses. But in principle, the leaders in the church should have at least this fundamental knowledge.

Dear brothers and sisters, how we need the great mercy of God because as leaders we have a great influence on the church. Let us constantly ask each other this when we serve: in our church service, where are we leading the children of God; does our service conform to what God wants? The bible tells us when our Lord returns, we need to tally an account of our work before His judgment seat. It is such a serious matter. May the Lord have mercy on us! We cannot say, now since I am serving in the church, I can do things according to my own will. Exodus clearly shows us that God has to change His people, but first God needs to change those who lead. Only when Moses had been transformed by God, then could he lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

The People of Israel

We clearly know the ultimate goal for Moses leading the people out of Egypt was to enter into Canaan. Its principle is to leave the world and enter into the fullness of Christ. We know that in the Old Testament, this people were a chosen race by God. This race was to testify to God's kingdom, power and glory. But their way of life had to be changed. I repeat again, if there is no change, we will not be able to testify what God wants us to testify. Many Christians when they read the Bible come to understand the purpose that God led them in the wilderness for forty years was to refine the lives of these people. But actually, this is only one aspect of the life in the wilderness. A higher meaning is that God wanted to teach these people to practice living a heavenly life. We see during the forty years when they were in the wilderness, they were governed by heaven. The people of Israel never experienced this kind of life when they were in Egypt. Now God was to let them grow accustomed to a life governed by heaven so God led them through the Red Sea into the wilderness.

First God used the Red Sea to separate Egypt. The meaning of this is obvious. That is today God wants the church to be entirely separated from the world. We have already mentioned the reasons for the weakness of the church are that many things of the world entered into the church and the lives of the children of God are no different from that of the people in the world. And thus we fail to accomplish what God has entrusted us. We know the purpose for the life in the wilderness was for the Israelites to learn to deal with their flesh and to deliver them from their flesh. In fact the New Testament clearly tells us that it is the kind of life we should have after our baptism. Thus for Christians, after baptism, we need to strive to separate ourselves from the world, and to give up our fleshly life. This is what God tells us through the lives of the people of Israel in the wilderness.

Submitting to the Guidance (Leading) of the Holy Spirit

We know when the people of Israel were in the desert, the guidance for their entire journey was from heaven; they were led by the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud from heaven. Brothers and sisters, when

they were in the wilderness, they did not have maps or anyone to give them directions. But thank God, they did not need anyone to direct them. In fact this should also be true for our life today. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. The best Christian life is one which follows the anointing oil; which lives under the guidance of the Spirit in our life. Of course, if you are to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, then you have to lay down yourself; you cannot do things according to your own will. Thus after the people of Israel left Egypt, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire were their real guidance. On the outside, it seemed Moses was leading them. In reality Moses led the people of God according to the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. God has never given the power of guidance solely to the leaders of the church. Only when these leaders follow the Holy Spirit, then they are able to lead God's people. And this is what God tells us through Moses.

Today in the church, we need to respect the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Today the Lord's Spirit dwells inside each brother and sister. We need to follow the Spirit of life every day. But we find that in recent years, for some reasons we do not understand, there are less and less people who truly live by the leading of the Spirit. Brothers and sisters, this is a dangerous sign. Seriously speaking if one truly lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the condition will be like what John said; you do not need anyone to teach you; but the Spirit in you will guide you as to whether you should do it or not, whether you should say it or not and whether you should go or not. It seems like there were more and more people who followed the Lord in the past generation. Brothers and sisters, we really do need God's grace. If you allow God's Spirit inside you to guide you, then you can have an emancipated and noble life. Brothers and sisters, this leading by the Holy Spirit is indeed an immense grace that God has given us.

Please forgive me for saying this. I had the chance to go back to China for a little while. The Spirit was so free among us when we prayed. It was so resounding when we sang hymns. Even though sometimes it was out of tune and confusing, yet we sense the life among us. But the one thing I regret was that there were piles of fruit peels and candy wrappers all over the floor every time after the meeting. I thought it strange since I did not see anyone eating anything when I was giving the message at the pulpit. I was thinking if we have the sense of life inside us; if we have the sense of holiness the situation would not be like this. Brothers and sisters, of course this was just a minor thing. In the New Testament, the Lord's Spirit dwells in us, just like the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire in the Old Testament and we need to learn to submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Feeding on the Bread from Heaven

The kind of food the people of Israel ate also changed. In Egypt, they had melons, leeks, onions, garlic, fish and meat. God took away all these when they were in the wilderness. And what did they eat? God let them learned to eat manna and the manna was called the bread from heaven. The Lord Jesus said in

John chapter 6 that He is the bread of life that came down out of heaven. How can we receive this provision from Christ today? We need the Holy Spirit to expound the truth; to bring out the fullness of Christ. And this becomes our bread of life today.

When the people of Israel first came to the wilderness, they wondered who could provide food for so many of them. Consequently God said I would rain down manna from heaven. We know the word 'manna' is a direct translation from Hebrew and it means 'what is this'. It is very meaningful. When we told the children of God today you are saved; from now on we have to learn to live by the word of God. They would say in their heart 'what is this'. Thank God. What is this? This is manna. Indeed, God changed the food they ate. They ate manna for the forty years they were in the wilderness. Today brothers and sisters, I feel that a lot of times we are like the people of Israel. Though we read the Bible; we received a little of the word of God, yet our minds are filled with melons, leeks, onions and garlic. So today, the ministers bring melons, leeks, onions and garlic, the knowledge of the world and the world into the church. And brothers and sisters everywhere are happy about this.

I remember there was an elderly sister who was from Shantung. She said the people of Shantung love to eat leeks the most. We know grass looks similar to leeks. This sister sighed and said, leeks are edible but grass is not edible. She said, I see so many people bring grass to the church and brothers and sisters enjoy eating the grass so much. Brothers and sisters, God tells us that we as children of God must live by the bread from heaven for our life; we need the pure word from God. Today if the church cannot preach the pure word but use other things to replace the pure word of God, then God's kingdom, God's power and God's glory will be lost.

Drink of the Water Flowing From the Rock

They not only ate manna, they also drank the water that came out of the rock. The apostle Paul explained this as the spiritual water and that was a spiritual rock which followed them. This tells us the Holy Spirit leads us to the living spring of life. Thus in John, he told us what God has given us is a spring of living waters and when it flows, it will become rivers of living water. Today the Holy Spirit daily leads us to drink of this living water from Christ. If we live in this spring of living water, our life will be forever fresh and pure.

Dear brothers and sisters, today men forsake the living spring of life. Thus everywhere we see the children of God feeling so dry. Yet they drink from the water of the world instead. God already said it will not work because if we drink of the water of the world, it will just be like drinking from Jacob's well. Our thirst will never be quenched. We need to drink of the living water that God gives. That was why God changed the way of life of the people of Israel in the wilderness.

Camping Around the Tabernacle

Not only was it liked this but we see that later after the tabernacle was erected, the twelve tribes of Israel camped around the tabernacle. God dwelt among them through the tabernacle. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle represented the house of God. Brothers and sisters, as children of God, we need to understand one thing and that is only the house of God is truly a home. Our individual house is transient, given to us by God so we can get a taste of what a home is. Thus we see that generation after generation the earthly home passed away. God has to build up His house on earth and only God's house is eternal. So there is an important principle that we need to know; only when God has His house on earth, then we have a home. We are the children of God; we should live in the house of God.

But the history of Israel tells us that the people of Israel destroyed the house of God many times. When God could not have His house of earth, they did not have a home either. This is also true throughout the history of the church. Whenever the house of God was destroyed, you and I do not have a home. No wonder many of God's children live a homeless life.

The Way of Life has to Change

Dear brothers and sisters, through the change in the life of the people of Israel, God gave us a very important pointer. The reason God had to build up Israel was for His kingdom; for His power and for His glory. Today God speaks to the church through the people of Israel. Brothers and sisters, from individual to the corporate body, we need to change our way of life. We look to God for His mercy. Hopefully after this conference, we will have a greater change in ourselves. We ask God for His mercy that we will not just listen to these glorious messages, but that we will practice them in our life. We look to God for His mercy that He will change each one of us so that there will be change starting from each one of us and then progresses onto each local gathering.

Dear brothers and sisters, even though all these matters seemed to be in a hidden way in the Old Testament, yet the heart desire of God is very clear. We have to allow His will of having the kingdom, power and glory to manifest in our life in this age. Through the manifestation we can proclaim the kingdom is Yours, the power is Yours, and the glory is Yours. I repeat again, this way of living is not just an outward proclamation but our life has to testify to it that this way of life is a reality. May God's grace be on us.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we need to prostrate and to worship before your feet, because we are chosen and saved for your glorious will. We ought to live for your glorious will. Our Lord, you paid a great price to redeem us. You entrusted your heart desire to us. In this rebellious world, may we who are saved by grace can

manifest in our life that kingdom is Yours, power is Yours and glory is Yours. Please remember Your work on this earth. We again give You the worship. Please hear our prayer, in the precious name of Jesus Christ, Amen.