

THE UNIQUE WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

(SATURDAY—FIRST MORNING SESSION)

Message Seven

Ministering to the Lord to Enjoy Him as the Hidden Manna, the Budding Rod, and the Law of Life

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 44:10-11, 15-18; Acts 13:1-2; Heb. 9:3-4

- I. **“The Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall minister in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them...But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to present to Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord Jehovah, it is they who will enter My sanctuary, and it is they who will come near to My table to minister to Me, and they will keep My charge”—Ezek. 44:10-11, 15-16:**
- A. In God's eyes, not only is there the ministry to the house; there is also a better ministry, the ministry to the Lord.
 - B. God has only one goal: to have men who belong absolutely to “Me”; in other words, He wants us to be before “My” presence and minister to “Me”; God's unique goal is not in so many things; rather, it is in “Me”—vv. 15-16.
 - C. To minister to the Lord does not mean that we neglect the house; those who minister to the Lord will also preach the gospel to save sinners and help the brothers and sisters to make progress, but their one goal is to be for the Lord, and their focus is the Lord Himself; they treasure men absolutely for the Lord's sake.
 - D. If we come to the Lord's presence, focusing only on Him, we will spontaneously be able to minister to the brothers and sisters also; the question of whether or not we are ministering to the Lord hinges on whether or not the Lord occupies the first place in our heart.
 - E. Whatever we do in the Lord's service should be for the Lord's sake; it should be for His satisfaction, His heart's desire, His happiness, His goal, His pleasure, and His glory.
 - F. In the Lord's work there are areas that are appealing and attractive to our flesh because they are solely for the pleasure and glory of our self—cf. 2 Cor. 4:5.
 - G. No one can minister to the Lord without drawing near to Him, approaching Him in prayer; spiritual power is not in the power of preaching but in the power of praying; how much we pray indicates how much inner strength we really possess.

- H. If we want to minister to the Lord in the Holy of Holies, we must spend time before the Lord and pray more; we need to draw near to Him, stand before Him, and wait for His will.
 - I. To pray is to stand before God (Ezek. 44:15); it is to seek His will before Him in order to be saved from the sin of presumption (Psa. 19:13).
 - J. Those who ministered to the Lord had to present to Him the fat and the blood—Ezek. 44:15:
 - 1. Whereas the fat of the offerings typifies the preciousness of the person of Christ, the blood signifies the redemptive work of Christ.
 - 2. In our service to God we must present both to Him; the blood is for God's holiness and righteousness, and the fat is for God's glory.
 - K. Those who ministered to the Lord had to be clothed with linen material, not with woolen garments or with anything that caused sweat—vv. 17-18:
 - 1. Linen garments signify a daily living and walk in the life-giving Spirit by the life of Christ; such a living and walk is pure, clean, and fine.
 - 2. Woolen garments would cause the priests to sweat (v. 18), a sign of fallen man laboring under God's curse, without God's blessing, by his own energy and strength (Gen. 3:19).
 - 3. The work that causes sweat is the work that comes out of human effort without the blessing from God the Father; everyone ministering to the Lord must do a work that causes no sweat, a work without human effort and fleshly strength.
 - 4. If we spend an adequate amount of time in God's presence and deal properly with Him, there is no need to sweat before man; we can accomplish the most amount of work with the least amount of strength.
 - L. "Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers...As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"—Acts 13:1-2:
 - 1. This is the work of the New Testament and the unique principle for the work of the New Testament—the work of the Holy Spirit can only be revealed at the time of ministering to the Lord.
 - 2. Only at the time of ministering to the Lord will the Holy Spirit send some forth; if we do not place ministering to the Lord as the top priority, everything will be out of order; only the Holy Spirit has the authority to commission men to work.
 - 3. To minister to the Lord is not to forsake all the work on the outside; instead, all the work on the outside should be based on our ministry to the Lord.
 - 4. We go forth, out from our ministry to the Lord, rather than out from our own desires, which have no basis in the ministry to the Lord.
- II. "After the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies, having...the Ark of the Covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant"—Heb. 9:3-4:**

- A. The hidden manna is the portion of Christ that we enjoy in the presence of God when there is no distance between us and Him; when there is no distance between us and the Lord, we enjoy Christ in the most intimate and hidden way; this is the enjoyment of the hidden manna, the hidden portion of Christ—Exo. 16:31-36:
1. To overcome the condition of the church in Pergamos is to separate ourselves from the general practice of today's Christianity and to remain in the presence of God ministering directly to Him, not to anything else; here we enjoy something of Christ that all those who are far off from His presence cannot taste—Rev. 2:17.
 2. If we want to enjoy the hidden manna, there must be no distance between us and God; all the distance between us and the Lord must be eliminated.
 3. When we are ministering to the Lord and enjoying Him as the hidden manna, we have direct fellowship with Him and know His heart and His intention; it is in the presence of the Lord that we can be charged with Him, with His intention, and with all He wants us to do.
 4. When we are ministering to the Lord, we will have God's commitment because we are in His presence, realizing that there is no distance between us and God.
- B. The budding rod signifies that Christ, the resurrected One, should be our life, our living, and the resurrection life within us and that this life should bud, blossom, and bear fruit to maturity—Num. 17:8:
1. After the children of Israel rebelled, as recorded in Numbers 16, God commanded the twelve leaders to take twelve rods according to the twelve tribes of Israel and put them in the Tent of the Testimony before the Ark; then He said, "The rod of the man whom I choose shall bud"—17:5.
 2. All twelve rods were leafless, rootless, dry, and dead; whichever one budded was the one chosen by God; here we see that resurrection is the basis of God's selection and that the basis of service is something apart from our natural life; thus, the budding rod signifies our experience of Christ in His resurrection as our acceptance by God for authority in the God-given ministry.
 3. The principle to every service lies in the budding rod; God returned all the eleven rods to the leaders but kept Aaron's rod inside the Ark as an eternal memorial; this means that resurrection is an eternal principle in our service to God—vv. 9-10:
 - a. Resurrection means that everything is of God and not of us; it means that God alone is able and that we are not able.
 - b. Resurrection means that everything is done by God, not by ourselves; all those who know resurrection have given up hope in themselves; they know that they cannot make it.
 - c. As long as the natural strength remains, the power of resurrection has no ground for manifestation; as long as Sarah could conceive a child, Isaac would not come—Gen. 18:10-15; 21:1-3, 6-7.
 - d. What we can do belongs to the natural realm, and what is impossible for us to do belongs to the realm of resurrection; a man must come to

the end of himself before he will be convinced of his utter uselessness—Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27.

- e. If a man has never realized his own inability, he can never experience God's ability; resurrection means that we cannot make it and that God is the One who has done everything—cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 4:7.
- C. The tablets of the covenant, which are the tablets of the law, signify the law of the divine life, which is the spontaneous power, automatic function, innate ability, and divine capacity of the divine life—Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; cf. Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 10:12-13:
 1. The law, this divine capacity, of life can do everything in us for the carrying out of God's economy:
 - a. According to this capacity, we can know God, live God, and be constituted with God in His life and nature so that we may become His increase, His enlargement, to be His fullness for His eternal expression—Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19-21.
 - b. Furthermore, the capacity of the inner law of life constitutes us to be the members of the Body of Christ with all kind of functions—4:11, 16.
 2. While the divine life grows in us, the law of life functions to shape us, to conform us, to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:2, 29:
 - a. The law of life does not regulate us from doing wrong; it regulates the shape of life.
 - b. The law of life does not primarily function in the negative sense of telling us what not to do; rather, while life grows, the law of life functions in the positive sense of shaping us, that is, conforming us, to the image of Christ.
 - c. Through the function of the law of life, we all shall become the mature sons of God, and God will have His universal expression.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

WHAT IS RESURRECTION?

Now my question is: What is resurrection? Resurrection is everything that is not out of our natural life, not out of ourselves, and not based on our ability. Resurrection speaks of the things that are beyond us, which we cannot do in ourselves. Any rod can be engraved with flowers or painted with colors, but no one can make it bud. We have never heard of a rod which can still bud and blossom after being used for decades. This is God's work. No woman in the world has ever given birth after her womb has been closed, but Sarah bore Isaac (Rom. 4:19). This was God's doing. Hence, Sarah typifies resurrection. What is resurrection? Resurrection means that one cannot do anything by himself, that he can only do it through God. It means that it is not by oneself, but by God. Resurrection means that one ignores what he is and trusts only in what God is. It matters little whether or not you are smarter than others or more eloquent than others. If you have any spirituality, this spirituality is not based on yourself, but on God's work in you. Suppose Aaron had been foolish enough to say to others, "My rod is different from your rod. My rod is smoother, brighter, and straighter. This is why it budded." How foolish and silly that would have been! If we think for a moment that we are different from others, that is the most foolish thought. Even if there is something different in us, it is the result of God's work. Resurrection means that everything is out of God.

The name *Isaac* means “laughter.” Why did Abraham call his son “laughter”? He called him Isaac for two reasons. First, God promised Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a son. When Sarah heard, she laughed. It was natural for her to laugh. When she looked at herself, she could not help but laugh. Her time of childbearing was past, and her womb was closed. How could she ever bear a child? She thought that this was impossible. Therefore, when God told Abraham that she would have a child, she laughed. Second, when Sarah brought forth a son a year later, she was indeed laughing for joy. Hence, God called the child’s name *Isaac* (Gen. 18:10-15; 21:1-3, 6-7), which means “laughter.” The first time she laughed because of the impossibility of the promise. The second time she laughed because she discovered to her surprise that it was possible. If a man has never experienced the first laughing, he can never experience the second laughing. If a man has never realized his own inability, he can never experience God’s ability. Sarah knew herself; she had full knowledge of herself. She knew that she could not make it. But as soon as she looked to God’s work, she was able to laugh. What is resurrection? Resurrection means that God has given us something that we did not have in ourselves. The Bible testifies again and again that man cannot make it by himself. But many people think that they can make it. In the matter of service, if some would truly laugh at themselves, saying, “I cannot make it,” they would find themselves laughing again, saying, “I did not make it. I have seen through myself. The Lord has made it for me.” If there is any manifestation of authority in us, we should say to the Lord, “You are the One who has done it. It is none of my business.” Resurrection means that you cannot make it and that God is the One who has done everything.

RESURRECTION BEING THE ETERNAL PRINCIPLE OF SERVICE

The principle to every service lies in the budding rod. God returned all the eleven rods to the leaders, but kept Aaron’s rod inside the ark as an eternal memorial. This means that resurrection is an eternal principle in our service to God. A servant of the Lord is one who has died and resurrected. God testifies again and again to His people that authority to serve God lies in resurrection, not in a person himself. All services to the Lord must pass through death and resurrection before they will be acceptable to God. Resurrection means that everything is of God and not of us. It means that God alone is able and that we are not able. Resurrection means that everything is done by God, not by ourselves. All those who think highly of themselves and who hold a misguided judgment of themselves have never realized what resurrection is. No one should be mistaken to think that he can do anything by himself. If a man continues to think that he is able, that he can do something, and that he is useful, he does not know resurrection. He may know the doctrine of resurrection, the reason for resurrection, or the result of resurrection, but he does not know resurrection. All those who know resurrection have given up hope in themselves; they know that they cannot make it. As long as the natural strength remains, the power of resurrection has no ground for manifestation. As long as Sarah could beget a child, Isaac would not come. What we can do belongs to the natural realm, and what is impossible for us to do belongs to the realm of resurrection.

God’s ability is not manifested in His creation but in resurrection. God’s greatest power is manifested not through creation but through resurrection. When God’s power is manifested in creation, it does not need to be preceded by death. But when His power is manifested in resurrection, there is the need for it to be preceded by death. Every created thing needs no precedence for its creation, but everything in resurrection has its precedence. If a man can survive by what he possessed in the first place, he has not experienced any resurrection. If a man’s ability is according to what he had in the first place, he does not have resurrection. If he is what he was in the first place, he does not have resurrection. If what he has is what he possessed in the first place, he does not have resurrection. We must acknowledge that we can

do nothing, are nothing, and have nothing. We are like a dead dog. If we acknowledge this, and we find that something is still alive in us, that is resurrection. Creation does not require the knowledge of death, but resurrection requires that we fall down, prostrate before God, and confess to Him, "I can do nothing. I am nothing, and I have nothing. This is what I am. If I can give anything to others, it is because You have given it to me. If I can do anything, it is because You have done it through me." Once we prostrate before the Lord in this way, everything we have will become God's work in us. Henceforth, we will never be mistaken. We will realize that everything that is dead belongs to us and everything that is living belongs to God. We have to separate ourselves from the Lord clearly; everything that has to do with death belongs to us, and everything that has to do with life belongs to the Lord. The Lord is never confused, but we are often confused. A man must come to the end of himself before he will be convinced of his utter uselessness. After Sarah gave birth to Isaac, she would never be foolish enough to think that her own strength was responsible for it. The colt would not be mistaken to think that the hosannas were directed at it. God has to bring us to the point where we will no longer be confused about what is of God and what is of us.

Everyone who is an authority should know this; he should not be mistaken in any way. There must be no misunderstanding with authority. Authority is of God and not of us; we are only those who keep custody of authority. Only those who have seen this are qualified to be a deputy authority. Brothers and sisters, when you set out for your work, I hope that none of you would be foolish enough to think that you have any authority in yourself. As soon as you offend the principle of resurrection, you lose authority, and as soon as you try to exhibit your authority, you instantly lose authority. A dry rod can exhibit nothing but death. But when you have resurrection, you have authority, because authority rests with resurrection, not with the natural life. Everything that we have is natural. Hence authority does not rest in us but in the Lord.

THE TREASURE AND THE EARTHEN VESSEL

Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 4:7 matches the teaching here. I have often thought that Paul painted a wonderful picture in that chapter. He compared himself to an earthen vessel, one made of clay. He compared the power of resurrection within him to a treasure. This is like the precious ointment in the alabaster box. He knew very well that he himself was just an earthen vessel. But the treasure within him constituted the excellency of power. There is a vast difference between these two things. Paul said that this resurrection power is a treasure and that it is a surpassingly great power. This is truly the word of an honest man; he said it like it was—"the excellency of the power." Following this he said that he was pressed on every side, but that he was not constricted because of the efficacy of the treasure. In himself he could not find a way out, but with the treasure he was not utterly without a way out. In himself he was persecuted, but with the treasure he was not abandoned. In himself he was cast down, but with the treasure he was not destroyed. As far as he was concerned, he was pressed on every side. But as far as the treasure was concerned, he was not constricted. On the one hand, there is death, but on the other hand, there is life. On the one hand, we have a constant deliverance to death, but on the other hand, we have the producing of life. Death operates on the one hand, and life is manifested on the other hand. Second Corinthians 4 and 5 unfold the center of Paul's ministry. Here we find the principle of death and resurrection and nothing else. Everything in us is death, and everything in the Lord is resurrection.

AUTHORITY BEING WHERE RESURRECTION IS

If there is any authority in us, this authority comes from God, not from us. We should never be mistaken. We should see clearly that all authority comes from the Lord. We are here

on earth merely to maintain His authority; we are not here to maintain our own authority. Authority does not belong to us. Whenever we trust in the Lord, we see authority. Whenever we express the natural life, we become the same as everyone else, and there is no authority in us whatsoever. Only that which issues from resurrection results in authority. Authority is based on resurrection, not on ourselves. No ordinary rod can be placed before God. Only a rod of resurrection can be placed before Him. Furthermore, resurrection is found in the budding rod. It is not a general resurrection but a full resurrection. It is not just a faint expression of the resurrection life but a life that has budded, blossomed, and brought forth fruit. This is resurrection life in maturity. Only one matured in resurrection life can act as God's deputy authority. The more resurrection life is expressed through us, the more authority we will have. (*Authority and Submission*, pp. 147-152)