

**ENTERING INTO THE FOURTH STAGE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE
TO ARRIVE AT A FULL-GROWN MAN
FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE**

(Thursday—First Morning Session)

Message One

**A Full-grown Corporate Man Fulfilling God's Purpose
through the Experience of Life in the Fourth Stage**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26-28; Ezek. 1:5, 26; Eph. 2:15; 4:13, 24

- I. In the Bible there is a mysterious thought concerning the relationship between God and man—Gen. 1:26; Ezek. 1:5, 26; 1 John 3:2b; Rev. 4:3a; 21:11b:**
- A. Man is the means of God's manifestation, man is the means of God's move, and man is the means of God's administration—Acts 2:32-33, 36; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 5:6.
 - B. The fact that the four living creatures in Ezekiel 1 bear the appearance of a man and that God on the throne bears the appearance of a man indicates that God's central thought and His arrangement are related to man—vv. 5, 26; Gen. 1:26:
 - 1. In Ezekiel 1 there are three crucial matters concerning the four living creatures' bearing the appearance of a man:
 - a. God's glory is manifested upon them; apart from their bearing the appearance of a man, God's glory cannot be manifested—v. 28.
 - b. The living creatures are the means of God's move; God's move depends on them—vv. 12-21.
 - c. The living creatures are the means of God's administration—v. 26:
 - (1) God's throne is the center of His administration—Rev. 4:2, 6.
 - (2) Because the living creatures bear the appearance of a man, there is the administration of God's throne—Jer. 17:12.
 - 2. The Christ whom the church must express is the man on the throne—Rev. 3:21.
 - C. There is a connection between Ezekiel 1:26 and Genesis 1:26—a resemblance between God and man in their images and likenesses:
 - 1. In Ezekiel 1:26 the One on the throne has the appearance of a man:
 - a. The One sitting on the throne is not only God but also man; He is the God-man, the Man-God, the mingling of God and man—Acts 7:56.
 - b. Through incarnation God became a man; He lived, died, resurrected, and ascended as a man; and now as the One on the throne, He is still a man—John 6:62; Acts 7:56.
 - 2. Through His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Lord Jesus was brought to the throne—2:36; Phil. 2:5-11:
 - a. God has always been the Lord, but now a man is on the throne as the Lord—Rev. 4:2-3; 5:6.
 - b. After the Lord Jesus was crucified and buried, God resurrected Him and set Him at His right hand, making Him the Lord of all the universe—Acts 2:36.

- D. God's intention is to work on man in order that man can be on the throne—Psa. 8:4-8; Rev. 3:21:
1. God's mind is on man; He wants to manifest Himself through man and reign through man—Psa. 8:4, 6; Gen. 1:26.
 2. God's goal is to bring us to the throne and to make us people of the throne—Rev. 3:21:
 - a. God's kingdom cannot come in full until we are on the throne.
 - b. God's enemy will not be subdued until we are on the throne.
 3. God desires to bring us to the throne because of the rebellion of Satan against God's throne—Isa. 14:12-14:
 - a. The greatest difficulty God faces in the universe is that His throne has been opposed and attacked by rebel forces; in his rebellion against God's throne Satan intended to exalt his throne to the heavens and thereby to intrude upon God's authority.
 - b. God needs to gain a full-grown corporate man so that through this man the authority of God can be executed, and the kingdom of God can come to the earth—Rev. 11:15; 12:5, 10.

II. God's purpose in His creation of man was to have a corporate man to express Him and to represent Him—Gen. 1:26:

- A. God created man in His own image for His expression, and then He gave man His dominion to represent Him to deal with His enemy—vv. 26-28.
- B. For the fulfillment of His purpose, God's desire is to become the same as man is and to make man the same as He is by working Himself in Christ into man—1 John 3:2b; Eph. 3:17a.
- C. God's creation of man in Genesis 1 is a picture of the new man in God's new creation; this means that the old creation is a figure, a type, of the new creation—2:15; 4:24:
 1. The church, the Body of Christ, is the one new man to accomplish God's eternal purpose—1:9, 11; 3:9; Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:15-16; 4:22-24.
 2. Eventually, the church as the one new man is the corporate man in God's intention, and this new man will fulfill the twofold purpose of expressing God and dealing with God's enemy—vv. 13, 24; Gen. 1:26-28.

III. The goal of the Lord's recovery is to bring forth a full-grown corporate man—Eph. 2:15; 4:22-24; Col. 3:10-11:

- A. What the Lord has been doing, and what He is now doing, in His recovery is bringing forth the corporate new man with Himself as the life and the person for His expression and representation—Eph. 3:17a; Col. 3:4, 10-11.
- B. The one new man will usher in the kingdom of God and bring Christ, the King, back to the earth—Rev. 11:15.
- C. "Ultimately, the Bible speaks of the church as the one new man...In the new man there is nothing but the person. This level is so high that it cannot be higher, so strict that it cannot be stricter, and so intimate that it cannot be more intimate. All are one new man; this one new man has only one person, and this person is the Lord Jesus" (*One Body, One Spirit, and One New Man*, pp. 82-83).

- D. Now is the time for God to accomplish His purpose to perfect the new man, who will come into full existence on the earth—Eph. 4:24:
 1. The world situation has been raised up for the goal of the corporate new man.
 2. Today there is the possibility that the saints in all the localities in their environmental circumstances will become this corporate man—v. 24.
 3. When the one new man is full grown and perfected, that will be the time of the Lord's coming, and this corporate man will be His bride—Rev. 19:7.

IV. In order to arrive at a full-grown corporate man for the fulfillment of God's purpose, we must enter into the fourth stage of the experience of life—Eph. 4:13:

- A. This is the last and highest stage of our spiritual life—the stage of Christ's full growth in us.
- B. According to the type of the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, journey in the wilderness, and entrance into Canaan, the first three stages of our spiritual life take place before we pass through the Jordan—1 Cor. 10:6, 11.
- C. The fourth stage of our spiritual life occurs after we cross the Jordan and enter into the land of Canaan, where we learn to engage in spiritual warfare.
- D. At the end of the third stage, we express God with His image, and in the fourth stage we represent Him with His authority—Gen. 1:26.
- E. The experiences of life in the fourth stage include knowing the Body, knowing the ascension, reigning with Christ, engaging in spiritual warfare, and being full of the stature of Christ.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

Bearing the Appearance of a Man

The Bible clearly reveals that man is the means for God to manifest Himself. God cannot be manifested without man. Man was created in God's image in order to be God's expression. God is the center of the universe, but He needs an expression, and this expression is through man. Without man, God has no expression. The millions of angels cannot be the expression of God. God needs a corporate man to express Him. You should never despise the fact that you are a man.

In the Bible there are actually only four men: the first man, the second man, the new man, and the man-child. We were the first man; Christ is called the second man (1 Cor. 15:47); we have become the new man by regeneration; and now there is the prospect that we may become the man-child. This ministry is not only for the new man but is also for the man-child.

We may talk about the church as the expression of Christ, but we may not realize what the expression of Christ is. The Christ whom the church must express is the man upon the throne. If we would express Christ, we need to realize Christ today is still a man. We do not express merely God; we express God in a man. The church is the expression of Christ. This means that the church is an expression not merely of God but also of a man.

Ezekiel 1:26 shows us that the Lord today is a man on the throne. God needs a man, and eventually He became a man. We as the living creatures express Him as a man. He is the man on the throne, and we also bear the appearance of a man. It is man who fulfills God's plan, it is man who expresses God, it is man who defeats the enemy, and it is man who brings the kingdom of God into the human race. God needs a man.

The vision in Ezekiel 1 reveals three crucial matters concerning the four living creatures' bearing the appearance of a man. First, God's glory is manifested upon them. The manifestation of God's glory depends upon their having the appearance of a man. Where they are, there God's glory is. God's glory is not separate from them, and apart from them God's glory cannot be manifested. Second, these living creatures are the means of God's move. God's move depends on them. When they move, God will move, for His move is with them. Third, the four living creatures, who bear the appearance of a man, are the means of God's administration. Ezekiel 1 reveals that God is sitting on the throne. God's throne dominates everything on earth and everything recorded in this book. This throne, therefore, is the center of God's administration. However, the center of God's administration depends on the four living creatures having the appearance of a man. Because of this, there is the administration of God's throne. If we put these three things together, we will see that man is the means of God's manifestation, that man is the means of God's move, and that man is the means of God's administration. In God's eyes and in God's hands, man has such an important position.

We all need to realize that God's desire is to gain man. God uses the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum to enliven us in order to gain man as the means of His manifestation, move, and administration. Since man is so important to God, it is crucial for us to be a man and to bear the appearance of a man. We need to be a man for God's manifestation, for God's move, and for God's administration.

How precious it is that the One sitting on the throne in Ezekiel 1:26 has the appearance of a man! This verse speaks not of the almighty God but of One who has "the likeness as the appearance of a man." There is at least a twofold significance to the fact that the One sitting on the throne here has the appearance of a man. First, there is surely a connection between Ezekiel 1:26 and Genesis 1:26, which says that God created man in His own image and according to His likeness. Second, in the incarnation God Himself became a man. Having the nature of man, He lived, died, resurrected, and ascended as a man, and now in heaven He is still the Son of Man (John 6:62; Acts 7:56).

In the Bible there is a mysterious thought concerning the relationship between God and man. God's desire is to become the same as man is and to make man the same as He is. This means that God's intention is to mingle Himself with man and thereby make Himself like man and make man like Him. The Lord Jesus is the God-man; He is the complete God and the perfect man. We may also say that He is the Man-God. The One whom we worship today is the Man-God. Furthermore, to be a man of God, as Moses was (Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6; Psalms 90, title), is to be a God-man,

a man who is mingled with God. It is a delight to God that all His chosen and re-deemed people would be God-men.

God's intention on earth is to have a man. This is His desire. Eventually, He Himself became a man, and today on the throne He is still a man. People may want to be like God, but God wants to be a man. God's intention is to work Himself into us, making us the same as He is, and even more, making Himself the same as we are. Thus, God's intention is to have a man and to work Himself into man. We need to be deeply impressed with the fact that the Lord is still on the throne as a man. In the book of Ezekiel, the term *the son of man* is used more than ninety times. This indicates how much God desires to have a man.

If we would live out God and express God, we need to be a man and have the appearance of a man. Ezekiel 1:5 says that the four living creatures have the appearance of a man, and verse 26 says that the One on the throne has the appearance of a man. The crucial point here is that because man was created in the image of God in order to express God, only man is like God. A person must have the appearance of a man in order to live out the image of God and therefore express God. If we want to live out God and express God, we must be a man and have the appearance of a man. Anyone who does not have the appearance of a man cannot express God. The One on the throne and the four living creatures both have the appearance of a man, indicating that the four living creatures on earth are the expression of the One on the throne. (*Life-study of Ezekiel*, pp. 48-50, 124-125)

THE FOURTH STAGE— CHRIST'S FULL GROWTH IN US

Now we will consider the fourth stage of our spiritual experience. This is the last and highest stage of our spiritual life—Christ's full growth in us.

After we have passed through the previous stages, all difficulties in us relating to sin, the world, the offense in the conscience, the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution having been dealt with and purged, there remains in us nothing but God. God now has gained absolute ground in us, and our whole being within and without is entirely filled with the Holy Spirit. Now we enter the highest stage of the spiritual life, where Christ is fully grown and matured in us. We have, therefore, called this highest stage "Christ's full growth in us."

Let us look at the type in the Old Testament as shown in the account of the Israelites' departure from Egypt and their entrance into Canaan. At the outset of their journey, by passing through the Red Sea, they left Egypt, the land of bondage, while Pharaoh and his army were buried under the sea. Henceforth, the world with its usurping power was stripped off. Later, they fought with the Amalekites, which is a type of their dealing with the flesh. Then the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. The number forty in the Bible denotes testing and affliction. God led them to walk through the wilderness for forty years because He desired, by means of testing and affliction, to expose the wickedness of their flesh. His intention was that the flesh should be dealt with exhaustively. Our experience is the same. After baptism, it is not enough to deal with the flesh just once; we must be dealt

with in the hand of God for months and years. Sometimes God leads us through the wilderness so that not only is our living difficult but even our spirit is dry, depressed, and miserable. The only reason for this is that through testing and affliction our flesh might be dealt with.

When the Israelites fulfilled their days of wandering, God led them through the Jordan, and they were circumcised in Gilgal. On one hand, they entered the promised land of Canaan in a practical way; on the other hand, they were facing the seven nations of the Canaanites, and warfare was required in order to annihilate them and establish the kingdom of God. This prefigures the fact that when our days of testing in the spiritual wilderness are fulfilled and we have learned to let our flesh be dealt with to a certain degree, God will lead us through the spiritual Jordan, where the flesh will be completely rolled away (*Gilgal* means “a rolling”) and cut off (Col. 2:11). Henceforth, we shall attain to the heavenly realm in a practical way, thereby inheriting all the fullness of Christ. Furthermore, it is at this very time that we contact the hosts of evil spirits in the heavenlies and begin the experience of spiritual warfare.

During their entire journey, the Israelites passed through two bodies of water: the Red Sea, and the river Jordan. The Red Sea was for the burial of Pharaoh and his armies, whereas the Jordan was for the burial of the Israelites themselves. When they passed through the Jordan, they brought twelve stones over with them and set up another twelve stones in the riverbed. These two groups of twelve stones represent the twelve tribes. They signify that the “old” twelve tribes were terminated in the Jordan, and the “new” twelve tribes passed over to the other side of the river to enter into the promised land. Both of these two bodies of water through which they passed typify the death of Christ. The water of the Red Sea is a type of the aspect of Christ’s death that ends the power of the world. The water of the Jordan represents the aspect of Christ’s death that brings our old man to an end. When the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, they could fight only with the Amalekites; not until they passed through the Jordan could they fight with the seven nations of the Canaanites. This means that in the beginning of our spiritual life, after our baptism, we can only have warfare with the flesh (Gal. 5:17). Not until our spiritual life has reached the climax, when our flesh has been completely buried and rolled away and all our difficulties within have been resolved, will we be able to deal with the enemy without and engage in spiritual warfare.

We understand by all these types that the first three stages of our spiritual life have transpired before we pass through the Jordan. The fourth stage occurs after we cross the Jordan and enter into the land of Canaan. All our difficulties have been dealt with on the other side of the river Jordan and in the river Jordan. Now we come to this side of the river to deal with God’s difficulty, to fight against and totally destroy the seven nations of the Canaanites—the powers of spiritual darkness and wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12)—who are usurping this promised land of God. Thus, spiritual warfare must be placed in the last and highest stage of our spiritual life. Only by passing through the various dealings and having our own problems solved can we engage in spiritual warfare.

From another point of view, God has a twofold purpose for all His redeemed ones: first, and most important, that we be filled with God Himself and manifest His glory; second, that we rule for God and deal with His enemy. When we reach the end of the third stage of our spiritual life, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, or God Himself; this, the first and most important purpose of God, has been fulfilled. It is at this time that God desires that we learn to fight for Him and deal with His enemy so that His secondary purpose can be fulfilled in us. This is what we will experience in this fourth stage of our spiritual life.

In this fourth stage, we shall cover five experiences: (1) knowing the Body, (2) knowing the ascension, (3) reigning, (4) spiritual warfare, or bringing in the kingdom of God, and (5) full of the stature of Christ. (*The Experience of Life*, pp. 311-313)