

LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH

(Thursday—First Morning Session)

Message One

Living and Serving according to the Heavenly Vision of God's Economy

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:4-5; 3:2, 9; 5:26-27; Heb. 2:10-11; 1 Thes. 5:23; Acts 26:18-19

I. The one thing, the unique thing, that should be focused on, stressed, and ministered in the Lord's recovery is the heavenly vision of the eternal economy of God; the central subject of the Bible is the economy of God, and the entire Bible is concerned with the economy of God—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 8-9, 16-19; Acts 26:18-19:

- A. "God's economy and plan is to make Himself man and to make us, His created beings, 'God' so that He is 'man-ized' and we are 'God-ized'" (*A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing*, pp. 51-52).
- B. God's eternal economy is for Him to become man that man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem—John 1:1, 14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 4:5; 5:6; 21:2, 10-11.
- C. Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision, the vision of the eternal economy of God—Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 1:9-10; Jer. 32:39.

II. Our becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead was initiated by God the Father in eternity past by His choosing us to be holy, predestinating us unto sonship; the divine sanctification for the divine sonship is the center of the divine economy and the central thought of the revelation in the New Testament—Eph. 1:4-5:

- A. To be sanctified is to be made holy, which is to be separated unto God and saturated with God as the Holy One, the One who is different, distinct, from everything that is common—1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:4-5.
- B. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy in order for us to become God in nature (v. 4); God is the only One who is holy; for us to be holy we need God in His holy nature dispensed into us, and this holy nature becomes the holy element with which the Holy Spirit sanctifies us (2 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 12:14).
- C. He predestinated us unto sonship even before we were created in order for us to become God in life (Eph. 1:5); for us to become sons of God, we must be born of God by the dispensing of God's life into our being (John 1:12-13; 3:6; 1 John 5:11-12):
 - 1. Ephesians 1:4-5 reveals that God chose us to be holy for the purpose of our being made sons of God; to be made holy is the process, the procedure, whereas to be sons of God is the aim, the goal, so that our whole being, including our body (Rom. 8:23), may be "sonized" by God (Rev. 21:2, 9-11).
 - 2. Hebrews 2:10-11 reveals that the resurrected Christ as the Captain, the Author, of God's salvation is leading many sons into glory by sanctifying them.
 - 3. The divine sanctification is the holding line in the carrying out of the divine economy to sonize us divinely, making us sons of God that we may become the same as God in His life and in His nature (but not in His Godhead), so that we may be God's expression; hence, God's sanctification is the divine sonizing.
 - 4. We say that sanctification is the holding line because every step of God's work with us is to make us holy; the carrying out of the eternal economy of God is by the

Spirit's sanctification—1 Thes. 5:23; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:3b; Heb. 12:4-14; Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thes. 5:19; Rev. 2:7a; Psa. 73:16-17, 25-26; Rev. 21:2, 10.

III. The divine, dispositional sanctification is carried out by Christ as the life-giving, sanctifying, and speaking Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 5:26:

- A. Christ as the life-giving Spirit sanctifies the church by cleansing her according to the washing of the water in the word; according to the divine concept, water in Ephesians 5:26 refers to the flowing life of God, typified by flowing water (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17); we are now in such a washing process in order that the church may be holy and without blemish.
- B. The Greek word for *washing* in Ephesians 5:26 is literally “laver”; in the Old Testament the priests used the laver to wash away their earthly defilement (Exo. 30:18-21); day by day, morning and evening, we need to come to the Bible and be cleansed by the laver of the water in the word.
- C. Paul uses the Greek word *rhema* when he speaks of the word with its washing process (Eph. 5:26); *logos* is God's Word objectively recorded in the Bible; *rhema* is the word of God spoken to us on a specific occasion (Mark 14:72; Luke 1:35-38; 5:5; 24:1-8).
- D. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ is the speaking Spirit; whatever He speaks is the word that washes us; this does not refer to *logos*, the constant word, but to *rhema*, which denotes an instant word, the word that the Lord presently speaks to us—Matt. 4:4; John 6:63; Rev. 2:7; 22:17a; cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:14-15; Acts 28:25-31.
- E. The *rhema* reveals something to us personally and directly; it shows us what we need to deal with and what we need to be cleansed from (the laver of bronze was a mirror that could reflect and expose—Exo. 38:8); the important thing for each one of us is this—is God speaking His word to me today?—Rev. 2:7; 1 Sam. 3:1, 21; Amos 3:7.
- F. One thing that we always treasure is that the Lord still speaks to us personally and directly today; true growth in life depends upon our receiving the word directly from God; only His speaking in us has true spiritual value—Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7; Psa. 95:7-8.
- G. The central point of our prayers should be our longing for the Lord's speaking, which enables us to fulfill the goal of His eternal economy according to His heart's desire to have His divine sonship—Luke 1:38; 10:38-42; Eph. 1:5.
- H. In a very practical sense, the Lord's presence is one with His speaking; whenever He speaks, we realize His presence within us; Christ's speaking is the very presence of the life-giving Spirit—cf. Exo. 33:12-17; Heb. 11:8.
- I. The speaking of the indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit within us is the cleansing water that deposits a new element into us to replace the old element in our nature and disposition; this metabolic cleansing causes a genuine and inward change in life, which is the reality of dispositional sanctification and transformation.

IV. Acts 26:18 reveals the contents of our divine commission to serve according to the heavenly vision of God's economy; we need to pray over these contents, asking the Lord to make them our experience and reality so that we can bring others into this experience and reality:

- A. “To open their eyes”—v. 18:
 - 1. We need to continually pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation to understand and to see more and more of Christ, the Body of Christ, and the divine dispensing for the divine economy—Eph. 1:17; 3:5; cf. Rev. 4:6; 3:17; Matt. 6:6.
 - 2. We cannot go on without new knowledge of the Lord and a new vision of Him—Acts 26:16; Phil. 3:8b, 10a, 13; cf. Deut. 4:25.

3. Our commission is to “enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is”—Eph. 3:9.
- B. “To turn them from darkness to light”—Acts 26:18:
1. Light is the presence of God; we need to be people who are full of light—Isa. 2:5; 1 John 1:5; Luke 11:34-36.
 2. The enjoyment of Christ as our God-given portion is “in the light”—Col. 1:12; John 8:12; 1:4; Psa. 119:105, 130; Matt. 5:14; Rev. 1:20.
 3. We need to be luminaries in the world, holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:14-16); we need to tell out the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).
- C. “To turn them...from the authority of Satan to God”—Acts 26:18:
1. The highest point in our spiritual experience is to have a clear sky with the throne above it; to have the throne above a clear sky is to give the Lord the preeminence in our being and the highest and most prominent position in our life—Ezek. 1:22, 26; Col. 1:18; cf. Ezek. 14:3.
 2. If we are under a clear sky with the throne above it, genuine authority will be with us to bring others under God’s authority—2 Cor. 10:4-5, 8; 13:3, 10.
 3. Our uttermost love for the Lord qualifies, perfects, and equips us to speak for the Lord with His authority—cf. John 21:15, 17.
- D. “That they may receive forgiveness of sins”—Acts 26:18:
1. We need to go to the Lord to receive a thorough forgiveness of all our sins—1 John 1:7, 9.
 2. David begged God to blot out his transgressions, wash him thoroughly from his iniquity, and cleanse him from his sin—Psa. 51:1-2, 7, 9:
 - a. Like David we need to stay in the presence of God to have a thorough and genuine repentance and confession to receive a full forgiveness from God.
 - b. If we confess our sins to receive God’s forgiveness, we will have the gladness of God’s salvation and be sustained with a willing spirit; then we can teach transgressors His ways, and sinners will turn back to Him—vv. 12-13.
- E. “That they may receive...an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me”; this inheritance is the Triune God Himself with all He has, all He has done, and all He will do for His redeemed people—Acts 26:18:
1. The Triune God is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ, who is the portion allotted to the saints as their inheritance—Col. 2:9; 1:12.
 2. We enjoy the pneumatic Christ as the pledge of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14) “among those,” that is, among those in the church life (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22).
 3. We need to bring people into the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ in the church life so that they may enjoy Christ as we do and be sanctified dispositionally with the holy nature of God through the exercise of their spirit—Heb. 2:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 4:13.
- V. Our being sanctified for the divine sonship ultimately consummates in the New Jerusalem as the holy city (Rev. 21:2, 10) and the aggregate of the divine sonship (v. 7); this is the ultimate consummation of God becoming a man in the flesh that man might become God in the Spirit to gain a great, corporate God-man (vv. 3, 22) for the corporate expression, the glory, of the Triune God (vv. 11, 23).**