

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND THE WORK

Message Four

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Remaining in the One Unique New Testament Ministry of God's Economy for the Building Up of the One Unique Body

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:13-18; 2:2; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3-4

I. In the New Testament age, the Lord has one unique ministry to produce and build up the one unique Body as His one unique testimony:

- A. The Lord's recovery is to recover His unique ministry, the ministry of the New Testament, which is according to the apostles' teaching, the teaching of God's New Testament economy, for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 3:8-11, 14-19; 4:11-12.
- B. As a whole, the Body has one corporate ministry, not many ministries; although there are many functions in the Body, the ministry in the Body is one—Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12:
 - 1. The New Testament ministry is uniquely one and corporate, but because this ministry is the service of the Body of Christ, and because this Body has many members, every member has its own personal ministry—Acts 20:24; Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5.
 - 2. Although the ministers are many, all these ministers have only one corporate ministry, which is the New Testament ministry—2 Cor. 3:6.
- C. The proper ministry, the ministry according to God's New Testament economy, is for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:11-12:
 - 1. For a local church to receive a ministry that is different from the general ministry that produces the churches, establishes the churches, and is still edifying the churches affects the entire Body—1 Cor. 1:12; 16:12; Acts 18:25; 19:1-2; cf. Rev. 2:1, 4.
 - 2. The saints who have been raised up by this ministry have a taste for this ministry; this taste is the controlling factor in the Lord's recovery.
 - 3. Those who have been raised with this taste will reject a taste that is contrary to it; this means that if you speak something contrary to the taste of the Lord's recovery, your speaking will be rejected, and you will suffer loss.

II. The basic factor of the decline and apostasy of the church is the turning away from the New Testament ministry of the apostles' teaching, the teaching of the economy of God—2 Tim. 1:15-18; 4:3-4; 1 Tim. 1:3-4:

- A. Because they turned away from Paul's ministry, the churches in Asia declined into degradation—2 Tim. 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rev. 2:1-7; cf. 3:16.
- B. The striking point of the churches' degradation was different teachings—the teaching of Balaam (2:14), the teaching of the Nicolaitans (v. 15), and the teaching of Jezebel (v. 20); different teachings crept in because the churches

turned away from Paul's teaching, the unique teaching of God's eternal economy.

- C. One church in Asia was unique and highly appraised by the Lord—the church in Philadelphia; the Lord appreciated them because they kept the word, which means they did not turn away from the healthy teaching of God's economy, the teaching according to godliness—3:8; 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:3.

III. Divisions come out of different ministries with different teachings:

- A. "To teach differently tears down God's building and annuls God's entire economy. We all must realize that even a small amount of teaching in a different way destroys the recovery" (*Remaining in the Unique New Testament Ministry of God's Economy under the Proper Leadership in His Move*, p. 17).
- B. "There is only one ministry that ever builds up and that never destroys—this is God's economy" (p. 18).
- C. "All the troubles, divisions, and confusions came from the one source of the tolerance of different ministries...If we are not watchful, if we are careless, in one way or another the enemy would creepingly use some means, some ways, to bring in different ministries. Such a thing would end the Lord's recovery" (p. 21).
- D. "If you could take away all the different ministries and leave only the unique ministry of the New Testament, all the denominations, all the different groups, and all the divisions would disappear. There would be no division and no confusion" (pp. 21-22).
- E. "If we carry out something new, something different, something other than this unique ministry, we will be through as far as the Lord's recovery is concerned. Actually, the Lord's recovery is to bring us back to the unique ministry of the New Testament" (p. 22).

IV. The healthy teaching of God's economy according to the unique New Testament ministry keeps the church healthy in life and established in truth to bring forth godliness—a life that lives Christ and expresses God in Christ—1 Tim. 6:3; 3:15-16; 2 Tim. 1:13; Matt. 4:4; John 6:57, 63; Rev. 2:7:

- A. In order to be reconstituted and inoculated, we need to labor to get into the healthy teaching of God's economy through the unique ministry—1 Tim. 5:17:
 - 1. The healthy teaching not only ministers the life supply to the believers and heals the spiritual diseases, but in so doing, it also brings the church into a sound condition with a good order—6:3; Titus 1:1, 9.
 - 2. The notes of the Recovery Version and the Life-study messages do not replace the Bible but open up the Bible to bring us into its intrinsic significance according to the unique teaching of God's economy—Psa. 119:130; Acts 8:30-31; Neh. 8:8, 13.
 - 3. "I have the assurance to say that whoever has read through five hundred Life-study messages properly has been an excellent believer...Medicine, nourishment, and all kinds of vitamins are included in these messages" (*Elders' Training, Book 3: The Way to Carry Out the Vision*, p. 106).

4. We must deposit the Lord's healthy words and the healthy teaching of God's economy into our being, like we deposit money in a bank—2 Tim. 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 6:3, 20; Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:72.
- B. In a darkened and confused situation we must cleave to and inoculate others with the healthy teaching of God's economy—Titus 1:9; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:15-16; 2:2.