

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND THE WORK

Message Five

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Entering into the Ministry of the Age with the Vision of the Age to Be in One Accord for the Building Up of the One Body

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:19; Prov. 29:18a; 2 Kings 2:1-14; Acts 1:14; Eph. 4:11-12

I. The particular recovery and work that God is doing in one age is the ministry of that age:

- A. In the Old Testament, Noah had the ministry of that age to build the ark, Moses had the ministry of that age to build the tabernacle, and David and Solomon had the ministry of that age to build the temple.
- B. In the New Testament, the ministry of the Lord Jesus is to build up the church as the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18.
- C. The many gifted persons produced in the Lord's ascension have only one ministry, that is, to minister Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ, the church; this building up is not accomplished directly by the gifted ones but by the saints who have been perfected by the gifted ones—Eph. 4:11-12.
- D. "In God's building ministry, there are those who take the lead in that ministry in every age. May the Lord open our eyes to see that as long as we are human beings, we should be Christians; as long as we are Christians, we should enter into the Lord's ministry in this age" (*Words of Training for the New Way*, vol. 1, p. 23).

II. Elisha's following of Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to the river Jordan shows that in order to enter into the ministry of the New Testament age, we must follow the Lord through four crucial places—2 Kings 2:1-14:

- A. Elijah is a type of the Old Testament age with the Old Testament economy, and Elisha is a type of the New Testament age with the New Testament economy.
- B. The age was changed by passing through four places:
 - 1. Gilgal is the place where God's people were circumcised to deal with their flesh—Josh. 5:2-9; Gal. 5:24; Phil. 3:3.
 - 2. Bethel is the place to give up the world and turn to God absolutely, taking God as everything—Gen. 12:8; 1 John 2:15-17.
 - 3. Jericho, the first city that Joshua and the people of Israel had to defeat when they entered into the good land, signifies God's enemy, Satan—Josh. 6; Rev. 12:11.
 - 4. The river Jordan, where the New Testament baptism began, signifies death—Matt. 3:5-6; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 2:20.
- C. In order for the age to be changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament in our experience, we must deal with our flesh (5:24; Phil. 3:3), give

up the world and turn to God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17), defeat Satan (Eph. 6:10-20; Rev. 12:11), and pass through death (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 2:20).

- D. We need to be co-workers who are dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord to match the need of the ministry of the age—Acts 1:14; cf. Judg. 7.

III. Our one accord is in the all-inheriting vision of the age through the ministry of the age—Acts 26:19; 1:14; Rom. 15:6; 1 Tim. 1:12; Acts 20:24:

- A. In every age there is the vision of that age, and we need to serve God according to the vision of the age; God's Word reveals to us that in every age He gives only one vision to man—26:19; Eph. 1:17; 3:9.
- B. Our vision should be one that matches the age; in order for us to serve God today, our vision must extend all the way from the first vision of Adam in Genesis to the ultimate vision of John in Revelation—Gen. 2:9; Rev. 21:2.
- C. The vision that the Lord has given us in His recovery is the ultimate consummation of all visions—the New Jerusalem; within this ultimate consummation everything is included—vv. 9-10.
- D. Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision, an up-to-date, all-inheriting vision, the vision of the eternal economy of God; where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint because there is no one accord—Prov. 29:18a.
- E. Throughout the ages there were many saints who loved the Lord and who feared the Lord, but we cannot say that they all had the vision that matched their age—Acts 15:35-39; 18:24-25; 19:1-2; 21:18-21:
 - 1. Many lovers of the Lord were raised up through the past centuries, but they were not able to be in one accord because the vision each held was different in degree; because the degree of the visions they saw was different, spontaneously there was no one accord.
 - 2. The problem among us is that some are bound by the little experience and vision they have; some are unwilling to see more and consider all those who see more to be wrong.
 - 3. While the Holy Spirit is moving on, some decide to follow and others decide to stay; the more the Holy Spirit moves on, the fewer are those who follow Him.

IV. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is the leadership of the controlling, God-given revelation of God's economy—26:19:

- A. You should not do a work to attract people to follow you; such a one who makes himself attractive is wrong, and if you are attracted to follow him, you help him to be wrong, destroying yourself and him—cf. 2 Cor. 4:5.
- B. In the Lord's work we should beware of the ambition to get a place or a district for our work, captivating people to be our private co-workers; our fallen disposition by birth likes to captivate people—1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:19-20.
- C. "It is grossly wrong to say that we are following a certain person. We are following a vision that belongs to the present age. It is God's consummate vision" (*The Vision of the Age*, pp. 49-50).
- D. Because we are under the heavenly vision of the eternal economy of God according to the unique teaching of the apostles, we can be one in teaching

(1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 16:1; Acts 2:42; Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3; Eph. 4:13-14), practice (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33b-34), thinking (Phil. 2:2; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:10), speaking (Rom. 15:6), essence, appearance, and expression (Rev. 1:11-12) in God's one ministry for His one move to produce one Body as His one testimony.