

THE WILL OF GOD

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

The Mystery of God's Will in the Universe Ultimately Being to Head Up All Things in Christ through the Church as the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:5, 9-11; 3:11; 5:17; Col. 1:9; Rev. 4:11; 21:1-2, 9-11

- I. We need to understand what the will of the Lord is—Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9.**
- II. God's will is what He wants and what He intends to accomplish—Eph. 1:5, 9, 11:**
 - A. God has an eternal will, which is the source of His eternal purpose—v. 11; 3:11.
 - B. Since God is eternal, without beginning or ending, His will is also eternal; it lies at the heart of the origin of the universe—Rev. 4:11.
 - C. God created all things for His will so that He might accomplish and fulfill His purpose—Eph. 3:11.
 - D. The will of God is concentrated in Christ and is for Christ to have the first place in all things; Christ is everything in God's eternal will—Col. 1:15-18; 3:4, 10-11.
 - E. God wants to have Christ with the church; the will of God is to obtain the church as the Body of Christ—Eph. 5:32; 1:9, 22-23; 2:21-22; 4:16.
 - F. God in Christ as the Spirit is now working within us to accomplish His eternal will to have the New Jerusalem—the wife of the Lamb filled with the glory of God for His eternal expression in the new heaven and new earth—Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:14-21; Rev. 21:1-2, 9-11.
- III. According to the good pleasure of His will, God predestinated us unto sonship—Eph. 1:5:**
 - A. God has a will, in which is His good pleasure; God's good pleasure is of His will and is embodied in His will, so His will comes first—vv. 5, 9, 11.
 - B. God's good pleasure is what makes God happy—it is the desire of His heart; the living, loving, and purposeful God surely has a heart's desire—v. 5.
 - C. God predestinated us to be His sons according to His pleasure, according to the desire of His heart—v. 5:
 1. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us to be holy; to be made holy—to be sanctified by God through His dispensing Himself into us and then mingling His nature with us—is the process, the procedure—v. 4.
 2. To be sons of God is the aim, the goal, and is a matter of our being joined to the Son of God and conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God so that our whole being may be “sonized” by God—v. 5; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15.
- IV. We have been “predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will”—Eph. 1:11:**
 - A. God's will is His intention, and God's counsel is His consideration of the way to accomplish His will, His intention.

- B. According to His will, a council was held by the Trinity before the foundation of the world to make a counsel, a decision, which is His determined will—1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:11.

V. God's will was hidden in Him as a mystery, so Ephesians 1:9 speaks of "the mystery of His will":

- A. In eternity God had a will, but this will was hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery—v. 9; 3:3-5, 9.
- B. In the pleasure of His heart and in His wisdom and prudence, God made this hidden mystery known to us through His revelation in Christ, that is, through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—1:9; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3-4; 4:25; 8:3, 34.

VI. Ultimately, God's will in the universe is to head up all things in Christ through the church as the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:10, 22-23; Rev. 21:1-2:

- A. God's eternal intention is, in the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, who has been appointed to be the universal Head—Eph. 1:10, 22.
- B. Through the dispensations of God in all the ages, all things will be headed up in Christ in the new heaven and new earth; this will be God's eternal administration and economy—Rev. 21:1-2.
- C. Satan's goal is to corrupt God's creation and to cause confusion—Rom. 8:19-23:
 - 1. The entire universe is a heap of collapse caused by Satan injecting himself as the factor of death into God's creation—Heb. 2:14; Rom. 8:20-21.
 - 2. God is working to liberate His creation from bondage and to bring it into liberty by heading up all things in Christ—Eph. 1:22, 10.
 - 3. We all need to be delivered from the heap of collapse and headed up in Christ—Col. 1:12-13.
 - 4. God's salvation is to save us not only from our fallen, sinful condition but also from the heap of collapse—vv. 12-13; Eph. 2:1-8, 21-22.
- D. God will subject all things under Christ by heading up all things in Christ through the church as the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:20-28:
 - 1. God is heading up His chosen ones to be the Body of Christ with Christ as the Head—Eph. 1:4, 22-23:
 - a. Christ's headship is being transmitted to the church; this means that, in a sense, we can share the headship of Christ over all things.
 - b. The church is under nothing but Christ Himself; we are above everything else because we are the Body of the One who is over all things.
 - c. The first step in the heading up of all things in Christ is for God to bring His chosen ones, His sons, out of the universal collapse and to place them under the headship of Christ—v. 22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19.
 - 2. When the church takes the lead to be headed up in Christ, God has a way to head up all other things—Eph. 1:22-23, 10:
 - a. The church is the vessel used by God to solve His problems and to fulfill His purpose, which is to manifest Himself through man by mingling Himself with man—3:9-11.

- b. Eventually, the Body with Christ as the Head will be the universal Head over all things—1:22-23.
 - 3. The church life is a life of being headed up—4:15; 1 Cor. 11:3:
 - a. In the proper church life we are being headed up in Christ.
 - b. If we do not know what it is to be headed up in Christ, we cannot know the church.
 - c. In the church life we are taking the lead to be headed up in Christ; for this we need to grow in life—Eph. 4:15.
 - d. We are headed up through the divine dispensing—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 1:1; 3:2, 9, 16-17.
 - e. God is working Himself into His chosen and redeemed ones through an administration that is a sweet dispensing, an intimate stewardship, a comfortable household arrangement—1:10; 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15.
- E. The heading up in the church life is by life and light—John 1:4; 8:12:
 - 1. God's way of recovery is Christ versus Satan, life versus death, light versus darkness, and order versus confusion.
 - 2. The collapse comes from the factor of death; the heading up comes from the factor of life—Ezek. 37:4-10.
 - 3. God's way to recover the oneness among His creation is to impart Himself into us as life—Rom. 8:6, 10-11, 19-21.
 - 4. In order to be delivered from the heap of collapse in a practical way, we need to grow in life; the more we grow in life, the more we will be headed up and the more we will be rescued from the universal collapse—Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19.
 - 5. When God comes into us as life, the light of life shines within us—John 1:4; Eph. 5:8-9:
 - a. This life swallows death, and this light dispels the darkness—John 8:12.
 - b. If we are in the life and under the light, we will be delivered out of confusion and brought into order, harmony, and oneness.
- F. In the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, all things will be headed up in Christ; this will be the complete fulfillment of Ephesians 1:10—Rev. 21:2-3, 23-25; 22:1-2a:
 - 1. In the New Jerusalem everything will be saturated with life and will be under light—v. 1; 21:23.
 - 2. In Revelation 21 we see the Head, the Body surrounding the Head, and all the nations walking in the light of the city; the whole universe will be headed up in the light shown through the transparent city—v. 18.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

**THE MYSTERY HAVING BEEN HIDDEN
THROUGH THE AGES**

In this message we come to the mystery of God's will. God's will has a mystery, a mystery that has been hidden through the ages (Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:26). The universe is a mystery. Why is there a heaven, and why does the earth exist? Why are there so many millions of items in the universe? Why is man here on earth? All these questions are mysteries and have given rise to many different philosophies. The mystery, which is the will of God, has been made known to the church through the apostles. A will is an intention, and the will of

God is God's intention. God's intention is intimately related to the desire of His heart. Thus, the mystery of the universe is a matter of God's will, which is related to the desire of God's heart. We need to know the mystery, the will of God, and the desire of God's heart.

Some may say that God's will and intention is to have the church and that the church is the desire of His heart. This is correct, but we need to ask what the church is. Many Christians, including Christian teachers, do not have a clear understanding concerning the church. The church is not simply a group of people. In ourselves we are not the church; we are pitiful sinners. The only way we can become the church is for God in His Son to work Himself into our being. Most Christians today do not see the crucial and vital matter that God in His Son is working Himself into His chosen and redeemed ones. They may know about God's selection and redemption, and they may realize that they are the chosen and redeemed ones. But they do not see that the very God who has chosen and redeemed them desires, in the person of the Son, to work Himself into them. Neither selection nor redemption is the goal. Both are steps toward the goal. God's goal is to work Himself into our being.

I realize that such a word may sound strange to many. For years I was in various branches of Christianity: fundamental Christianity, the Brethren assemblies, the inner-life practices, and the Pentecostal movement. But I was never told that in the person of the Son, God is working Himself into His redeemed ones. Nevertheless, this is the mystery of the universe.

The New Testament proves that God is working Himself into us. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us (Eph. 4:6; 2 Cor. 13:5; John 14:17). According to 1 John, we are in God, and God is in us (4:15). Furthermore, we abide in Him, and He abides in us (John 15:4). In Philippians 1:21 the apostle Paul could even say, "To me, to live is Christ." In Galatians 2:20 he said that he lived no longer but that Christ lived in him. All these verses indicate that God in the Son is working Himself into us...

The mystery of the universe is the church, and the church is a group of people into whom God is working Himself. Eventually, the church will be fully saturated with God and will consummately become the holy city, the New Jerusalem. The church will not only be saturated with God but also mingled with Him. This does not mean, however, that we shall become the Godhead. No, this is neither what we say nor what we mean. Nevertheless, as those who are being saturated with God and mingled with Him, we shall become the very expression of God. The New Jerusalem will be the corporate expression of God. As we have pointed out a number of times, both God on the throne (Rev. 4:3) and the New Jerusalem (21:11) have the appearance of jasper. This means that the entire city has the appearance of God and is the expression of God. This is the mystery of the universe.

What a deliverance it would be for Christians if they could only see this! Many know only about being saved, being regenerated, becoming the children of God, and going to heaven some day. But the concept of being saved for the goal of going to heaven is much lower than the mystery of God's will. The mystery of God's will is to have a church constituted with those who have been saturated and mingled with God...

The mystery of the universe is that God is working Himself into us. Everything is working together for this purpose (Rom. 8:28). All things serve this goal. Everything is for God's working of Himself into our being. This is much different from merely having a happy life. You may be very happy today but not tomorrow. You may be happy in a meeting, but when you return home, your wife or husband may give you a difficult time. The mystery of God's will is not that we are becoming happy people. Today is not the time for us to be fully happy, because the time is not yet ripe. Because many do not have the adequate vision or revelation, they do not know what is actually taking place in the church life. They think that we are simply here to have a good time. But this is not the mystery of God's will. This mystery

is that God is dispensing Himself into us to produce the church for Himself. This is a mystery hidden through the ages.

**GOD'S WILL BEING GOD'S INTENTION
TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE DESIRES FOR HIMSELF**

God's will is God's intention to accomplish what He has purposed in eternity past and what He desires for Himself for eternity future. He purposed and He desires to have the church. This is His will and intention.

**THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL
HAVING BEEN MADE KNOWN TO US BY REVELATION**

Ephesians 1:9 says that God has made known to us the mystery of His will. To make known to us the mystery of His will is one item of God's wisdom and prudence. In eternity God planned a will. This will has been hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery. In His wisdom and prudence He has made this hidden mystery known to us through His revelation in Christ, that is, through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. It was the pleasure of God's heart to reveal to us the mystery of His will.

ACCORDING TO GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE

God's good pleasure is the desire of His heart, that is, to have the church, and God's revelation of His hidden will is according to this desire of His heart. This is according to His good pleasure.

**GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE
HAVING BEEN PURPOSED BY GOD**

In Himself

God's good pleasure has been purposed by God in Himself. This means that God Himself is the initiation, origination, and sphere of His eternal purpose. God has a plan, a desire, and according to His plan, He has a purpose. The existence of the universe is according to God's purpose. Heaven, earth, millions of items, and the human race are all according to God's purposed desire. Eventually, all these things will issue in God's desire. In the universe there is a desire, God's desire. Because this desire has been purposed by God, no one and nothing can overthrow it. Everything that takes place on earth is for this purpose. We, the sons of God, in whom God's grace abounds, are the focal point of His purpose, and everything is working for us. God has purposed this desire in Himself. He did not take counsel with anyone else regarding it.

God's good pleasure is what He has purposed in Himself for an administration (v. 10). The entire universe will eventually be under one administration. The Greek word rendered "administration" is *oikonomia*, from which we get the English word *economy*. God has purposed to have an economy. All the kingdoms in the universe—the angelic kingdom, the demonic kingdom, the human kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the plant kingdom—are for this economy, this administration, and are moving toward it. For example, today's world situation, the center of which is the Middle East, is according to the Bible. Since the reformation of the nation of Israel in 1948 and especially since the return of Jerusalem to Israel in 1967, the Middle East has become the center of international relations. This is altogether according to the Bible, and it is a sign that the universe is moving toward God's administration. Such an administration is what God has planned and purposed according to His desire. All the kingdoms will be under this unique administration, which is to head up all things in Christ. (*Life-study of Ephesians*, pp. 64-69)

THE HEADING UP OF ALL THINGS

In Ephesians 1:10 Paul says, “Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.” We need to note that it is in Christ that God intends to head up all things. The word *Christ* here literally means “the Christ”; it refers to the One mentioned in verse 1 and verse 3, the One in whom are the spiritual blessings of God and in whom are the faithful saints, who participate in the blessings. He is a particular One; hence, He is called “the Christ.”

The Greek word rendered “economy” in verse 10 is *oikonomia*, which means “house law, household management, or administration,” and derivatively, “administrative dispensation, plan, or economy.” The economy that God, according to His desire, planned and purposed in Himself is to head up all things in Christ at the fullness of the times. This is accomplished through the dispensing of the abundant life supply of the Triune God as the life factor into all the members of the church that they may rise up from the death situation and be attached to the Body.

The expression *the times* in verse 10 refers to the ages. The fullness of the times will be when the new heaven and new earth appear after all the dispensations of God in all the ages have been completed. Altogether there are four ages: the age of sin (Adam), the age of the law (Moses), the age of grace (Christ), and the age of the kingdom (the millennium).

God’s eternal intention is to head up all things in Christ, who has been appointed to be the universal Head. Through all the dispensations of God in all the ages, all things will be headed up in Christ in the new heaven and new earth. That will be God’s eternal administration and economy. Thus, the heading up of all things is the issue of all the items covered in verses 3 through 9. God chose us to be holy, predestinated us unto sonship, accomplished redemption for us through the blood of Christ, graced us in the Beloved, and caused grace to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence in order that He may head up all things in Christ.

Ephesians 1:22 says that God gave Christ to be Head over all things. This reveals that the heading up of all things is to the church so that the Body of Christ may share in all that is of Christ as the Head, having been rescued from the heap of the universal collapse in death and darkness, which was caused by the rebellion of the angels and the rebellion of man. In Christ God is in the process of heading up all things in heaven and on earth. However, without the church as the Body to match Christ as the Head, it will not be possible for God to head up all things in Christ. The heading up of all things is accomplished by the Head, but it cannot be accomplished without a Body for the Head. Whether Christ can be the Head over all things, whether all things can be subjected to the authority of Christ, and whether all things can be headed up in Christ completely depend upon whether or not the church has been produced and has grown up (4:14-16; Col. 2:19). When the church is fully grown, God is able to subject all things to the authority of Christ. By means of the church, Christ is able to be the Head over all things. Eventually, the Body with Christ as the Head will be the universal Head over all things. When everything is headed up in Christ, there will be absolute peace and harmony (Isa. 2:4; 11:6; 55:12; Psa. 96:12-13), a full rescue out of the collapse. This will begin from the time of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

When God created the universe, everything of the universe was in oneness; all things in it were in harmony, not in chaos. God and the universe were in harmony. This harmony is the great oneness of the universe. All things related to the universe depend on God, who is one, as the factor of their oneness. The center of the universe is God Himself; hence, the oneness of the universe is God Himself. There was oneness in the creation of the universe, and in this oneness there was no confusion. Yet because of Satan’s rebellion, which was followed

by man's fall, this original oneness in creation was ruined so that the entire universe was brought into confusion. Satan damaged the oneness of the universe in creation by introducing death into all creation, which death severed the Creator's relationship with creation. In other words, when Satan brought death into the universe, the universe was separated from God, and the oneness of the universe was lost. Thus, there is not the full harmony in the universe.

Yet God had an eternal plan to head up all things in Christ, that is, to make Christ the Head of all things and the Head above all things. God's way to recover the oneness among His creation is to impart Himself in Christ into us as life (Rom. 8:6, 10-11, 19-21). The Triune God as life brings in light, and light issues in harmony and brings all things into oneness. Hence, the believers participate in this heading up by growing in life, by being headed up in the proper church life, and by living under Christ's light (John 1:4; Rev. 21:23-25). The more we grow in life, the more we will be headed up and the more we will be rescued from the universal collapse (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19). This process of heading up all things in Christ is still continuing, and the heading up of all things will be fully accomplished and manifested when Christ finishes His work to bring forth the new creation out of the old creation through all the dispensations of God. It is through this new creation that Christ will head up all creation and bring it into the universal oneness; this will issue in the new heaven and the new earth. In the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, all things will be headed up in Christ; this will be the complete fulfillment of the heading up of all things spoken of in Ephesians 1:10. In Revelation 21 we see the Head, the Body surrounding the Head, and all the nations walking in the light of the city. The whole universe will be headed up in the light shown through the transparent city (v. 18). (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3341-3344)