

The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy

by Ed Marks

In this article we would like to focus our entire attention on the heart's desire of the Triune God and on how His desire is carried out. May the Lord grant us a spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of our heart (Eph. 1:17-18) so that we can live a life according to God's heart. Ephesians 1 speaks of the good pleasure of God's will (vv. 5, 9). God has a will, a good pleasure, which is His heart's desire. The apostle Paul's commission from the Lord was to carry out this heart's desire. As he describes what his commission from the Lord is, we can see what God's heart's desire is. In Ephesians 3:8-11 Paul said:

To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel and to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, in order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Eternal Economy of God— The Unique Revelation in the Entire Bible

Paul said that his commission from the Lord was to be an announcer and an enlightener. Let us first consider his commission of enlightening. In Acts 26:18 God commissioned Paul "to open their eyes." His divine job, his career, was to enlighten others that they might see something which he called *the economy of the mystery*. This eternal economy was hidden throughout the ages until it was made known through the apostles' teaching in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4 Paul exhorted Timothy to charge certain ones in Ephesus not to teach anything different from God's economy. This shows us that God's eternal economy is the unique revelation and the unique teaching in the entire Bible. We should not teach anything other than His divine economy.

The word *economy* is anglicized from the Greek word *oikonomia*, which is composed of two words: *oikos* meaning house or household and *nomos* meaning law. Thus, God's economy is His household law, His household administration. God's heart's desire is to gain a household (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10) composed of His many sons who are His duplication and expression. In Ephesians 1:5 Paul told us that we were predestinated unto sonship according to the good pleasure, the heart's desire, of God's will. In order for God to gain such a household of many sons for His universal expression, He has an eternal economy, a household administration, an administrative arrangement. God's economy, His household administration, is to dispense all that He is in Christ as the Spirit into His chosen and redeemed people to make them His corporate household, His aggregate sonship, for His expression. This household is the church (1 Tim. 3:15), the Body of Christ, which ultimately consummates in the New Jerusalem.

The Stewardship for the Carrying Out of the Divine Economy

In order to carry out God's eternal economy, there is a divine stewardship (Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 9:17; Col. 1:25). The Greek word for stewardship in the New Testament is also *oikonomia*. When God's economy is committed to His servants, this economy becomes their stewardship. A steward is someone who manages and dispenses, distributes, the riches of the household to all the members of the household, and a stewardship is that one's dispensing function. In the Old Testament Joseph is an excellent example of a steward. His stewardship was to manage and dispense all the food of Egypt to the hungry people in a time of famine. Paul was such a steward in the New Testament. In Ephesians 3:2 he said, "If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you." Notice the phrase *given to me for you*. The grace was given, dispensed, into Paul not merely for his

God's Economy: Its Contents

The contents of God's economy are actually the process of the Triune God in traveling from eternity past across the bridge of time into eternity future to gain His heart's desire. These contents may be encapsulated in the following statements by Athanasius, one of the church fathers, concerning Christ: "He was made man that we might be made God" ("De Incarnatione" 65), and "The Word was made flesh...that we, partaking of His Spirit, might be deified" ("De Decretis" 159). (This tremendous subject will be covered in full in the next issue.) The Triune God came out of eternity onto the bridge of time, and He came with His divinity into humanity. This was the Word who was God, the Triune, becoming flesh. The man Jesus was the embodiment of the Triune God. All the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (Col. 2:9). On the bridge of time this wonderful God-man, the complete God and the perfect man, passed through human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, in which He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) to produce the church as the Body of Christ. As the Spirit through regeneration He now indwells us and is "traveling within us" on the bridge of time by dispensing Himself into us to sanctify, renew, transform, conform, and glorify us so that we will be completely filled with the unsearchable riches of Christ to make us completely like Him in life, nature, and appearance (1 John 3:2). This is the process of man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. When the Body of Christ is fully built up through this process, His Body will become His prepared bride for His wedding day of one thousand years (Rev. 19:7-9; 20:6). After this wedding day, His bride will become His wife for eternity future (21:2, 9). Thus, the Triune God steps off the bridge of time into eternity future in union with His bride—His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, renewed, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect, with whom He is mingled. This will be "the economy of the fullness of the times," in which all things are eternally headed up in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

personal appropriation but so that he could impart it into others. Peter said in 1 Peter 4:10 that we are to be "good stewards [Gk. *oikonomoi*] of the varied grace of God." God in Christ as the Spirit dispenses Himself into us as grace, and we are to be the stewards of this grace by dispensing it into others.

The divine stewardship was the second part of Paul's commission. The grace of God was given to him not only to enlighten people to see God's eternal economy but also to "announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel" (Eph. 3:8). Paul's function was to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ into God's chosen people to make them the fullness of Christ, the Body of Christ (1:22-23), for Christ's expression. Colossians 1:25-27 says:

I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints; to whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul's stewardship of the grace of God was to complete the word of God, and this word of God which Paul completed was "the mystery." Paul's writings completed the divine revelation of the New Testament concerning the mystery of God, which is Christ as the embodiment of God (Col. 2:2, 9), and the mystery of Christ, which is the

church as the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:4). "This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church" (5:32). The unsearchably rich Christ and His Body, the church, are the crucial contents of God's eternal economy. Paul said that this mystery is Christ *in* us. Paul did not preach merely Christ but Christ *in* us. He preached a Christ that has been dispensed and is being dispensed into the believers to produce and build up the Body of Christ.

In Galatians 1 Paul described his conversion experience by saying, "It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me" (vv. 15-16a). When we received Christ as our Savior and life, God revealed Him in us. Paul received an inward revelation of Jesus, the Son of God, and that revelation brought Christ into his being. God's shining into his inner being brought the Christ of glory into him, to become the treasure within him, an earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:6-7). As earthen vessels we are worthless and fragile, but we have Christ dwelling within us as the treasure who is priceless and indestructible.

Paul also said in Galatians that Christ was not only revealed in him but also living in him: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (2:20a). God's desire is for the Christ revealed in us to be the Christ living in us. Our prayer should be: "Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord, / Oh, to be lost in Thee, / Oh, that it may be no more I, / But Christ that lives in me" (*Hymns* 540).

Paul showed that as Christ is living in us, He is being formed in us: "My children, with whom I travail again in

birth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). Christ revealed in us is the initiation of the divine dispensing, Christ living in us is the process of this dispensing, and Christ being fully formed in us is the consummation. Christ must be fully grown in us, formed in us, until we are conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29). Paul was in travail as a mother in childbirth with his spiritual children, laboring to present them full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28-29). This was his stewardship for the carrying out of God’s eternal economy.

The Divine Dispensing

God’s dispensing is the intention of God’s economy and the means by which He accomplishes His economy. God’s eternal household administration is carried out by His dispensing of Himself into His chosen people. The Triune God operates to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ for the producing of the church as the Body of Christ to become the fullness of Christ and of God (Eph. 3:19) for the expression of God. The divine dispensing for the divine economy is the central line of the divine revelation in the entire Bible.

We pointed out in our previous issue that God is triune, not for doctrinal study or debate, but for the dispensing of Himself as life into our being (*Affirmation & Critique*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 24). The Father in the Son as the Spirit produces and builds up the Body of Christ which consummates in the New Jerusalem. The Father is the fountain of life (Jer. 2:13), the source and origin of the divine dispensing. The Son is the spring of life (John 4:14), the embodiment, manifestation, and emergence of the divine dispensing. The Spirit is the flow of life (Rev. 22:1), the application, current, and reaching of the divine dispensing. The Father flows in the Son as the Spirit into the believers to become in them a living spring and to gush up and flow out of them into others (John 7:37-39). It is by this continual dispensing of the Divine Trinity as the flowing liquid of life into us and out of us into others that God accomplishes His eternal economy to gain a people for His expression.

The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy as Seen in the Typology of the Old Testament

God’s divine dispensing for His eternal economy to gain the desire of His heart can be seen in His creative work in Genesis 1 and 2. What we see in this introduction to God’s divine revelation may be considered as the blueprint

of God’s eternal economy carried out by His divine dispensing.

In His creation God spoke things into being (Psa. 33:9; Rom. 4:17), but when it came to the creation of man God worked in a special way. God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). The words *let Us* indicate that there was a council among the three of the Divine Trinity to make man unique among and the apex of all created things. All the created things except man were created according to their particular kind, or species. But man was created by a council of the Godhead not according to

man’s kind, but according to the likeness of the Triune God and in His image. Actually, before sin came in, mankind was “God-kind.” Just as a glove is created in the image of a hand to contain and express a hand, man was created in the image of God to contain and express God. This is the desire of God’s

heart seen in His creation of man in Genesis 1. God’s eternal economy is His divine plan to dispense Himself into man to be man’s content and to make man His expression.

Genesis 2 shows us the steps of the divine economy, God’s plan, to gain what He desires by His divine dispensing. The first step was the creation of man as a vessel to contain God. Verse 7 says, “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (lit.). This verse shows the tripartite being of man—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The dust of the ground became man’s body, the breath of life breathed into him became his human spirit, and the result was that man became a living soul. Man was created as a vessel with a particular organ, the human spirit, so that he could receive and contain God who is Spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). The apostle Paul later said that we have this treasure, Christ, in us, the earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7) and that we are vessels of mercy unto honor and glory (Rom. 9:21, 23). We are vessels created to contain the God of honor, the God of glory.

The second step of the divine economy is seen in God’s placing man before the tree of life. Man’s being created as an empty vessel and placed before the tree of life indicates that God wanted man to take Him in as life. The Gospels clearly show us this. John 1:4 says, “In Him was life.” It is wonderful to see that in Christ was life, but we also need to see that God’s intention was for the life in Christ to become the life in us. The life here is not the physical life (Gk. *bios*)

or the psychological life (Gk. *psuche*) but the divine, uncreated life of God (Gk. *zoe*). The Lord Jesus said, "I am... the life" (14:6a). The divine life is Christ Himself, and He came that we might have Him as life and have this life abundantly (10:10b). First Corinthians 15:45 tells us that in His resurrection, Christ as the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. When we receive Him by believing into Him, He imparts Himself as life into us. Now the life that was in Him is in us. Christ is our life (Col. 3:4).

Genesis 2 also speaks of a river flowing out of Eden to water the garden and becoming four rivers (v. 10). Thus, we see the tree of life and a flowing river. The New Testament reveals that when we receive Christ into us as our spiritual life, He begins to flow within and out of us as rivers of living water. This is the third step of the divine dispensing for the divine economy seen in Genesis. In John 4:14 the Lord said that the water that He gives us would become in us a spring of water gushing up into eternal life. He also said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (7:37-38). The Spirit of life flows out of us as rivers to reach all the thirsty people on this earth.

The issue of the flow of this river in Genesis 2 was gold, bdellium, and onyx stone (vv. 11-12). Bdellium is a pearl-like substance. At the end of the Bible, we see a holy city built with gold, pearl, and precious stones. Gold signifies God the Father in His divine nature; pearl signifies Christ in His redeeming, life-releasing death, and life-imparting resurrection; and precious stones signify the Spirit in His transforming work within us. This reveals that by the flow of the divine life within us we are constituted with the Triune God to be transformed into precious materials for God's building.

The final step of the divine economy is seen in Genesis 2:22: "And the Lord God built (lit.) into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man." Here we see God building a woman to be man's counterpart. Romans 5:14 tells us that Adam is a type of Christ. Ephesians 5 furthermore reveals that the church is being built up to be Christ's counterpart, His wife. Thus, the church is the real Eve as the issue of

Christ. Just as Eve was built with the rib of Adam, the church is built with the resurrection life of Christ. Just as Eve was constituted with the element of Adam, the church is constituted with the element of Christ. As the divine life is dispensed into us, the members of Christ's Body, the Body grows. The growth of the Body, resulting from the increase of Christ as life within the Body, is the building up of the Body (Eph. 4:16). When the church as the Body of Christ is fully built up by the growth in life, Christ will present the church to Himself as His glorious bride, just as the built-up Eve was presented to Adam (Eph. 5:27). The bride, the wife of Christ, will be the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 9-10). This will be the consummation of the divine dispensing for the divine economy.

Thus, in Genesis 1 and 2 we see a marvelous picture of the divine dispensing for the divine economy. In chapter one we can see the divine economy in God's creation of man according to His kind, His species, so that man could contain and express Him. In chapter two we can

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see the divine dispensing to carry out this economy with man as a vessel, the tree of life as his content, the flow of life as his enjoyment, the precious materials as his constitution, and the built-up wife as his consummation. This is all realized in the New Jerusalem, the built-up wife of Christ. In this holy city, constituted with the Triune God as the precious material, is the tree of life, which is Christ as the embodiment of life, and the river of water of life, which is the Spirit as the flow of life (Rev. 22:1-2). As the wife of Christ, we will enjoy the eternal dispensing of the Divine Trinity as we eternally express Him for His glory.

Now we want to consider some other major types in the Old Testament which illustrate the divine dispensing. Genesis 24 presents a marvelous picture of the Triune God working to dispense His riches into His chosen people to gain a bride for Christ. There are four major persons in this

chapter: Abraham, Isaac, Abraham's servant, and Rebekah. The first three persons signify the three of the Godhead. Abraham signifies God the Father, Isaac signifies God the Son, and Abraham's servant signifies God the Spirit. The fourth person, Rebekah, signifies the bride of Christ. Abraham sent his servant on an errand to gain a bride for his son Isaac. In the same way, God the Father has sent the Spirit on a divine errand in this age to gain a bride for His Son, Christ. When the servant realized that Rebekah was the chosen bride, he beautified her with the wealth of Isaac (v. 22). Then she returned with Abraham's servant to be Isaac's bride for his glorification. In the reality of the New Testament, the life-dispensing Spirit beautifies us with the unsearchable riches of Christ for our beautification, and then we return to Christ with those riches as His bride for His glorification.

In Exodus 12 there is another great type of the divine dispensing with the Passover lamb, which is a picture of Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). First Corinthians 5:7 speaks of "our Passover, Christ." Many Christians emphasize that the blood of the lamb typifies the blood of Christ shed for the forgiveness of our sins so that God could redeem us judicially. Thank the Lord for the precious redeeming blood of Christ, the God-Lamb! But we also need to see that the children of Israel were required not only to strike the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and the lintel of their houses (Exo. 12:7) but also to eat the lamb (vv. 8-11). To eat is to take food into us that it may be as-

simulated organically into our body. What we eat is dispensed into our being and assimilated by us to become our very constitution. This is why dieticians say that we are what we eat. This is also true in a spiritual sense.

Just as the children of Israel were required to eat the Passover lamb, we are required to eat Christ, the true Lamb of God. The Lord told us in John 6 that we need to eat Him (v. 57). To eat Christ as the Lamb of God is to receive Him as life into us, not for our judicial redemption by the blood but for our organic salvation in His life (Rom. 5:10). To eat is to receive food into us. To believe in Christ is to receive Him (John 1:12) as the Lamb of God into us. His blood cleanses us for our forgiveness, and His person dispensed into us supplies us for our deliverance. The blood of the Passover lamb saved the children of Israel from God's judgment and condemnation, and the meat of the lamb supplied, strengthened, and energized them to journey out of Egypt to be delivered from the usurpation of Pharaoh. When we received Christ, He dispensed Himself into us as our energizing life to strengthen and supply us organically to move out of the world (Egypt) and be delivered from the tyranny and usurpation of Satan (Pharaoh). Thus, our Christian life began with Christ as the Lamb of God being dispensed into our being through our believing in Him. When we eat Christ as the Lamb, we receive Him into us as our life. Then we continue our Christian life by eating Him day by day as the heavenly manna spoken of in Exodus 16. This is to live a daily life in the divine dispensing for our spiritual life supply.

"He who eats Me..."

The Lord Jesus told us in John 6 that He is the true bread out of heaven (v. 32), the bread of God (v. 33), the bread of life (v. 48), and the living bread (v. 51). Then He said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (v. 57). What does it mean to eat Jesus? Some who heard this said, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (v. 52). Many of the Lord's disciples were stumbled by this, so they went back to what they left behind and no longer walked with Him (v. 66). The Lord, of course, was not speaking of the physical realm when He told us to eat Him. His speaking was purely in the spiritual world. He said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v. 63). We need to eat the Lord as our spiritual food. Concerning the type of Israel, Paul said that they "all ate the same spiritual food" (1 Cor. 10:3). As our spiritual food, the Lord is the Spirit who gives life. As the Spirit who gives life, He is embodied in His words, which are spirit and life. To eat Him is to eat His words. Thus, Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I ate them" (Jer. 15:16). To eat His words is to receive them by means of all prayer (Eph. 6:17-18). By reading His Word prayerfully by the exercise of our spirit, we take in Christ as the Spirit, and the One who gives life is dispensed into our being as our spiritual food. This brings us back to God's original intention for man in placing him before the tree of life, which was "good for food" (Gen. 2:9). God wants man to eat Him as his spiritual food so that man will be constituted with Him for His expression.

Another wonderful type of the divine dispensing in the Old Testament is the picture of the living water flowing out of the cleft rock enjoyed by the children of Israel. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:4: "All drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ." In Exodus 17 the Lord told Moses to strike the rock for the water to flow out (v. 6). Moses represents the law. This is a picture of Christ being smitten on the cross by the authority of the law so that His life could be released and dispensed into us for our satisfaction and supply. When He was on the cross, "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and

water” (John 19:34). The first stanza of a well-known hymn concerning the blood and the water is very meaningful: “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, / Let me hide myself in Thee; / Let the water and the blood, / From Thy riven side which flowed, / Be of sin the double cure, / Save me from its guilt and power” (*Hymns* 980).

As the Rock of Ages, Christ was cleft on the cross for us. The blood and water which flowed out from His side signify a marvelous “double cure.” His blood saves us from the guilt of sin by judicially satisfying all the righteous requirements of God. His flowing life (signified by the water) saves us from the power of sin by organically dispensing all that the Triune God is into our being so that we can reign in His life over every negative thing (Rom. 5:17).

As the children of Israel were journeying, they again became short of water. This time the Lord instructed Moses not to smite the rock but to speak to the rock to cause the water to flow (Num. 20:8). Concerning the reality of this type, the chorus of another hymn says, “Speak to the Rock, / Bid the waters flow, / Doubt not the Spirit, / Given long ago; / Take what He waiteth, / Freely to bestow, / Drink till its fulness / All Thy being know” (*Hymns* 227).

Christ, having been once crucified, does not need to be smitten again. In order to enjoy His life dispensing, we simply need to speak to Him in prayer. As we open our being to Him by conversing with Him in prayer, His life flows into us to be our supply as the answer to all our needs. Indeed, we “were all given to drink one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit is our divine beverage.

Psalms 36:8-9 says, “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (KJV). Strong’s concordance tells us that the Hebrew word for *fatness* here refers to the fatty ashes of sacrifices. The Hebrew word for *pleasures* is the plural of the word for *Eden*. God the Father is our fountain of life and light; God the Son is the reality of all the Old Testament sacrificial offerings with which we are abundantly satisfied; and God the Spirit is the river of God’s pleasures which we drink for our uttermost delight. In today’s temple, the church as the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15), we can enjoy the Father as the fountain of life and light, Christ as the reality of all the offerings, and the Spirit as the river of abundant pleasure. Thus, the Triune God is dispensed into us for our enjoyment and for His rich expression.

Another great type of the divine dispensing in the Old Testament is that of the rich produce of the good land of Canaan. The children of Israel ate the Passover lamb in Egypt, they ate the heavenly manna in the wilderness, and consummately they partook of the rich produce of the good

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land, which was God’s goal for them (Josh. 5:12). These are three stages of eating Christ. The good land is a type of the all-inclusive Christ realized as the Spirit to be our God-allotted portion. Colossians 1:12 says, “Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light.” Just as the children of Israel were each allotted a portion of the good land for their physical inheritance, Christ has been allotted to us by God for our spiritual inheritance. The good land was

a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything. (Deut. 8:7-9)

The all-inclusive Christ is surely the unsearchably rich One, in whom there is no scarcity and in whom we do not lack anything. It was in the good land and by and with its riches that the children of Israel eventually built the temple, God’s dwelling place for His expression. Similarly, it is in Christ and by and with His riches dispensed into our being that we are built up as the Body of Christ to consummate in the New Jerusalem, which is God’s dwelling place for His expression.

The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy as Seen in the New Testament

Now we want to see the divine dispensing for the divine economy in the New Testament. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus told three marvelous parables in Luke 15

which unveil the operation of the three of the Divine Trinity in God's love for sinners to redeem them, seek them, and dispense Himself into them. The first parable is that of a shepherd seeking a lost sheep, typifying Christ as the good Shepherd coming into the wilderness of this world to die for our sins and bring us back to His flock (vv. 1-7). The second parable concerns a woman carefully seeking a lost coin, which typifies the Spirit seeking the lost sinner in a sanctifying way until the sinner is found (vv. 8-10). The third parable concerns a father receiving back his prodigal son, which typifies God the Father receiving the profligate sinner back to Himself. In this third parable, the father honors the returning son with the riches of his house, saying to his slaves, "Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet" (v. 22). The best robe signifies Christ as the God-satisfying righteousness to clothe and cover the penitent sinner (1 Cor. 1:30). The ring signifies the sealing Spirit to impress God's substance and image upon the believer, showing that he belongs to God (Eph. 1:13). The sandals signify the power of God's salvation to separate and insulate the sinner from this dirty world in his daily walk. No doubt, the father's son appreciated this outward adornment, but his real need was still not met. He was famished with hunger and had been reduced to eating pig's food because of his former life of debauchery. Knowing this, the father did not stop with adorning his son outwardly; he went on to tell his slaves, "And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry" (Luke 15:23). The outward adornment of the son qualified him to enter into the father's house to feast on the fattened calf. The slaughtered fattened calf signifies the abundantly rich Christ killed on the cross so that He can be our enjoyment in resurrection. He is now our rich feast. Outwardly we are clothed with Christ for our redemption judicially to satisfy the requirements of God's righteousness, and inwardly we are filled with Christ for our salvation organically to fulfill His divine purpose as He is being dispensed into us through our spiritual feasting on Him.

John 14 shows us the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity for the producing of His habitation. Verses 7 through 14 reveal the Father embodied in the Son manifested among the believers. The Lord tells the disciples, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (v. 9). This is because the Father and the Son coinhere, that is, They mutually indwell each other: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (v. 11). Verses 15 through 20 reveal that the Son as the Spirit comes to dwell within the believers. The Lord said,

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inwardly we are filled with Christ
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His divine purpose as He is being dispensed
into us through our spiritual feasting on Him.*

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality...He abides with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you...In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (vv. 16-20)

The Lord's saying to the disciples that the Father would give them another Comforter indicated that He was the first Comforter dwelling among them. This other Comforter, the Spirit of reality, would be not merely among them but in them. After the Lord declared that "He [the Spirit of reality]...shall be in you," He continued by saying, "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you...I in you." Thus, the Spirit of reality to be in the disciples (the "He" in verse 17) is the Lord Jesus coming to the disciples to be in them (the "I" in verses 18 through 20).

These verses show the work of the economical Trinity. The Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit to be dispensed into the believers. Thus, the Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God within the believers. Indeed, the New Testament reveals that all three of the Divine Trinity now dwell in the believers (Eph. 4:6; 2 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 8:9). The goal of this divine dispensing is to produce a mutual abode of the Triune God and the believers. In John 14:23 the Lord said that He and the Father would come to the believer and "make an abode with him." This refers to verse 2 where the Lord said, "In My Father's house are many abodes." The Father's house in the New Testament is the church as the Body of Christ, the New Testament temple of God, the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 3:16). As Christ's many members, we are the many abodes, or dwelling places, within the Body of Christ. The Triune God has been dispensed into us, making us His abodes which constitute the Father's house. The ultimate consummation of God's eternal economy, His household administration to dispense Himself into the believers, will be the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem the Triune God is the temple for our dwelling, and we are the tabernacle for His dwelling (Rev. 21:22, 3). The ultimate issue of the divine dispensing for the divine economy is such a mutual

abode of our eternal coinherence with the Triune God. John 16:13-15 says:

But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality...and He will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I

have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you.

These verses show the divine transmission of the Divine Trinity into the believers. All that the Father is and has is the Son's, and all that the Son is and has is received by the Spirit and declared by the Spirit as reality to the believers. This declaring is the Spirit's guiding the believers into all the reality, making all that the Son is and has real to the believers.

The fulfillment of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity in His economy takes place through His two great "becomings." The first becoming is in John 1:14: "The Word became flesh." The Word who was God Himself came out of eternity into time and became a physical man, partaking of human flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). This wonderful God-man passed through human living to contact men in a personal and affectionate way. Then He died an all-inclusive death in which He crucified Satan (Heb. 2:14), sin (Rom. 8:3), the flesh (Rom. 6:6), and the world (John 12:31). Through this death He entered into an all-surpassing resurrection in which He had another great "becoming"—the great "becoming" in 1 Corinthians 15:45b: "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." The last Adam, the physical Jesus, in resurrection became a life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ. The pneumatic Christ is the Christ who is the Spirit, the *pneuma*. Thus, Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "The Lord is the Spirit." The Lord here is referred to by Paul in 4:5 when he says, "We...preach...Christ Jesus as Lord." Thus, Christ Jesus the Lord is the Spirit today. Through His two great "becomings," He is now able to be dispensed. When He was the physical Jesus He said, "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). But in order for us to have this life abundantly, the physical Jesus had to become the life-giving Spirit.

As the life-giving Spirit He gives life to our entire tripartite being to make us men of life for the building up of the Body of Christ. First Thessalonians 5:23 reveals that man is composed of "spirit and soul and body." God is triune and man is tripartite. Romans 8 unveils the life of the Triune God being dispensed into the tripartite man. Verse 10 says, "But if Christ is in you...the spirit is life because of righteousness." When we receive Christ as our life, He becomes our righteousness because He has satisfied all the righteous requirements of God judicially. At the same time He comes into our spirit to dwell in our spirit. The Lord who is the divine life is now with our spirit organically (2 Tim. 4:22). "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). Christ as the Spirit dwells in our

The fulfillment of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity in His economy takes place through His two great "becomings":
"The Word became flesh" and
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human spirit, and these two are mingled together as one spirit. This means that the One who is life is dispensed into our spirit, making our spirit life. What a marvel that through the dispensing of the divine life into our spirit by the vivifying Spirit, the human spirit of the believers becomes life itself!

This dispensing continues by spreading from our spirit, our innermost being, outward into our soul, particularly into our mind, the leading part of our soul. Romans 8:6 says, "The mind set on the spirit is life." As we set our mind on the spirit, which is life, our mind becomes life. This mind which is life is the mind of Christ, who is our life (1 Cor. 2:16). This is what it means to be renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23). The divine Spirit mingled with our spirit spreads into our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind. Our mind is then renewed with the fresh supply of the resurrection life, which is Christ Himself, who makes all things new (Rev. 21:5a). In this way we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). Transformation is not an outward change but a metabolic process of renewal in which the very life of the Triune God is dispensed into our being to purge out our natural life and make us a new creation for His expression (2 Cor. 5:17).

Eventually, this wonderful life—the divine, uncreated, indestructible, resurrection life—is even dispensed into our mortal bodies. Romans 8:11 says, "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." The life-giving Spirit vivifies our mortal bodies as He indwells us. When the Lord returns, our mortal bodies will be swallowed up by the divine life (2 Cor. 5:4). This will be the redemption of our bodies, our full sonship (Rom. 8:23). But Romans 8:11 tells us that even today we may experience the dispensing of the divine life of the Triune God into our mortal bodies.

This dispensing of the divine life is for our enlivening to carry out God's will. Many times we are so weak when it comes to carrying out spiritual things. When the Lord was agonizing in prayer in Gethsemane, His disciples fell asleep; they were not able to watch with Him in that critical hour. The Lord said to them, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). Our spirit, which has become life by regeneration, is willing to cooperate with God, but our flesh is weak and resistant to God's will. When we exercise our spirit in prayer and in fellowship with the believers, the divine life is dispensed into our mortal bodies so that

we can be energized in that life to coordinate with God to carry out His heart's desire. In this way Christ is magnified, extolled, in our mortal bodies (Phil. 1:20).

First Corinthians 1:30 also reveals the divine dispensing of Christ as life to the three parts of our being: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Christ is wisdom to us from God in a threefold way as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Righteousness is related to our past when we were regenerated in our spirit with God's life; our spirit is life because of righteousness. Sanctification is for our present as we are being sanctified with God's holy nature dispositionally by the washing of the water in the word (Eph. 5:26). Redemption is for our future when our body will be redeemed and transfigured with the element of the divine life to be conformed to the body of Christ's glory (Phil. 3:21). Thus, Christ as wisdom is dispensed into our tripartite being in a threefold way, and as the multifarious wisdom of God, He is made known through the church, making the church the wise exhibition of all that Christ is (Eph. 3:10).

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul blessed the believers with the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. The love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are to be with us all. The love of God, God as love, is the source of the divine dispensing. The grace of Christ, Christ as grace, is the outflow and manifestation of the love of God. The fellowship of the Spirit, the Spirit as fellowship, is the reaching and flowing of the Spirit within us, with the love of God and the grace of Christ, for our full enjoyment of the entire blessed Trinity.

Ephesians 1 shows that the church as the Body of Christ is the issue of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. Verses 4 and 5 speak of the Father's choosing us to be holy by predestinating us unto sonship. To be holy is to be unique and distinct from all that is common. The Bible reveals that God is the Holy One. How can we sinners be holy as God is holy? It is only by God dispensing His holy nature into us. Second Peter 1:4 says that we believers have become "partakers of the divine nature." We are holy not merely positionally by being set apart to God but also dispositionally by possessing His holy nature.

God the Father also predestinated us unto sonship. We become His sons by being born of Him to have His very life. His life has been dispensed into us to make us the children of God (John 1:12-13). We are the sons of God not only positionally but also organically because we have

been begotten of God to have His very seed, the divine life, abiding in us (1 John 3:9). "God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life" (5:11-12). "Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are" (3:1). Thus, verses 4 and 5 of Ephesians 1 show that the Body of Christ is the issue of the dispensing of the Father in His nature and His life into us.

Verses 7 through 12 of Ephesians 1 show that the Body of Christ is the issue of the dispensing of the Son in His redemptive work to release His life into us and by this dispensed life to head up all things in Christ and make us the inheritance of God. Verse 7 says that we have redemption through His blood; verse 10 says that at the economy of the fullness of the times, all things in the universe will be headed up in Christ; and verse 11 says that in Christ we were designated to be God's inheritance. The Lord Jesus revealed that in His redeeming death He would be like a grain of wheat falling into the ground to die and resurrect to bear much fruit (John 12:24). When He died, the shell of His humanity was broken and the divine life within Him was released. In His resurrection this released divine life was imparted into His chosen ones to make them the

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many grains, the many sons of God, His many brothers. Now He is the Firstborn among many brothers who have His very life (Rom. 8:29). As the firstborn Son of God, He is the Head, and as the many sons of God, we are the members of His Body.

Due to the fall of man, the universe has been turned upside down because of rebellion against

the headship of God. But by the dispensing of the divine life into His chosen people, the upside-down universe is turned right-side up. As we walk according to the life-dispensing Spirit within us, He transforms us, thereby bringing us out of the satanic chaos into the divine heading up of Christ. It is by our growth in the divine life that we grow up into Christ, the Head, in all things (Eph. 4:15) and take the lead for the whole universe to one day come under His headship. Furthermore, as we are being filled with the riches of Christ's life, we become His fullness, His expression, that is, the fullness of Christ as the One who fills all in all (1:22-23). As Christ's Body, His very fullness filled to overflowing with His riches, we become God's inheritance.

Verses 13 and 14 of Ephesians 1 reveal that the church is the issue of the dispensing of the Spirit in His sealing us and imparting Himself into us as a pledge. In Christ we "were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory." The Spirit

has been imparted into us as a living seal. When one stamps a paper with a seal, the ink is dispensed into that paper in the image of the seal. When the Spirit is dispensed into us, He comes into us as the sealing ink to “stamp” us with the very image of the Triune God for us to express Him and to show that we belong to Him. This sealing is a continual matter because it is “unto the day of redemption,” the redemption of our bodies (4:30). Also, the Spirit is dispensed into us as the pledge of our inheritance. The pledge is the foretaste, the earnest, the down payment, the sample, of what we will inherit of God in full. Thus, the Divine Trinity is our present enjoyment in the Spirit as the pledge of our inheritance to come. The Triune God is our inheritance for our enjoyment, and we are His inheritance for His enjoyment. His being dispensed into us as our inheritance makes us His inheritance, His unique treasure, constituted with His unfathomable riches.

The dispensing of the Divine Trinity is carried out by the transmission of the great power of the Triune God. God caused this great power to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead, seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, subjecting all things under His feet, and giving Him to be Head over all things to the church (1:20-22). *To the church* implies the transmission of this power to us. This resurrecting power, ascending power, overruling power, subjecting power, and heading-up power is the surpassing greatness of the power of the Triune God “toward us who believe” (v. 19). The issue of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity by the surpassing greatness of His power toward us is “the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all” (vv. 22-23).

The Body of Christ ultimately consummates in the New Jerusalem, in which we see the eternal dispensing of the Divine Trinity for the universal display of His accomplished economy. The New Jerusalem is not a literal city—it is a wonderful person. This person is the wife of Christ in an eternal marriage union with her Husband, the Lamb (Rev. 21:2, 9). This is a union of coinherence in which the Triune God dwells in His redeemed as the tabernacle (v. 3), and they dwell in Him as the temple (v. 22). From this we see that the New Jerusalem is the great God-man, the Triune God in man and man in Him. Divinity and humanity are mingled together to be one couple.

In this marriage union with God as our Husband, we will enjoy His divine dispensing for eternity. Revelation 22:1 and 2a say, “And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life.” We must also read a portion of verse 3: “And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it [the New Jerusalem].” The throne of God and the Lamb is not a throne for two separate persons. Revelation reveals that God is the light

dwelling within the Lamb, who is the lamp of the city (21:23). Christ as the lamp is the embodiment of God as the light. Out of the throne of the Lamb-God flows the river of water of life, which signifies the Spirit. Such a throne is *in* the holy city, the wife of the Lamb. This is an indwelling throne. This portion of the Word depicts the Divine Trinity—God, the Lamb, and the Spirit—eternally dispensing Himself into His redeemed under His divine headship, signified by His throne. God in the Lamb is the light of life, Christ the Son is the tree of life, and the Spirit is the river of water of life for our enjoyment.

Our eternal enjoyment of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity depicted in Revelation 22:1 matches Paul’s blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:14. The throne of God and of the Lamb equal the love of God and the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the river of water of life. Indeed, the throne of God and of the Lamb is the throne of grace where we can receive mercy and find grace for timely help (Heb. 4:16). The enthroned Lamb who came to us as grace is the embodiment of the God of love. This Lamb-God of grace and love reaches us in the fellowship of the Spirit, which is the flow of the divine life within all the believers.

Even today when we give Christ, the Lamb-God, the preeminence in our being, He has a free way to flow within us as the Spirit, to dispense all that He is into us. We need to pray, “Lord set up Your throne in the center of my being and of my life. I want to give You the preeminence in all the details of my family life, my daily life, and my church life. Bring my entire life with all of its details fully under Your headship.” When we pray in such a way, we will sense the inner flowing of the Spirit as the reality of Christ, who is the embodiment of the Father. The Spirit will also have the free way to flow out from our innermost being as rivers of living water to be dispensed into others. As we live in the reality of the divine dispensing in this age, we will be growing up into Christ, the Head, in all things. Our growth in the divine life is the building up of the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem, in which all things will be headed up in Christ at the economy of the fullness of the times. Under this divine headship, we will enjoy the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity eternally. This is the divine dispensing for the divine economy, and this is the central revelation of the Scriptures. 

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