

THE Economy of God IN THE Holy Scriptures

by Witness Lee

The following article is excerpted from chapters one and two of *The Conclusion of the New Testament, 1-20*, published in 1985 by Living Stream Ministry.

And He said to them, O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He explained to them clearly in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Luke 24:25-27

And He said to them, These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled. Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures; and He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise up from the dead on the third day.

Luke 24:44-46

Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, 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.

Eph. 1:9-10

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.

Eph. 3:9-11

Of which 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.

Col. 1:25-27

The New Testament is related to the Old Testament. This relationship is indicated by a portion of Hebrews 10:7: "In the roll of the book it is written concerning Me." This refers to the Old Testament, which gives us a full record of Christ, either by plain words or by types (Luke 24:27, 44, 46; John 5:39, 46). Augustine once said that the New Testament is contained in the Old and that the Old Testament is explained in the New. We may put the matter this way: The New Testament is in the Old contained, and the Old Testament is in the New explained. This means that the New Testament is in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament is explained by the New Testament.

The Central Line concerning Christ

What does it mean to say that the New Testament is contained in the Old Testament? What are the contents of the New Testament that are contained in the Old Testament? Some might say that in the Old Testament we have many promises, prophecies, types, and shadows concerning Christ. This, of course, is correct. The focal point of all the promises, prophecies, types, and shadows in the Old Testament is Christ. However, we must go further to ask this question: What kind of Christ has been promised, prophesied, typified, and shadowed in the Old Testament? Are you able to give a brief description of such a Christ?

It is easy to see, even without revelation, that the Old Testament presents Christ as the King. According to Genesis 3:15, Christ is the One who crushes the head of the serpent. This verse, however, does not speak of the central matters concerning what Christ is. The central line concerning Christ in the Old Testament is that Christ is the eternal God incarnated to be a man who lived on earth, died on the cross, resurrected, ascended, and descended. These seven major points are the central line regarding Christ as promised, prophesied, typified, and shadowed in the Old Testament. Concerning Christ's being the eternal God, Micah 5:2 says that His origin is from eternity. Furthermore, Isaiah 9:6 speaks of Him as the mighty God.

For what purpose did Christ, the eternal God, become incarnate, live on earth, die on the cross, resurrect from among the dead, ascend to the heavens, and descend? Those with a superficial knowledge of the Scriptures might say, "Christ became a man, lived on earth, was crucified, resurrected, ascended, and descended in order to rescue me from hell and bring me to heaven." In the light of the New Testament, we can strongly say that Christ, the eternal God, was incarnated, lived on earth, died on the cross, resurrected from among the dead, ascended to the heavens, and descended for the dispensing of the Triune God into His chosen people for the producing of the church. Although the word *church* cannot be found in the Old Testament, certain persons typify the church. For example, both Eve and Rebekah typify the church. Hence, both Christ and the church are contained in the Old Testament.

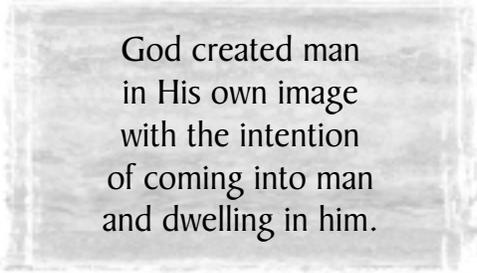
God's Dispensing

In the Old Testament we can also see the matter of God's dispensing. Genesis 1:27 says, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Why did God create man in His own image? In answering this question we may use the illustration of a hand and a glove. A glove is made in the image of a hand for the purpose of containing the hand. Likewise, God created man in His own image so that man might contain God. If we receive even a little wisdom from God, we shall realize that He created man in His own image with the intention of coming into man and dwelling in him.

This understanding is confirmed by Romans 9:23, which speaks of God making "known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory." Here we see that man was made a vessel to contain the glory of God. Since man was created to contain the

glory of God and since the glory of God is actually God Himself expressed, man was created in God's image for the purpose of containing God. God's intention in creating man in this way was to enter into man. The word *image* in Genesis 1:27 indicates that God's intention is to come into the man created by Him.

In what way does God come into man? It is not in a way that can be compared to putting apples into a box. In order to answer the question concerning how God comes into man, we need to consider chapter two of Genesis. According to this chapter, after creating man God placed him in front of the tree of life with the intention that man would eat of the fruit of this tree and thereby take God into him. As we shall see, this involves the mingling of God with man.



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Some oppose the biblical truth of the mingling of God and man. To oppose this truth is to be in darkness.

In John 6 the Lord Jesus says that He is the heavenly bread for us to eat (vv. 32, 53-54, 56-58). In the same chapter the Lord twice says,

"I am the bread of life" (vv. 35, 48). The bread of life is the life supply in the form of food, like the tree of life (Gen. 2:9), which is also the life supply "good for food." The food we eat eventually is mingled with our being. If the food taken in by us does not mingle with us, we must have poor digestion. The food that we eat and digest is assimilated into our being. The food becomes our tissue, bone, flesh, and skin. This means that the food eaten, digested, and assimilated by us actually becomes us. This surely is a matter of mingling. Therefore, it would certainly be incorrect to say that the food we eat is not mingled with us.

The thought of mingling is implied in Genesis 2. God does not enter into a man in a way that is like putting apples into a box. On the contrary, God comes into us in a way that is like food entering into our being to become one with us. In Genesis 1 we see that man was created by God in His image. Then in Genesis 2 the man created by God is placed in front of the tree of life. This indicates that God wants man to receive Him as food. Here we have the dispensing of God into man.

Eating implies both dispensing and mingling. When a mother serves food to her family, she dispenses the food to them. As the members of her family eat the food, it is dispensed into them. After the food is dispensed, it is mingled with those who eat it. Likewise, in Genesis 1 and 2 we have God's dispensing of Himself into man and His mingling of Himself with man.

How can God be dispensed into man and mingled with man? This can be accomplished only by the Triune God being incarnated, living on earth, dying on the cross, resurrecting, ascending, and descending. In this way God dispenses Himself into us and mingles Himself with us.

The Bible is profound. Because the Bible is a profound book, we should not stay on the surface of the Word. Instead, we need to see what is revealed in the depths of the Scriptures. We need to see not only that in the Old Testament Christ is promised, prophesied, typified, and shadowed; we need to see what kind of Christ is promised, prophesied, typified, and shadowed in the Old Testament. As we have pointed out, this Christ is the eternal God who was incarnated, lived on earth, died, resurrected, ascended, and descended. We also need to see God's purpose for Christ to be such a One.

The content of the New Testament is God's New Testament economy. As we shall see, God's New Testament economy is the dispensing of God into His chosen people for the producing of the church. This eternal economy of God, the content of the New Testament, is contained in the Old Testament.

The Fulfillment of the Old Testament

The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Matthew 1:22 and 23 indicate this: "Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." This Son brought forth of a virgin is the seed of the woman prophesied in Genesis 3:15. Therefore, the birth of Christ was a great fulfillment of prophecies in the Old Testament.

The first prophecy in the Old Testament is Genesis 3:15. After the fall of man, after the serpent had worked himself into man, God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent. This promise concerning the seed of the woman was the first prophecy in the Bible. This prophecy is fulfilled in Matthew 1:22 and 23. In Galatians 4:4 Paul says that Christ was born under the law and was also born of a woman. Therefore, Christ came not only to fulfill the law, but also to fulfill the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

In Isaiah 7:14 there is another prophecy concerning Christ: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." According to Matthew 1:23, the name of this Son was called Emmanuel, which means "God with us." Therefore, the fulfillment of this promise brought God into man.

Luke 24:25-27 and 44-46 also indicate that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Verses 25 through 27 say, "He said to them, O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." As verse 44 indicates, the Scriptures included the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

Luke 24:44-46 go on to say, "He said to them, These are My words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all the things must be fulfilled which have been written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me. Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures; and He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise up from the dead on the third day." The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms are the three sections of the entire Old Testament, that is, "all the Scriptures" (v. 27). The Savior's word here unveils that the entire Old Testament is a revelation of Him and that He is its center and content. The fact that the Lord opened the mind of His disciples to understand the Scriptures indicates that to understand the Scriptures requires our mind to be opened by the Lord Spirit through His enlightening (Eph. 1:18).

Romans 1:2 speaks of the gospel of God which "He promised before through His prophets in the holy Scriptures." This gospel, which concerns His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:3), was promised by God through the prophets in the Scriptures. This indicates that the gospel of God was not an accident but was planned and prepared by God. Before the foundation of the world, God planned to have this gospel. Therefore, numerous times in the holy Scriptures, from Genesis through Malachi, God spoke in promise through the prophets regarding the gospel of God. Hence, Romans 1:2 is a further demonstration of the fact that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4 Paul says, "For I delivered to you, among the first things, that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Again, the Scriptures refer to the Old Testament. Christ's death for our sins, His burial for our termination, and His resurrection for our germination with life took place according to the prophecies of the Old Testament (Isa. 53:5-8, 10-12; Psa. 22:14-18; Dan. 9:26; Isa. 53:9; Psa. 16:9-10; Hosea 6:2). These three matters are the basic matters among the first things of the gospel. The fact that Paul says that Christ's death, burial, and resurrection were

according to the Scriptures is a further proof that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament.

Bible students often say that the prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament. For example, Micah 5:2 says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This prophecy is fulfilled in Matthew 2:4-6 and Luke 2:4-7. Yes, here we have an instance of the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New Testament. However, we need to go on to see something deeper concerning the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

If we have a deeper understanding of the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New Testament, we shall see that Christ came not only to fulfill the prophecies but also to fulfill God's eternal dispensation, which is God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people for the producing of the church. God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people was promised, prophesied, typified, and shadowed in the Old Testament, and it was fulfilled by Christ's coming in the New Testament. Therefore, Christ came not merely to fulfill the prophecies concerning His birth, death, and resurrection; He came, in particular, to fulfill the promises, prophecies, types, and shadows concerning God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people for the producing of the church.

The Development and the Reaping of the Seed Sown in the Old Testament

The New Testament is the development and reaping of the seed sown in the Old Testament. Bible teachers are accustomed to saying that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. I also have spoken about the divine revelation in this way. However, this way of considering the divine revelation in the Scriptures is rather shallow. Actually, instead of merely progressing, the divine revelation in the Bible is developing.

Certain Bible teachers have said that nearly all the seeds of the truths are sown in the book of Genesis. After years of studying the Bible, I have come to agree with this saying. The seeds of nearly all the truths have been sown in Genesis and then grow throughout the Scriptures.

Growth is a matter of development. First, a seed is sown into the soil, and then the seed grows. While it grows, it develops. After a grain of wheat is sown into the ground,

it grows and develops until it eventually brings forth many grains. When the wheat is ripe, that is the time for the reaping of the harvest. In like manner, the divine truths in the Bible are sown as seeds, mainly in the book of Genesis. These seeds develop through the Old Testament and especially in the New Testament, until reaching the time of "harvest" in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 14 we have a vision concerning the reaping of the ripened harvest. It is important for us to see that whatever is sown as a seed in the Old Testament is developed in the New Testament and is eventually reaped as a harvest in Revelation.

Now we need to ask a crucial question: What was sown as a seed in the Old Testament? Christ is the seed that is sown in the Old Testament and that develops throughout the Scriptures. In Genesis 3:15 God promised fallen mankind that as the seed of woman Christ would come to crush the head of the serpent. The Bible goes on to reveal that this seed is developed into the seed of Abraham, the seed of Isaac, and the seed of Jacob. In the book of Isaiah we see the further development of

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this seed into the One born of a virgin and called Emmanuel, the mighty God, and even the everlasting Father (Isa. 7:14; 9:6). Eventually, in the New Testament, the seed sown in the Old Testament will produce many grains, and these grains will become a harvest reaped in the book of Revelation. From this we see that the New Testament is the development and reaping of the very Christ sown in the Old Testament, developed throughout the books of the Bible, and reaped as a harvest in the last book of the New Testament.

The Completion of the Divine Revelation

The New Testament is the completion of the divine revelation. In Colossians 1:25 Paul 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 word of God is the divine revelation. This was not completed before the New Testament. In the New Testament the apostles, especially Paul, completed the word of God in the mystery of God, which is Christ, and in the mystery of Christ, which is the church, to give us a full revelation of God's economy. At the time of Paul the word of God included the Old Testament and the word preached by the early apostles. Although the word of God preached by the early disciples grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24), it was not yet completed according to God's economy. For this completion, God's revelation to Paul was needed. According to the stewardship of God, Paul became a minister of the church to complete the word of God.

Consider what a lack there would be if we did not have the Epistles of Paul. Without them, there would be no completion of the word of God.

Paul received the revelation of Christ as the mystery of God. In Colossians 2:2 he speaks of the “full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ.” In Ephesians 3:4 Paul speaks of the mystery of Christ. The mystery of God in Colossians 2:2 is Christ, whereas the mystery of Christ in Ephesians 3:4 is the church. Paul was also given the revelation concerning the dispensation of God (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:14-19). Therefore, the completion of the word of God includes the great mystery of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32), the full revelation concerning Christ, the Head (Col. 1:26-27; 2:19; 3:11), and the full revelation concerning the church, the Body (Eph. 3:3-6).

In Colossians 1:26 and 27 Paul speaks of “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 nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This mystery is Christ Himself within us as our life today and our glory in the future. At present, this glory is our hope. From these verses we see that the completion of the divine revelation concerns Christ coming to dispense God into us as a mystery and as a hope of glory.

**God’s New Testament Economy:
God’s Household Management, God’s Household
Administrative Arrangement, the Divine Dispensation**

What is God’s New Testament economy? God’s New Testament economy is God’s household management, God’s household administrative arrangement, the divine dispensation (plan). By dispensation we mean here an arrangement, that is, a plan.

This economy, this dispensation, is revealed in Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9. Ephesians 1:10 says, “Unto a dispensation 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.” The Greek word rendered *dispensation* here 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 human kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the plant kingdom, are for this economy, this dispensation, and are moving toward its completion.

The Greek word rendered *dispensation* in Ephesians 1:10 can also be translated “stewardship” or “household arrangement.” The word *administration* may also be used because eventually this dispensation, this stewardship and household arrangement, will become an eternal

administration. The entire universe will eventually be under one administration. Although the word *administration* may be used here, I prefer the words *dispensation*, *stewardship*, and *household arrangement*.

In relation to God’s purpose, the word *economy* is unfamiliar to many Christians. The Greek word for economy, *oikonomia*, is used two other times in Ephesians. We have seen that in Ephesians 1:10 Paul speaks of a dispensation, or economy, of the fullness of the times, in which all things will be headed up in Christ. Then in 3:2 he speaks of the stewardship of the grace of God, and in 3:9, of the dispensation of the mystery. In 3:9 Paul says, “To bring to light what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.” God’s mystery is His hidden purpose. His purpose is to dispense Himself into His chosen people. Hence, there is the dispensation of the mystery of God. This mystery was hidden in God from the ages, that is, from eternity and through all past ages, but now it has been brought to light to the New Testament believers.

In 1 Timothy 1:4 Paul speaks of “God’s dispensation which is in faith.” Once again, the Greek word rendered “dispensation” is *oikonomia*. In Greek the words *God’s dispensation* here also mean God’s household economy. This is God’s household administration to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen people so that He may have a house, a household, to express Himself, which household is the church, the Body of Christ. Paul’s ministry was centered on this economy of God (Col. 1:25; 1 Cor. 9:17).

A Plan Made by God according to His Good Pleasure

God’s New Testament economy is a plan made by God according to His good pleasure. Concerning this, Ephesians 1:9 says, “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.” God’s good pleasure is the desire of His heart. This good pleasure was what God purposed in Himself for a dispensation, for a plan (v. 10). This plan made by God was according to His good pleasure, the desire of His heart.

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. Hence, 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. God purposed this desire in Himself; He did not take counsel with anyone else regarding it.

We have seen that Ephesians 1:9 speaks of God's good pleasure. Everyone desires pleasure. If we desire pleasure, then certainly God does also. Every living thing desires pleasure. In fact, the more living you are, the more pleasure you need. Because God is the most living One, He surely needs the most pleasure. If we, as fallen sinners, require pleasure, then how much more does God, the living One, have a deep need for it?

Unlike the book of Romans, which begins from the perspective of the condition of fallen man, the book of Ephesians was written from the perspective of God's good pleasure, the desire of His heart. What, then, is God's good pleasure? God's good pleasure is to dispense Himself into us. This is the unique desire of God. We may say that God is "dreaming" of dispensing Himself into us. His longing, His aspiration, is to dispense Himself into His chosen people.

Many Christians neglect God's desire to dispense Himself into us. Instead of caring for this matter, they may pay attention to teachings concerning how to be holy, spiritual, and victorious. Many have never heard that God wants to do one thing—to dispense Himself into us.

In a sense, a believer may be "holy" without having much of God dispensed into him. However, that kind of holiness is not genuine, thus not stable. But if God is dispensed into our being, we shall be genuinely holy. Actually, holiness is nothing other than God dispensed into us subjectively. The objective God is holy only to Himself and by Himself. But the subjective God—the God dispensed into us—becomes our subjective holiness. Therefore, to us, the real holiness is God dispensed into our being. It is God's good pleasure, the desire of His heart, to dispense Himself into us for our everything.

An Eternal Plan God Made in Christ

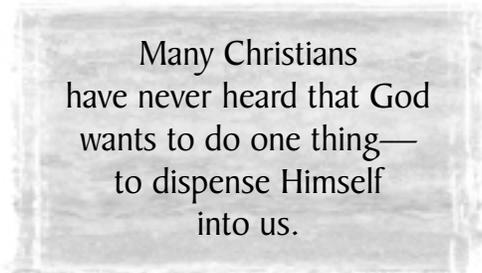
God's economy is an eternal plan made by God in Christ. Regarding this, Ephesians 3:11 says, "According to the purpose of the ages which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord." The purpose of the ages is the purpose of eternity, the eternal purpose, the eternal plan of God made in eternity past.

God made His eternal economy in Christ. The Christ revealed in the Bible is the embodiment of the Triune God and all the processes through which He has passed, including incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and descension. In such a Christ God made His eternal economy. Christ, therefore, is the

element, sphere, means, goal, and aim of God's eternal economy. Christ is everything in God's economy. In fact, all the contents of the eternal economy of God are simply Christ. Christ is the center, circumference, element, sphere, means, goal, and aim of this economy. According to Ephesians 3, this economy was made in Christ.

To Dispense God Himself into His Chosen People in His Trinity

God's New Testament economy is His plan to dispense Himself into His chosen people in His trinity. In what way does God dispense Himself into His people in His trinity? This dispensing has three steps. First, it is of God the Father. The Father is the source, the origin. Second, this dispensing is through God the Son, who is the course. Third, God's dispensing is in God the Spirit, who is the instrument and sphere. Through these steps of God the Father, through God the Son, and in God the Spirit God dispenses Himself into His chosen people.



For the Producing of the Church as the Kingdom of God Consummating in the New Jerusalem

God's New Testament economy to dispense Himself into His chosen people is for the producing of the church (Eph. 3:10). This dispensing brings forth the church for the manifestation of the multifarious wisdom of God according to His eternal purpose made in Christ (Eph. 3:9-11). This means that through the dispensing of God in His trinity the church is produced to exhibit God's manifold wisdom.

We have pointed out that the church today is the kingdom of God. Therefore, the dispensing of God into us produces the church as the kingdom of God. First Corinthians 4:17 and 20 show that the kingdom is the church life today. In verse 17 Paul refers to his ways "which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church." Then in verse 20 he says, "The kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power." These verses show that the kingdom of God is the church everywhere, and the church everywhere is the kingdom. The kingdom is here because the church is here.

The church as the kingdom of God will have a consummation, and this consummation will be the New Jerusalem for the eternal expression of the Triune God. Revelation 21:2 says, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The New Jerusalem is a living composition of all the saints redeemed by God throughout

all generations. It is the bride of Christ as His counterpart (John 3:29) and the holy city of God as His habitation. As the bride of Christ, New Jerusalem comes out of Christ, “her husband,” and becomes His counterpart, just as Eve came out of Adam, her husband, and became his counterpart (Gen. 2:21-24). The New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride for her husband by participating in the riches of the life and nature of Christ. As the holy city of God, she is wholly sanctified unto God and fully saturated with God’s holy nature to be His habitation.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God likens His chosen people to a spouse (Isa. 54:6; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16:8; Hosea 2:19; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31-32) and a dwelling place for Himself (Exo. 29:45-46; Num. 5:3; Ezek. 43:7, 9; Psa. 68:18; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Tim. 3:15). The spouse is for His satisfaction in love, and the dwelling place is for His rest in expression. Both of these aspects will be ultimately consummated in the New Jerusalem. In her God will have the fullest satisfaction in love and the utmost rest in expression for eternity.

Revelation 21:10 and 11 say, “He carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, as a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” The glory of God is the expression of God, God expressed. We have been ordained for this glory and called to it (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Thes. 2:12). We are being transformed into this glory (2 Cor. 3:18) and shall be brought into it (Heb. 2:10). Eventually we shall be glorified with Christ (Rom. 8:17, 30) to bear the glory of God for God’s expression in the New Jerusalem. Therefore, God’s dispensing of Himself into His chosen people for the producing of the church as the kingdom of God will consummate in the New Jerusalem as His eternal expression.

The Need for a Vision of God’s Economy

Throughout the years we have given many messages on God’s New Testament economy. However, according to my observation, most of the saints who have received these messages still need a clear vision of God’s economy. We need a vision of the central matter in the Bible—the desire of God’s heart to dispense Himself into His chosen people in His trinity for the producing of the church, which is the kingdom of God that will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal expression of the Triune God.

We need a vision of God’s New Testament economy. It is

not adequate merely to know about it. You may know about a certain person without ever having seen him. To see a person is very different from merely knowing about him. Likewise, seeing the vision of God’s New Testament economy is different from simply hearing about it. I hope that all the saints will spend much time to pray, both individually and corporately, regarding this. We need to say, “Lord, I cry out to You concerning God’s economy. I need a vision of the New Testament economy. Lord, I have been saved for a long time, but I have not yet seen the vision that the New Testament reveals God’s New Testament economy. Lord, cause me to see that the Triune God wants to dispense Himself into our being so that the church may be produced as the kingdom of God in order that God may have an eternal consummation to express Himself in a corporate way eternally.”

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Dispensation and Dispensing

It is important that we make a distinction between the words *dispensation* and *dispensing*. According to the dictionary, *dispensation* is a noun form of the verb *dispense*. But according to New Testament usage, the word *dispensation* refers to God’s arrangement, God’s plan.

We have seen that dispensation is the translation of the Greek word *oikonomia*, which is composed of two words: *oikos*, which means house, and *nomos*, which means law. *Oikonomia* denotes household regulations or household management. Because this word refers to a household administration and management, it implies a plan. In Ephesians 3 the word *dispensation* means a plan, an arrangement. Therefore, when we use the word *dispensation*, we mean God’s household management, God’s arrangement, God’s plan. When we use the word dispensation, we do not mean *dispensing*, which is the act of God’s dispensing Himself into us. Nevertheless, in God’s dispensation the crucial matter is the dispensing of the Triune God into us.

If we are clear concerning the difference between dispensation and dispensing, we shall not say that we are under God’s dispensation but rather are under His dispensing. To be under God’s dispensation is to be under His administrative government. To be under God’s dispensing is to be under His dispensing action, His act of dispensing Himself into us. If we use the word *dispensation* to refer to God’s dispensing, others may misunderstand us and think that we are speaking of the plan made by God. Therefore, let us use the words *dispensation* and *dispensing* according to biblical usage, making it clear that dispensation denotes God’s administrative arrangement and dispensing, His act of dispensing Himself into us. ✠