

Message Nine

**Ministering to the Lord to Enjoy Him  
as the Hidden Manna, the Budding Rod,  
and the Law of Life**

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 44:10-11, 15-18;  
Acts 13:1-2; Heb. 9:3-4

- I. **“The Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall minister in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them...But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to present to Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord Jehovah. It is they who will enter My sanctuary, and it is they who will come near to My table to minister to Me, and they will keep My charge”—Ezek. 44:10-11, 15-16:**
- A. In God’s eyes, not only is there the ministry to the house; there is also a better ministry, the ministry to the Lord.
  - B. God has only one goal: to have men who belong absolutely to “Me”; in other words, He wants us to be before “My” presence and minister to “Me”; God’s unique goal is not in so many things; rather, it is in “Me”—vv. 15-16.
  - C. To minister to the Lord does not mean that we neglect the house; those who minister to the Lord will also preach the gospel to save sinners and help the brothers and sisters to make progress, but their one goal is to be for the Lord, and their focus is the Lord Himself; they treasure men absolutely for the Lord’s sake.
  - D. If we come to the Lord’s presence, focusing only on Him, we will spontaneously be able to minister to the brothers and sisters also; the question of whether or not we are ministering to the Lord hinges on whether or not the Lord occupies the first place in our heart.
  - E. Whatever we do in the Lord’s service should be for the Lord’s sake; it should be for His satisfaction, His heart’s desire, His happiness, His goal, His pleasure, and His glory.

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- F. In the Lord's work there are areas that are appealing and attractive to our flesh because they are solely for the pleasure and glory of our self—cf. 2 Cor. 4:5.
- G. No one can minister to the Lord without drawing near to Him, approaching Him in prayer; spiritual power is not in the power of preaching but in the power of praying; how much we pray indicates how much inner strength we really possess.
- H. If we want to minister to the Lord in the Holy of Holies, we must spend time before the Lord and pray more; we need to draw near to Him, stand before Him, and wait for His will.
- I. To pray is to stand before God (Ezek. 44:15); it is to seek His will before Him in order to be saved from the sin of presumption (Psa. 19:13).
- J. Those who ministered to the Lord had to present to Him the fat and the blood—Ezek. 44:15:
  - 1. Whereas the fat of the offerings typifies the preciousness of the person of Christ, the blood signifies the redemptive work of Christ.
  - 2. In our service to God we must present both to Him; the blood is for God's holiness and righteousness, and the fat is for God's glory.
- K. Those who ministered to the Lord had to be clothed with linen material, not with woolen garments or with anything that caused sweat—vv. 17-18:
  - 1. Linen garments signify a daily living and walk in the life-giving Spirit by the life of Christ; such a living and walk is pure, clean, and fine.
  - 2. Woolen garments would cause the priests to sweat (v. 18), a sign of fallen man laboring under God's curse, without God's blessing, by his own energy and strength (Gen. 3:19).
  - 3. The work that causes sweat is the work that comes out of human effort without the blessing from God the Father; everyone ministering to the Lord must do a work that causes no sweat, a work without human effort and fleshly strength—Isa. 30:15a.
  - 4. If we spend an adequate amount of time in God's presence and deal properly with Him, there is no need to sweat before man; we can accomplish the most amount of work with the least amount of strength—cf. Matt. 11:28-30.

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- L. “Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers...As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”—Acts 13:1-2:
1. This is the work of the New Testament and the unique principle for the work of the New Testament—the work of the Holy Spirit can be revealed only at the time of ministering to the Lord.
  2. Only at the time of ministering to the Lord will the Holy Spirit send some forth; if we do not place ministering to the Lord as the top priority, everything will be out of order; only the Holy Spirit has the authority to commission men to work.
  3. To minister to the Lord is not to forsake all the work on the outside; instead, all the work on the outside should be based on our ministry to the Lord.
  4. We go forth, out from our ministry to the Lord, rather than out from our own desires, which have no basis in the ministry to the Lord.

**II. “After the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies, having...the Ark of the Covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant”—Heb. 9:3-4:**

- A. The hidden manna is the portion of Christ that we enjoy in the presence of God when there is no distance between us and Him; when there is no distance between us and the Lord, we enjoy Christ in the most intimate and hidden way; this is the enjoyment of the hidden manna, the hidden portion of Christ—Exo. 16:31-36:
1. To overcome the condition of the church in Pergamos is to separate ourselves from the general practice of today’s Christianity and to remain in the presence of God ministering directly to Him, not to anything else; here we enjoy something of Christ that all those who are far off from His presence cannot taste—Rev. 2:17.
  2. If we want to enjoy the hidden manna, there must be no

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- distance between us and God; all the distance between us and the Lord must be eliminated—Ezek. 1:22, 26.
3. When we are ministering to the Lord and enjoying Him as the hidden manna, we have direct fellowship with Him and know His heart and His intention; it is in the presence of the Lord that we can be charged with Him, with His intention, and with all that He wants us to do.
  4. When we are ministering to the Lord, we will have God's commitment because we are in His presence, realizing that there is no distance between us and God.
- B. The budding rod signifies that Christ, the resurrected One, should be our life, our living, and the resurrection life within us and that this life should bud, blossom, and bear fruit to maturity—Num. 17:8:
1. After the children of Israel rebelled, as recorded in Numbers 16, God commanded the twelve leaders to take twelve rods according to the twelve tribes of Israel and put them in the Tent of Meeting before the Testimony; then He said, "The rod of the man whom I choose shall bud"—17:5.
  2. All twelve rods were leafless, rootless, dry, and dead; whichever one budded was the one chosen by God; here we see that resurrection is the basis of God's selection and that the basis of service is something apart from our natural life; thus, the budding rod signifies our experience of Christ in His resurrection as our acceptance by God for authority in the God-given ministry.
  3. The principle to every service lies in the budding rod; God returned all the eleven rods to the leaders but kept Aaron's rod inside the Ark as an eternal memorial; this means that resurrection is an eternal principle in our service to God—vv. 9-10:
    - a. Resurrection means that everything is of God and not of us; it means that God alone is able and that we are not able.
    - b. Resurrection means that everything is done by God, not by ourselves; all those who know resurrection have given up hope in themselves; they know that they cannot make it.

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- c. As long as the natural strength remains, the power of resurrection has no ground for manifestation; as long as Sarah could conceive a child, Isaac would not come—Gen. 18:10-15; 21:1-3, 6-7.
  - d. What we can do belongs to the natural realm, and what is impossible for us to do belongs to the realm of resurrection; a man must come to the end of himself before he will be convinced of his utter uselessness—Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27.
  - e. If a man has never realized his own inability, he can never experience God's ability; resurrection means that we cannot make it and that God is the One who has done everything—cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 4:7.
- C. The tablets of the covenant, which are the tablets of the law, signify the law of the divine life, which is the spontaneous power, automatic function, innate ability, and divine capacity of the divine life—Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; cf. Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 10:12-13:
- 1. The law, this divine capacity, of life can do everything in us for the carrying out of God's economy:
    - a. According to this capacity, we can know God, live God, and be constituted with God in His life and nature so that we may become His increase, His enlargement, to be His fullness for His eternal expression—Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19-21.
    - b. Furthermore, the capacity of the inner law of life constitutes us to be the members of the Body of Christ with all kinds of functions—4:11, 16.
  - 2. While the divine life grows in us, the law of life functions to shape us, to conform us, to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:2, 29:
    - a. The law of life does not regulate us from doing wrong; it regulates the shape of life.
    - b. The law of life does not primarily function in the negative sense of telling us what not to do; rather, while life grows, the law of life functions in the positive sense of shaping us, that is, conforming us, to the image of Christ.
    - c. Through the function of the law of life, we all shall become the mature sons of God, and God will have His universal expression.