

THE WILL OF GOD, Week 2

Knowing and Participating in God's Great and Lofty Will to Head Up All Things in Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:9-10; 4:15-16; Col. 2:19; 1 Cor. 8:1b

- Ephesians 1:9 Making known to us the **mystery of His will according to His good pleasure**, which He purposed in Himself,
- Ephesians 1:10 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;
- Ephesians 4:15 But holding to truth in love, **we may grow up into Him in all things**, who is the **Head, Christ**,
- Ephesians 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes **the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love**.
- Colossians 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, **grows with the growth of God**.
- 1 Corinthians 8:1b Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but **love builds up**.

SATAN BRINGING DEATH TO GOD'S CREATION

In His wisdom God allowed an archangel to rebel. Without God's permission, no rebellion could ever take place. Not even the rebellion among the angels could happen without God's permission. God allowed one of His angels to rebel against Him. This was according to God's wisdom. Satan's rebellion serves in the same way as the black background of a painting that makes the main object all the more outstanding.

The book of Genesis reveals that Satan came to inject himself into man, who was the center of the universe. **When Satan injected himself into man, Satan became death and darkness to man**. Whenever Satan comes to us or into our home, there is **death and darkness**. The result of this death and darkness is a **collapse**. A person who is full of life can stand upright. But when the power of death has been injected into him, he falls down; he collapses. Instead of being headed up, he collapses into a heap. As we pointed out in the foregoing message, the entire universe, including mankind, is a heap of collapse caused by Satan injecting himself as the factor of death into God's creation. Satan has brought death to the entire creation of God. **All of creation has been infected by the death factor of Satan**. This is the reason that Romans 8:20 and 21 say that the creation has been subjected to vanity and is under the slavery of corruption.

In order to inject a substance into a person's body, there is no need to inject it into every part. Instead, the injection is made at a certain spot, and then the substance spreads throughout the body. Likewise, Satan injected himself into man, the center of the universe, and from man Satan's poison has spread everywhere. Therefore, not only is man subject to death, but also every living thing is subject to it. Whenever any living thing dies, it collapses. The element of death has spread into every part of God's creation, causing the creation to collapse into a heap.

The collapse of the universe gives **God an excellent opportunity to manifest His wisdom**. Without such a situation of death and collapse, God's wisdom could not be fully manifested. Through the church God's manifold wisdom will be expressed. The collapse caused by Satan's injection of the factor of death into man serves as the black background to **make God's wisdom all the more glorious**.

Satan's way is always to act ahead of God. This is a principle in the Bible. Whenever God wants to do something, Satan acts first. For example, the Bible reveals that God's intention is to build a city, the New Jerusalem. But the first city was a counterfeit one built by Satan. Likewise, **God's intention is to impart Himself into man and to work Himself into man**. But before God did this, His enemy, Satan, came in to do a counterfeit work by injecting himself into man. After God created man, He placed him in front of the tree of life. This indicates that God desired man to take Him in. **God is never in a hurry; He is always willing to wait**. Satan, on the contrary, is always in a rush. We need to learn from this that anything that we do hurriedly is probably not of God, but of Satan. Before God dispensed Himself into man, Satan injected himself into man, the center of God's creation, and thereby caused the entire creation to collapse. Now instead of life, there is death everywhere: in the offices, factories, businesses, schools, and even in the so-called churches. Because death is everywhere and in everything, everything is in a state of collapse. This is the background of God's working Himself into man.

(Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 9, section 1)

Day 1

- I. "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:
 - A. The economy, or dispensation, that God, according to His desire, planned and purposed in Himself is to **head up all things in Christ at the fullness of the times**.
 - B. This is accomplished through the **dispensing of the abundant life supply of the Triune God** as the life factor into all the members of the church so that they may rise up from the death situation and be attached to the Body.
 - C. *The times* refers to the ages, and the fullness of the times will be when the **new heaven and new earth** appear after all the dispensations of God in all the ages have been completed:
 1. A dispensation is the act or instance of dispensing, and it refers to God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people; **we need the element of God with His life and nature to be wrought into our being**.
 2. Altogether there are **four ages**: the age of **sin** (Adam), the age of the **law** (Moses), the age of **grace** (Christ), and the age of the **kingdom** (the millennium).

3. **God dispensed Himself** into Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with Joseph; He had an even greater dispensation with Moses and, of course, with the Lord Jesus.
4. This dispensing continues in the New Testament Epistles; God's dispensation is even greater than it was at the time of the apostle Paul; **today there is a deeper, higher, and wider dispensation of the grace of God**—cf. Eph. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:10.
5. This **dispensation will continue through the millennium until the fullness of the times**; the ultimate, the consummate, dispensation will be the dispensing of the Triune God into the whole city of the New Jerusalem—Rev. 22:1-2.
6. We enjoy a miniature of this consummate dispensation in the church life today; as we enjoy the Spirit as the living water and eat Christ as the tree of life in the church life, we await the consummate dispensation, in which **we will be fully saturated with the Triune God**—1 Cor. 10:3-4; 12:13; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14; John 6:57.
7. **Where life is, there is light also** (1:4; 8:12); because the New Jerusalem is saturated with light, it has no need of the light of the sun; the glory of the Triune God will be our shining and controlling light (Rev. 21:23).
8. In the New Jerusalem there will be no night, no death, and no darkness; instead, there will be **life and light**, causing everything to rise up and be in good order and thus be fully headed up in Christ (v. 24; Eph. 1:10).
9. When we are **fully headed up in Christ** in the New Jerusalem, that will be God's eternal administration and economy

Day 2

- D. The heading up of all things in Ephesians 1:10 is the issue of all the things covered in verses 3 through 9—God has **chosen** us, **predestinated** us, **redeemed** us, **forgiven** us, and **graced** us for the purpose of heading up all things in Christ.
- E. Verses 22 and 23 reveal further that this heading up is “to the church” so that the Body of Christ may share in all that is of Christ as the Head, having been rescued from the heap of the universal collapse in death and darkness, which was caused by the rebellion of the angels and the rebellion of man; **to be rescued from the collapse is to be headed up**.
- F. When everything is headed up in Christ, there will be **absolute peace and harmony** (Isa. 2:4; 11:6; 55:12; Psa. 96:12-13), a full rescue out of the collapse; this will begin from the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).
- G. The picture in Ezekiel 37 of the dead, dry, and scattered bones shows that the unique way to have the Body, the church, and the house of God in the genuine oneness is the **way of life**:
 1. When the breath entered into the dead ones, it became life to them, and they **lived and stood up in oneness to become an exceedingly great army**.
 2. The dead bones were **enlivened** and became one as the **issue of the dispensing of life and the growth in life**—vv. 1-14.
 3. God's way to head us up is to work Himself as the factor of life into us so that we may **rise up and be attached to one another in the Body**.

Day 3

II. In order to be headed up in Christ, we need to grow up into Christ, the Head, in **all things**—*in all things* means **in everything big or small in our daily life and in our work**—Eph. 4:15; Zech. 4:10:

- A. The **organic building up** of the Body is the **growth of the Body**, which is the **growth of God**, the increase of God as life, in all the members—Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16; Col. 2:19.
- B. The growing members are the building members; **to grow in life is to have more of God in us**; our problem is that we are short of God—Eph. 4:16; cf. Job 1:1-5; 42:1-6.
- C. In order to grow up into the Head, **we must hold to truth in the element and sphere of the divine love**; *truth* in Ephesians 4:15 means things that are true—Rom. 3:4:
 1. We need to **hold to God's eternal economy**—1 Tim. 1:3-4:
 - a. This is the economy of the mystery hidden in God—Eph. 3:9.
 - b. This **economy** is to have the **church as the organic Body of Christ to consummate in the New Jerusalem** for the manifestation of Christ as God's multifarious wisdom—vv. 10-11; 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 1:30.
 2. We need to **hold to the all-inclusive Christ**—John 14:6; Eph. 1:23:
 - a. His **measure** is **immeasurable**—3:18.
 - b. His **riches** are **unsearchable**—v. 8.
 - c. His **love** is **knowledge-surpassing**—v. 19:3.
 3. We need to **hold to the church as the Body of Christ**—1 Tim. 3:15:
 - a. The **Body of Christ** is the **corporate Christ**—Acts 9:4; 1 Cor. 12:12.
 - b. The **Body of Christ** is the **fullness**, the **expression**, of Christ and of God—Eph. 1:23; 3:19.

Day 4

- D. We grow up into the Head through acknowledging the **authority of the headship of Christ**—Col. 2:19; cf. Josh. 9:14; 1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-27; 23:10-11:
 1. Christ is the **Head of everyone**—1 Cor. 11:3.
 2. Christ is the **Head of the church**—Eph. 5:23.
 3. Christ is the **Head of all things**—1:22, 10.

- E. The believers participate in Christ's heading up **by being willing to be headed up in the church life**, that is, by growing in life and by living under Christ's light—John 1:4; 8:12; Eph. 4:15-16; 5:8-9; Rev. 21:23-25.
- F. We grow up into the Head by **allowing Christ** to increase and grow in all the inward parts of our being:

Day 5

1. In order to grow in life, we must **pay attention** to our spirit (Rom. 8:6); we must **know**, we must **use**, and we must **exercise** our **mingled spirit** (1 Tim. 4:6-8):
 - a. Ephesians 1:17 shows that we need to **pray** for a spirit of wisdom and revelation to fully know Christ and God's economy.
 - b. Ephesians 2:22 says that all the believers are being **built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit**.
 - c. Ephesians 3:5 says that the **mystery of Christ has been revealed** to His holy apostles and prophets **in spirit**.
 - d. Ephesians 3:16 shows that we need to **pray to be strengthened into the inner man**, which is our **regenerated spirit** with God's life as its life.
 - e. Ephesians 4:23 tells us to be **renewed in the spirit of our mind**.
 - f. Ephesians 5:18 tells us to be **filled in spirit**.
 - g. Ephesians 6:18 tells us to **pray at every time in spirit**.
2. In order to grow in life, we must **feed** on the milk and food of the **holy Word**, as the embodiment of Christ, the living Word of God—1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13-14

Day 6

III. As we grow up into the Head in life, **our function will come out from the Head for the building up of the Body**—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19:

- A. When we **allow** Christ to be the Head in everything and when we grow up into Him in all things, **we will be supplied with the riches of His life**, receiving something from Him to transfuse into other members of the Body—1 Cor. 14:4b; John 7:37-39:
 1. To build up the Body of Christ is to **minister Christ as the life-giving Spirit into the saints for their growth into Christ**—2 Cor. 3:6, 8.
 2. **We must help the saints learn to enjoy** the Lord and be **nourished** by the Lord so that they can grow—Phil. 1:25; 2 Cor. 1:24.
- B. **Under Christ's headship** all the Body causes the growth of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:15-16:
 1. This growth is **through every joint of the rich supply**—all the particular gifts in the Body of Christ—vv. 11-12.
 2. This growth is **through the operation in the measure of each one part**—every member in the Body of Christ—vv. 7-8.
- C. The building up of the Body of Christ under His headship is in **love and by love**:
 1. Love is the most excellent way to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ; **nothing but love can keep us in a proper relationship with the Lord**—1 Cor. 12:31b—13:13.
 2. The goal of the book of Ephesians is to **bring us into love as God's inner substance** (1 John 4:8, 16) so that we may enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love and thereby **love others as Christ did** (Eph. 5:25; 6:24; 1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2).
 3. **"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"** (1 Cor. 8:1b); this refers to the building up of the corporate Body of Christ under the headship of Christ.
- D. To grow in life is to **grow up into the Head**, Christ, but to operate in the Body of Christ is to **operate out from Him**; first, **we grow into the Head**, and then we have something that is out from the Head for the building up of the Body; this is to **participate in God's great and lofty will to head up all things in Christ**—Eph. 4:15-16.

THE LIGHT OF LIFE KEEPING EVERYTHING IN ORDER

Where life is, there is light also. John 1:4 says, *"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."* This light is the light of life (8:12). In Revelation 21 we have both life and light. Because the New Jerusalem is saturated with light, it has no need for the light of the sun. Revelation 21:23 says, *"And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb."* In the New Jerusalem we shall have the glory of the Triune God as our shining light. **In the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem there will be no night, no death, and no darkness.** Instead, there will be **life and light**. This will cause everything to rise up and be in good order.

Wherever there is **light**, things are kept in order. Suppose there were no lights in the city of Los Angeles. What darkness and confusion there would be! **Life regulates, and light controls.** In the church life we do not have regulations, but we do have the regulating life and the controlling light. When the church is full of life, it is also full of light. Then everyone in the church is regulated by the inward life, not by outward regulations; and everyone is controlled and kept in order by the light of life. **Here in life and in light, we are headed up.** In Revelation 21 we see the Head, the Body surrounding the Head, and all the nations walking in the light of the city (v. 24). This will cause the new heaven and the new earth to be a bright sphere. **Therefore, in the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, all things will be headed up in Christ.** This will be the fulfillment of the heading up of all things in Christ spoken of in Ephesians 1:10.

In order for this to take place, **we need the dispensation of life.** The life that is dispensed into us eventually becomes the **light of men**. In the dispensation of the fullness of the times, all the nations will walk in the light of the city. This means that there will be no death, no darkness, no corruption, and no confusion. Instead, **everything will be in good order, headed up under Christ, the unique Head, to express the Triune God in eternity.** This heading up of all things will be an eternal expression of the Triune God. Today's church life is a foretaste of this. It is a miniature of the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem. As those in the miniature, we are enjoying the dispensation of life with light, and we are being headed up in Christ.

(Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 10, section 3)