

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

- Ezek 44:10 But the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear their iniquity.
- Ezek 44:11 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.
- Ezek 44:15 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,
- Ezek 44:16 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 44:17 And when they enter the gates of the inner court they shall be clothed with linen garments, and no wool will come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court and inside it.
- Ezek 44:18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads and have linen trousers over their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And 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.
- Heb 9:3 And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies,
- Heb 9:4 Having a golden altar and 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,

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:

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- Ezek 44:16 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.

- 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.
- Ezek 44:15 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,
- Ezek 44:16 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
- 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).
- Ezek 44:15 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,
- Psa 19:13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; / Do not let them have dominion over me; / Then I will be blameless and cleared / Of great transgression.
- J. Those who ministered to the Lord had to present to Him the fat and the blood—Ezek. 44:15:
- Ezek 44:15 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,
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:

Ezek 44:17 And when they enter the gates of the inner court they shall be clothed with linen garments, and no wool will come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court and inside it.

Ezek 44:18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads and have linen trousers over their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat.

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).

Ezek 44:18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads and have linen trousers over their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat.

Gen 3:19 By the sweat of your face / You will eat bread / Until you return to the ground, / Because from it you were taken; / For dust you are, / And to dust you shall return.

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.

Isa 30:15a For thus says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, / In returning and rest you will be saved; / In quietness and in trust will be your strength;...

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.

Matt 11:28 Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matt 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matt 11:30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

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:

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:2 And 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.

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:

Heb 9:3 And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies,
Heb 9:4 Having a golden altar and 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,

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:

Exo 16:31 And the house of Israel called its name manna, and it was like coriander seed, white; and its taste was like wafers made with honey.

Exo 16:32 And Moses said, This is what Jehovah has commanded, Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.

Exo 16:33 And Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before Jehovah, to be kept throughout your generations.

Exo 16:34 As Jehovah commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony to be kept.

Exo 16:35 And the children of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to inhabitable land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Exo 16:36 Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.

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.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.

2. If we want to enjoy the hidden manna, there must be no distance between us and God; all the distance between us and the Lord must be eliminated—Ezek. 1:22, 26.

Ezek 1:22 And over the heads of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like the sight of awesome crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.

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:

Num 17:8 And on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and there was the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi: it had budded; it even put forth buds and produced blossoms and bore ripe almonds.

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.

Num 17:5 And the rod of the man whom I choose shall bud, and I will put a stop to the murmurings of the children of Israel against Me, which they murmur against you.

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:

Num 17:9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before Jehovah to all the children of Israel, and they looked; and each one took his rod.

Num 17:10 Then Jehovah said to Moses, Put back the rod of Aaron before the Testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels, so that you may put an end to their murmurings against Me, and they not die.

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.

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.

Gen 18:10 And He said, I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and then Sarah your wife shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind Him.

Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah according to the manner of women.

Gen 18:12 And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

Gen 18:13 And Jehovah said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I indeed bear a child when I am old?

Gen 18:14 Is anything too marvelous for Jehovah? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Gen 18:15 Then Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh; for she was afraid. And He said, No, but you did laugh.

Gen 21:1 And Jehovah visited Sarah as He had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as He had promised.

- Gen 21:2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.
- Gen 21:3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.
- Gen 21:6 And Sarah said, God has made me laugh; everyone who hears will laugh with me.
- Gen 21:7 And she said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.

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.

- Matt 19:26 And looking upon them, Jesus said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.
- Mark 10:27 Looking upon them, Jesus said, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.
- Luke 18:27 But He said, The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

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.

- 2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.
- 2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

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:

- Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.
- Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.
- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
- Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
- Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

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.

- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- Eph 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us,
- Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

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.

- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 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.

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:

- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

- 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.