

THE FOUR LEVEL MEANING OF GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

Message 1

The First Level—The Teaching of the Apostles

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; Heb. 1:1-2; John 14:10; 5:24; 16:12; Col. 1:25-27; Rev. 22:18-19

- I. The first level of the meaning of God's New Testament economy is the teaching of the apostles:¹**
 - A. Only the teaching of the apostles can stand in God's New Testament economy, and it will stand unto eternity.
 - B. We must remember that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets—Eph. 2:19-20.
- II. The three thousand believers who were saved on the day of Pentecost continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers—Acts 2:41-42:²**
 - C. The teaching and the fellowship form one group which is of the apostles and related directly to God's economy for the keeping of the oneness of the church, the Body of Christ; both are unique:
 1. The teaching of the apostles was the holding factor of the one accord—Acts 2:42a, 46a.
 2. If we limit ourselves to the apostles' teaching, the teaching concerning God's New Testament economy, we will be kept in oneness and will have one way for one goal.
 3. In the church there should be only one unique teaching—the teaching of the apostles; furthermore, there should be one unique fellowship, which is produced by the apostles' teaching.
 4. Any fellowship outside the fellowship of the apostles is divisive; our fellowship must be inside the fellowship of the apostles.
 - D. The breaking of bread and the prayers form a second group and are practices of the believers' Christian life.
- III. The entire teaching of the New Testament, which is the apostles' teaching, is God's speaking, God's oracle, in the Son to His New Testament people—Heb. 1:1-2:**
 - A. In the universe there is a marvelous matter, God's speaking—vv. 1-2:
 1. In the age of the New Testament God does not speak to His people in many portions or in many ways, or through the prophets—v. 1.
 2. In the New Testament age God only speaks in one person, the Son—v. 2.
 - B. God firstly spoke in the Son as a man in the four Gospels—John 14:10; 5:24; 16:12; 10:30.
 - C. God secondly spoke in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles in Acts and the twenty-one Epistles (Romans through Jude)—John 16:12-15; Matt. 28:19-20; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Col. 1:25-27.
 - D. God thirdly spoke in the Son as the seven Spirits through the apostle John in Revelation—Rev. 1:2, 4; 2:1, 7.
 - E. God's speaking in the teaching of the New Testament was completed through Paul and John:
 1. The word of God as the revealed mystery was completed through Paul—Col. 1:25-27.
 2. The entire New Testament was completed by John's writings—Rev. 22:18-19.
 - F. This speaking in the Son, the apostles' teaching, does not stress matters such as foot-washing, baptism, head covering, etc.; these are not the basic, intrinsic, central, and elementary things contained in the New Testament revelation concerning God's eternal economy.
- IV. The teaching of the apostles is the unique divine revelation of God's New Testament economy from the incarnation of God to the consummation of the New Jerusalem, carried**

out by the full ministry of Christ in three divine and mystical stages for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy:

- A. The first stage, the stage of incarnation, is for Christ to bring God into man, to express God in humanity, and to accomplish His judicial redemption—John 1:1, 14, 18.
- B. The second stage, the stage of inclusion, is for Christ to be begotten as God's firstborn Son, to become the life-giving Spirit, and to regenerate the believers for His Body—Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23.
- C. The third stage, the stage of intensification, is for Christ to intensify His organic salvation, to produce the overcomers, and to consummate the New Jerusalem—Rev. 5:6; 2:7; 21:2.

V. The apostles' teaching is the contents of the full gospel of God, comprising not merely a part of the New Testament, but the entire New Testament.

VI. The apostles' teaching is the church's constitution; the church must hold it and be under it absolutely:

- A. The apostles' teaching is the constitution of the Christian faith—Jude 3; 1 Tim. 1:19; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.
- B. The apostles' teaching, as the church's constitution, should be universally taught everywhere in every church in the same way—1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17:
 - 1. The teaching of the apostles is for God's economy, and the teaching is the healthy words of the Lord Jesus—1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3.
 - 2. All teachings must be restricted by the limit and sphere of the apostles' teaching.
 - 3. Christianity has many ways because of the many teachings outside the limit of the apostles' teaching.
 - 4. All the problems, divisions, and confusion among Christians today are due to one thing—not caring only for the unique revelation of the apostles' teaching.
- C. In the church there should be one unique teaching, the apostles' teaching, not different teachings.
- D. This constitution, like every constitution, must be properly interpreted.

VII. Any teaching that was different from the apostles' teaching was not allowed by the apostles:

- A. No other belief besides the unique faith was allowed by the apostles—Gal. 1:7-9.
- B. Teachings that went beyond the teaching of Christ were not allowed by the apostles—2 John 9-11.
- C. The different teachings, including those from the Old Testament dispensation that were different.
- D. All teachings that were different from the unique revelation of God's New Testament economy were considered by the apostles to be winds of teaching—Eph. 4:14.
- E. God's holy writing should not be twisted by anyone in any way but rather unfolded rightly and straightly without any distortion—2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:15.

VIII. The blessing of the church is dependent upon the church's continuing steadfastly in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles—Acts 2:42, 46; 6:7.

IX. The deciding factor in determining the right ministry, which is the ministry of God's New Testament economy, is the teaching of the apostles:

- A. A person's work is in the New Testament ministry if he teaches the teaching of the apostles.
- B. The unique ministry is the ministry ordained by God according to the apostles' teaching.

X. We must serve according to, follow, and be based on the teaching of the apostles:³

- A. We must realize that the way we are taking is the way of following the apostles' teaching in the New Testament.⁴
- B. Everything is under the leadership of the apostles' teaching, that is, God's New Testament economy, the faith of God in the New Testament.
- C. Whether in the work or in the church, we should rely upon the apostles' teaching; the apostles' teaching is the constitution of the church and the work.