

The New Season The Economy of Grace

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Now as God assembles pieces of this picture, from the eternal into time as we've been speaking about, He brings eternal realities into time. The environment changes when eternal realities come into time. There is an actual location in time, a presence...its not so much a place as it is a people together who create that place, that world, that existence, that God then uses as ground zero for bringing eternal things into time. To illustrate this point, I want to refresh your memory of the story of Jacob who was running from his brother Esau. And he was on the open plains at a location that was known as Luz in the Old Testament. And he decided to bed down on the plains for the night. While he was sleeping, he had a vision, and in this vision he saw a stairway from earth to heaven. And on this stairway he saw angels ascending and descending, he saw the 'angelos', the 'angels', ascending and descending.

Now again this is a story in the Old Testament and it would have no real relevance to us unless we find that it was tied down into time by Jesus, who in the book of Mark said to a man who had come to walk with Him. Nathanael was this man's name. Jesus said to Nathanael, "Nathanael I saw you under the fig tree." And you remember the story, Nathanael apparently was a guiles fellow, he did not deal well with manipulation and things that were oblique suggestions. He was a man quote 'with his feet on the ground', he was that type of fellow. And when Jesus greeted Him by saying, "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no guile," Nathanael looked at Him quizzically as if to say, "What are You saying?" And Jesus said, "Well I saw you when you were under the fig tree." And Nathanael suddenly, because he was guiles, he showed his emotions on his face and he said, "Well You must be the Messiah because nobody was there when I was under the fig tree." And then Jesus responded by saying to him , "Nathanael, you believe because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree'. The days are coming when you will see heaven open and angels (the 'angelos') ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." And so Jesus collapses the time in between, from the day when Jacob saw the vision on the location known as Luz, and renamed the place 'Bethel'. 'Beth' means 'house', 'El' means 'God'. So Jacob long ago prophesied that the place where heaven and earth meet is called 'the house of God', the place where God dwells. Jesus said, "I am He." "You will see heaven open and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Now that means that there is actually, if you allow me to use the word, though it's an inaccurate characterization, 'a location in time'. We're used to thinking of locations as being spatial locations. But this is not a spatial location, this is a location that is comprised of associations of relationships. When people are related in a certain fashion, they create an environment that is like a location in time that God comes into and fills with His presence. That location in time is called 'the body of Christ'. That's why it's not a spatial (as in an architectural drawing), it is not a spatial location; it is the meeting ground of those who know God and who are joined together by the Spirit who are built up into the body of Christ. These are quotations from Ephesians 5- that form for us, this place where God dwells.

So the place where God dwells in time is where eternal realities come into time and create a new reality. So when you have the combination of people who are joined together by the Spirit, under the headship of Jesus Christ and they're moving together in the earth by a government that is a divinely inaugurated government, moving by the authority and rule of the LORD Jesus Christ; when those people together constituting the corporate presence of Jesus Christ in the earth, God fills that 'thing', that being, with His presence.

Now when the new season comes in the earth, it first shows up in that context because this is the place where heaven and earth meet. The location in time where heaven and earth meet, is known as the body of Christ. Hence it is not a spatial location and it does not argue for building a building to contain it, indeed if you tried to contain it in a building, you will soon be disappointed and out a lot of money because it's really about a people, it's a relational norm because the relationships are ordained from heaven, they are not constructed by the consent of men purely to walk together. If that's all you have, you have a social club. However benevolent the social club may be, it does not constitute the place where the presence of God visits. Because the other element, to this visitation from God in this configuration of relationships, is that there is an ascending and descending function. That means that 'sent ones', messengers of earth, go up to heaven, not physically, but are given by the Spirit of God access to the hidden mysteries of God. They look into things that angels have longed to look into. God no longer sends angelic messengers in the sense of supernatural beings to come and bring the messages from God. God now begins to employ human messengers who oddly enough take on the title of 'angels', 'angelos'.

So the angels are humans who ascend and descend. That is, by the Spirit of the LORD, they're caught up into the reality of God's presence from which they see things that are valuable to describe the season and to speak of the empowerment of the season. An example of this is Paul, who said in II Corinthians chapter 12, "I knew a man fourteen years ago, whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know, but he was

caught up to the third heaven.” And he saw things that were wonderful, indeed too wonderful in his case, to relate. Contrast this with John who was taken up, according to the book of Revelation chapter 4 verse 1, he was taken up through a door that was open to him into heaven. And he was allowed to see things that were yet to come and he was given clear and obvious instructions to write these things in a book.

The point is that there are biblical examples of at least two who were caught up into heaven. But this is not the norm for the catching up into heaven, angels, the 'angelos', ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. There are, according to Paul in his letter to the Romans he said, “That faith comes by hearing, hearing comes by the word of God, and the word of God comes by a preacher, and a preacher is one who has been sent. We'll get to this later on but I simply wanted to show you that there is a location in time comprised of relationships into which God pours the new season, that from there spreads out into the whole earth.

Now what is critical that we see is that with a new season comes a new measure of grace. I want to explain that. We often have thought of grace and mercy as one and the same thing. It is mercy that is unmerited favor, but grace is something else; grace is comprised of two elements; power and authority. An easy understanding of power and authority, an easy understanding of the distinction between power and authority is the law officer who has a badge and carries a weapon. The weapon is power, but the badge is a symbol of authority. And the presumption is, if you use the weapon in a manner that is consistent with the authority that is represented by the badge, then you have the functioning of power and authority to maintain order. Now there are permutations on that of course, but this is not the moment to be addressing those permutations, I simply want to explain grace as being comprised of power and authority and to explain the distinction between power and authority. Power is the ability to do a thing; authority is the legitimate right to do the thing. So if you can accomplish a thing, you have the power to do it. But the question of whether or not you have the authority has to do with how you are positionally related to the one who has authority. That's a very important point. The police officer is positionally related to the source of governance that gives him authority to use power. In the kingdom of God, we must be positionally related to Christ, because it is to Christ that all authority in heaven and on earth, was given.

So if grace is power and authority, we only have authority if we are positionally related to Christ. Now the reason that I emphasized that it is to be related to Christ, positionally, is that many say, “Well, I am the pastor of this church and my authority is actually derived from the numbers of people in my congregation.” Let us understand clearly, this is not the same as being positionally related to Christ. Here we are speaking about both gifts and calling, not about membership and position. There are two forms of empowerment when we speak of the church: one is the empowerment that is derived from the consent and consensus of the governed. That's the way human governments

often are constituted. Democratic forms of government recognize that sovereignty is in the people. And therefore, whomever the people appoint as their representatives are empowered to act on behalf of the people and they are therefore limited by what the people do if the people have consented to this form of behavior through their representatives, then the representative has power. If, on the other hand, the representative initiates something that is their own initiative that the people would not have initiated had they been consulted, then the people are not being represented properly.

But the other form of empowerment is where God has created you as a particular vessel, with a particular destiny that He intends to live out through you. So it's His destiny that is being lived through you. And then He gives you the requisite gifts of the Spirit, which gifts enable you to fulfill that destiny. At that juncture, it's His life being lived through you by His authority. In that case, you are positionally related to Christ. So for example, an apostle is a gifting of government that goes with a calling that God might give to a particular individual to restore order to the body of Christ. Now at that juncture, one's apostleship is not by the consent of the people of any particular congregation or group. Such a person has an endowment of both power and authority, from Christ, to live out a function that Christ Himself would live out in the earth and is living out through that individual. Now in that instance the person has both power and authority.

What if a particular congregation of people does not receive that gifting and that calling? Well it may be that the person wasn't sent to that group, in which case there's probably no consequence to them. But if that person were sent to that group and they refuse to receive that gifting of power and authority, then the presence of God will be withdrawn and they will not see Him again in their midst bringing order, establishing His kingdom, until they say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD." Now what I am NOT saying by that is that the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from an individual. At that point what you have are people living out their individual destinies but not participating in anything that is corporate. In which case, you become irrelevant to the purposes of God in your day. It has nothing to do with being saved; you're saved, you're going to heaven. But insofar as fulfilling the purposes of God are concerned, you're occupying space until He comes. In that sense, this is like the fig tree that bears no fruit; the absence of fruit, the barrenness of life, is not the same as saying you're not going to heaven. You're going to heaven, but there's a barrenness to your life in terms of the things of God.

So what I want to get to then is the point that every new season in God comes with a new dispensing of grace. The word 'dispensation' is a good word, but it's been wrongly applied in the common vernacular of religion. A 'dispensing' is simply 'a handing out'. In England, for example, a pharmacist is called a 'dispenser', since he dispenses the prescribed drugs. And a pharmacy (a drug store as they say in America), a drug store in England is called a 'dispensary', especially if it's related to government owned facilities.

So a 'dispensation' is 'a giving out', 'a dealing out', 'a handing out'. And if you think about it, we have all kinds of dispensers; there are soap dispensers in washrooms all over, there are vitamin dispensers that people keep in their homes, all manner of things that automatically give out a certain quantity. So a 'dispensation' is easy to understand, it's 'a giving out'.

With every new epoch, with every new season in God, there's a dispensation of grace for that season. Dispensation is not about how one age closes off and nothing transmits to another age from that previous age; that's how it's been used religiously to cordon off the continuation of the prophetic, for example. There are those who say, "Well the thing was fulfilled in this particular fashion, therefore there is no continuation of the fulfillment of that prophecy." And the point being, "then the dispensation ends," "the giving out of grace ends." That's not accurate. I used this example in an earlier teaching, where I explained the dispensation of grace that followed the Pentecostal movement at Isuzu street; that dispensation of grace was God giving back to the church a clear and easy and frequent understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Now there was not an end to that dispensation, the Holy Spirit has continued to be given but in different and growing measures. The next dispensation of grace that followed the Pentecostal season was the dispensation of gifts of the Spirit that came up in the Charismatic season.

So what I am saying is that you have both a season and the dispensing of grace that is sufficient for that season, that's what makes it a new season. So the Holy Spirit was not withdrawn after the end of the season of the Pentecostal movement, the Holy Spirit has continued. So what is true is the label 'Pentecostal Season' is no longer a useful term to describe anything that's going on today. The label 'Charismatic' is not a useful term to describe the work of God in this season today. But the dispensing of the presence of the Spirit and the dispensing of the gifts of the Spirit, have continued. And whereas once we had mainly the Holy Spirit as a gift, that was followed by, in the Charismatic season, a dispensing of gifts to persons in the Charismatic season. Now you have a dispensing of grace (power and authority) for the present season, and the present season is about how the body of Christ is meant to mature. So we're no longer going to be permitted the 'playtime' of the Pentecostal season, or the 'fun and games time' of the charismatic season, but we will have both the Holy Spirit and gifts of the Spirit operating but operating in a different context now because a new dispensation of grace has come. You see, that's why the strict understanding of dispensationalism, the arbitrary labeling of the work of God, the dispensing of grace in a particular period; that that's over. I would agree that the labeling no longer applies. But the essence of what God has done migrates from one season to another and builds up and comes around with greater mass and greater substance.

Now the word for 'dispensation' is the same word for 'economy', and that's not a surprise. Because what God is doing in a particular moment in time, He intends to support that and

the grace (power and authority) is what forms the economy around the thing God is doing. What happens if the season changes, but you don't; you're still in the same season? Then the answer is quite simple: you now must create your own economy in order to keep going. Well why would you want to do that, if God has moved on and His grace has created a new economy in support of the thing that He is doing? Well clearly, if you're not doing what He's doing, you're not in His economy but you may keep on doing what you want to do, but you must create your own economy. And the question becomes now: why would you want to do that? The answer is very simple: you want to keep your market share, you want to keep what you're known for because you're unwilling to lay all of that down, to be emptied out, to take on new measures of grace, to migrate to an unfamiliar season where you may not be the 'top dog', where you may not be the leading figure. That's why people don't want to migrate. But what God is doing, that He will support. What God used to do, the grace leaves that and moves on. If you stay there and continue to define what you do by that, then you're stuck in the economy that you've created yourself; you're in your own economy. And in that case, you have no where to go and there's nothing for you to do except by the sweat of your brow.

Now, I want you to understand that with the seasonal change, you must migrate to the new economy of God.

I'm Sam Soleyn, God bless you. I'll see you the next time, bye bye.