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Visions and Revelations
Message 2: The Change of the Age

Note: This is a lightly edited transcript meant to help saints in personal and small group fellowship and pursuing.

Dear brothers, I'm happy we have the opportunity to come to the second message. This series of messages will cover "Visions and Revelations". But we are not talking about the truth—what "visions and revelations" are according to the divine revelation, according to the speaking of the apostles. We are actually testifying or telling you the stories about it. So, number one there is the story of Joseph. Then backing up, accompanying the story of Joseph, there are other stories. Every story is related to a vision. The major figure in the story saw a vision. Then a lot happens afterward. How many incidents like this are mentioned in the Bible? There should be around twenty. So, we may need a half year, or four to five months to finish all these stories. They are very practical. Each one can be applied, can be appreciated, can be used to challenge ourselves and ask: "Are we part of it? Do we see something according to it? Do we really enjoy what was in the story?" In our heart, there is a response. We can say, "Lord, somewhat I also have seen the same thing."

Visions are a big thing. That's what I shared last time. You have a vision, you see something. When you see something, a big picture appears before you. It's like you see a baby. A baby becomes a vision. The vision includes what he has, how beautiful he is, what can be developed within him. Eventually, you even have a kind of thinking, "Oh ten years later, what will he be? Twenty years later, what will he be?" All together, this can be a vision. Then in this vision, there are many revelations. Just like when you go to a garden. You are so attracted. There are so many beautiful things. The trees, the flowers, the birds, the grass—all things together. Then you go one by one. Now I see a rose. Now I see a daffodil. I see something. One after another they become a revelation: how beautiful, how rich, how good is the smell, how they present themselves with dignity, even though they are just a flower.

You know brothers, we need visions and revelations. Concerning Jesus' coming, you have to realize this is a transition. The first vision the Bible records is Matthew one chapter one, the vision of Joseph. Accompanying this vision, there are other visions at or about the same time. There's another vision seen by Zachariah, a priest. And another vision that is related to Mary. And there is another vision that is related to all the shepherds. And another vision related to the wise men who saw one star. That star, a particular star. You know, this is very interesting. After all this, Jesus was born. A new age seemingly began. "Seemingly" because he was not yet grown up, He had not yet went through death, and He was not yet in resurrection. But somewhat the New Testament came into being. So all these visions, from Joseph and Zachariah and Mary and the shepherds and these wise men are a transition or a change. They denote a change from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from something according to law to a new age according to grace. It is very, very interesting. In between these two big governmental ages, or

dispensations, there are these five visions that bring us from old to the new. They give us the ability to see the change from something of the old to something that is new.

So, we come to the second message of “Visions and revelations.” The second message is “The Change of Age.” What is that? What does that mean? From the age of old to the age of new. From a dispensation of old to a dispensation of new. From something outward to something inward. From something that demands of man to something according to the life dispensation of God. This is a marvelous change! If you are soberly considering the whole Bible, you can see that overall there are seven dispensations. In the Old Testament there are five. The first one is the dispensation of innocence. The second one is the dispensation of conscience. The third one is dispensation of man; man’s government. The fourth is the dispensation of promise. After all this, around two thousand years, we come to Moses. The concluding of all the previous dispensations is the dispensation of Law.

So, if you come to the outline, here I did say, “God’s economy has seven dispensations in different ages. They are: the age of innocence, the age of conscience, the age of human government, the age of promise and the age of Law.” The age of Law concludes the Old Testament. In other words, God says, “If I can ask of man, this is the most I can ask. I give the Law, and I give the things related to the Law. So, they have the tabernacle, they have the priesthood, they have the sacrifices, and they have the festivals. Their life should be marvelous IF, and there has to be IF, if they do this. Because if they do My Law, they will live according to Law.” What happened in the one thousand five hundred years? Failure after failure. Failure after failure. It’s interesting. When you come to the most prevailing king, that is David, then come to the most prevailing rule, that is Solomon. Do you realize how corrupted these two rulers are? David is more than terrible. Solomon even much more than terrible compared with David. You can see God still has to say, “David is after My heart.” That means, in the Old Testament, “What can I do to get man exactly according to what I want? I see someone terrible, not good. Yet being good enough to satisfy Me is better than all the others. Why? At least in his heart he is for Me.”

That is the Old Testament. The Old Testament shows a thousand five hundred years of failures. Failures upon failures upon failures. Exposing upon exposing upon exposing. This is why, when you eventually come to the end of the Old Testament, Malachi, you should put down the Bible and sigh. “We are hopeless. We really are hopeless. You can boast about Abraham, but we are hopeless. You can boast about Isaac and Jacob, be we are hopeless. You can boast about Joseph or Joshua, but we are hopeless. You can boast about David and Solomon, but we are hopeless.” You have a strong feeling, WOE UNTO “MAN”! WHAT A HOPELESS SITUATION! This “man.” We “man” are terrible upon terrible.

So the dispensation must change. The era must be different. That is why you come to the sixth dispensation, the dispensation of grace. The dispensation of a new covenant. The content of this dispensation is Christ. And Christ as life. And Christ as a life supply. In this dispensation you have everything inside to uphold you, to carry you, to live with you, to support you, to bear you

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so that you are able to be a person really after God's heart and not just in intention like David. Not just in intention like David, rather, in living like Paul. What a marvelous situation!

But how hard is this changing? All of a sudden, everything changed. So with these seven, let me finish reading this point on the outline, with these seven dispensations, eventually you have the age of Law, which concludes the Old Testament. Now when the Lord Jesus came He brought forth a new age, a new covenant, which is of life. I will give you a new age, I will make a new covenant with you. And this covenant is of life which is the Age of Grace. When the Lord returns he will initiate the Age of the Kingdom (Millennium). So the Old Testament concludes with the Age of Law, while the New Testament concludes, or leads us to Jerusalem. Maybe we should say, the New Testament leads us to New Jerusalem.

I think you should have a view of God's overall operation. Don't consider today, don't consider how we are now bothered by the coronavirus. When you do, then you begin to fight, "This from China, this from US..." Of course this is childish. How can this be from whatever country? But eventually did you realize? We argue, we fight, we debate, we are very bothered. To come out of it is really something. We don't know. Today even many scientists predict this sickness will be with us, with the human race. It's hard to believe. But anyway we are in a chaotic situation. In the 21st century everything in human living is modern, is scientific, and the provision is more than marvelous. But somehow the whole situation is terrible. So in the Old Testament, the provision is marvelous, but the situation is terrible. It's very hard for us even to say, "Oh let's boast about the Old Testament," no we can't.

Then here, this is why I said a word in the outline, "the Old Testament law compared with the New Testament life." Old Testament, what composes the Old Testament? Law. God spoke to Moses, "You shall only have me as your God". Right? "Don't make any idols." At least four items are related to God himself. Then one item, honor your parents, which belongs to the first tablet. Remember? Two tablets have the Ten Commandments. The first five are related to the source. The source is God. So your living should be according to God. Divinely, God is there. Humanly, parents are there. So honor your parents, right? That's related to source. Another five are related to living, but whether related to source or related to living, human beings can try their best to say, "I want to have it, I want to be that godly, I want to have no other God but Jehovah Himself." Now you can be a very godly man, but do you have Jehovah as your reality? When you say don't worship anything else, anyone else, except Jehovah, can't you unconsciously still have idols? An idol can be a house at that time, an idol can be food at that time, an idol can be a good family at that time. Today of course idols can be much, much more. Unconsciously, we can see we are in the Old Testament time, so here I wrote a simple outline here to tell you there are differences between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament life. A testament that is according to law. Another covenant, testament is covenant, another covenant that is according to life.

If I read this to you, the Old Testament Law is the requirements stemming from God's own being. In other words, why does God give you Law? God says "Do you know who I am? If you

don't know me, read the Ten Commandments, then you will know who I am. I'm the unique one. I'm the real substance. No idols could give it to you. I'm the real blessed one. Then with me, I don't know anything that is unholy, anything that is unrighteous, anything that is improper, because I'm the unique God, the unique perfect one. So I am such a one that, according to my being, I will ask you to do something because I am such a person." What's going to happen? "Resulting in the judgment of man." So eventually all men would begin to say, "Wow, I can't have it, I can't do it. I can't have it."

"The New Testament brings in all-sufficient supply from God." God is sufficient supply. "All-sufficient supply from God's redemption and salvation, resulting in the satisfaction of both God and man." In the Old Testament God says, "I'm here, do this!" In the New Testament He says, "No, no, no. I'm the grace. I like to be in you. I like to be one with you. I like to abide in you. I like to be growing in you. I eventually like you to testify of me." The Old Testament condemns, the New Testament provides. It provides life for us to grow in life. This is so marvelous.

Then point two. What is the contrast between the Old Testament and New Testament? The former has an outward God. What is the Old Testament? God is outward. I know God, but God is outward. I know there is God, but God is outward. Remember when Paul was in Athens? They have all kinds of idols, of gods. Then they have one monument that says, "We worship the god we don't yet even know." Paul used that to give a message. God will not abide in a house, in a building that you build, because He is the creator of the universe, of the earth, of everything on this earth. So here, this shows that in Athens, just like with many Chinese or many races all over the globe, whether they are educated, cultured, civilized, or not, in every tribe, every race, every nation, there is a feeling: I want to respect God, honor God, satisfy God, to make God a blessing to me. Do you realize this basic thought matches the Old Testament?

So the Old Testament says: "I am God, I am *the* God. Worship me, honor me, do things according to who I am, according to my desire." This is the Old Testament, but the New Testament shows an indwelling Lord. Do you know the difference? If you see a Jew, you should honor them, because they're God's chosen people. You should respect them because basically, Jews are a respectable race because they have Jehovah, God. But at the same time, they worship Him, they honor Him, they keep the Sabbath, they do everything to try to please him. Christians are very different. Christians can say, "We're in the New Covenant. Where is God? In my spirit. Where is he living? In my spirit. What he is doing? Operating in my spirit. What's His desire? Growing in my spirit and the many Christians' spirit. Together we have an inward Christ, an inward, life-giving Lord." In the Old Testament He's outside, in the New Testament He's inside.

Then secondly, the former was what? Was Man's striving. The latter, that's the New Testament, is a divine supply of life. You know, if you still live in the Old Testament, you are like many priests, who were godly Israelites at that time. They tried everything so they can please God, at least, a number of them would try everything that they can please God. They strive to the point that their striving does not even look like striving--this just becomes our living. We will eat only the food that is clean, we will eat only the unleavened bread. We will do a certain thing in a certain way. We strive so that God can be happy with us. Can God really be happy? In principle,

if they have the sacrifices. These kinds of sacrifice: sin offering, trespass offering, meal offering, peace offering. You have all these offerings, also a burnt offering. You have these five kinds of offerings, showing your thought: I will do everything to make God happy.

But what does the New Testament show? I don't need to do a thing. The only thing I did was for some reason, I saw a revelation of Christ. In this revelation, I saw I'm a sinner, I need Jesus Christ. Through that, I become saved. And after I'm saved, I don't live outwardly, I live according to something inward. You know what that is? When I call "O Lord!" I'm very happy. When I read the Bible, I have the Lord's presence. When I'm with the saints, I'm joyful. When I sing hymns, I feel I can be in the heavenlies. There's not a strength, there's just a desire. Just like you have breakfast. Well, you have breakfast, right? So you ate already! But for some reason, you need lunch. But lunch is not from outside, but inside. And for some reason, later, you need supper. You slept last night. For some reason, you still want to sleep tonight. This is the nature of life: life's desire. This is not a demand. With this, you have a desire to say, "I enjoy the Lord's presence, the Lord can grow in me, and the Lord," here it says, "He is the life supply." When I have the Lord Jesus as breakfast, for some reason I want to read a verse. Then I begin to have a divine supply of lunch. For some reason, I'd like to see some brothers. Then I have a divine supply of supper. You know, brothers, it's not outward. But it's a life demand. Don't look down at this life demand. Now, you cannot be with each other that easily. Do you miss your brothers? I do. Do you miss meetings? I do. Do you miss the times that we can sing a hymn together? I do. It used to seem common. But now, it manifested, "Lord, in my life, there is such a need."

Then at the same time, with this need, there is a supply. The Lord is always with you. The Lord says, "I am the Bread of Life. I am the Water of Life. Right? I am the Light of Life. I am everything, I am ready to meet all of your needs as your supply." Don't do things outwardly--"I want to...!" No. But rather, according to the nature of life, the law of life, I have a need. And the stronger I am, the more I eat. So when you grow up somewhat healthy, to about eighteen or twenty, we Americans have this kind of funny statement: "I am so hungry, I could eat a horse!" When I hear this, usually I laugh. Who can eat a horse? I'll get a horse for you, eat it! But this expression is very good. In the Old Testament, where's the horse? In the New Testament, yes, the Lord Jesus is in you. He is so rich, He is the life store, and He is the storage house. He can give you all the riches you need as supply. There is nothing you need to worry and think about.

And more than that, the former is the old man's improvement. The latter is the new man's transformation. Not only do I want to strive to please the Lord, I want to change myself. I want to make myself very good. Right? Not only towards men, I dress properly, I do everything properly, but within me, before God, I'd like to say, "God, please look at me, how much I want me, this man, to be satisfying to You." I don't want to lose my temper. I don't want to have an evil thought. I don't want to have any greediness. I want to be somewhat so healthy that, "Lord, when You look at me, you say, 'I am happy. You're a marvelous boy!'" Is that true? No. You can strive for improvement. But improvement will bring you more things that need to be improved. I was very ill tempered. I got saved. Praise the Lord for that. Saved from my temper. You know what's happened? I need another improvement--improvement of my ability of overcoming my

temper. Because it's still me! So when I don't lose my temper, I say "Look, God, how holy I am!" God says, "No, no, no. That's still you. That's your improvement. Your improvement is from outward wickedness, which is your ill-temper, now to the inward weaknesses, which is your pride." I have overcome temper. I have overcome money. I have overcome--no. Whatever. The Lord says, "No."

But the New Testament is "the New Man's transformation." God says, "Now, I just change you. How do I change you? Sometimes you don't even know it." Christians can say, "I love the Lord. I take in His supply. I don't know what's happened. After a period of time, people see me, they tell me, 'Hey, you are so different!' I don't even know I'm different!" What is that? A change of life. Then a change in life issues in a change of living. Then that issues in a change of being. Then I'm different. After you love the Lord for many years and you have a kind of maturity, you can say, "Lord, thank You. I am so much like You. I don't even think about it. I just want to enjoy Your rich supply and enjoy Your transformation."

More than that, the former is unto perfection from the expectation of man. "Eventually, I'll be such a spiritual man, a holy man, a man of God. I have these kinds of dreams. One day, when people see me, people can smell something. This is my human perfection." But the latter is conformation from the will of God. I want myself to be so perfect. I have expectations. I wish that while I walk into the hall, people can see a man of God is walking in. I wish when I'm with friends, people can say "Here's a Christian, he's unique, he's special." No. But eventually God says, "I don't just transform you. I even conform you." What does "conform" mean? It means to live Christ. "I want you to live as Christ. Live with the life of Christ. Live expressing Christ. Live being one with Christ. Your living testifies Christ is not only in you as your Savior, also lives out through you." You are conformed in totality.

In the Old Testament, everything is related to doing. Doing something, doing something. The latter is a living according to the supply of life. This is a portrayal of your whole Christian life. Your whole Christian life is a matter of enjoying the divine supply of life. Who? Christ. Where is Christ? In our spirit. There is a supply of life, brothers. There is a supply of life. Remember, there IS the supply of life that is in your spirit. Enjoy Him. Be with Him. Partake of Him. Testify of Him. And tell the Lord, "Lord, save me from anything that is of the Old Testament. I know I am in the New Testament era. But for some reason, I still live an Old Testament life. Bring me back to You, to the New Testament. Let me enjoy redemption. Let me enjoy salvation. Let me enjoy you as the bountiful supply of life. Let me enjoy that with You, there is nothing short. I'd like to live out Christ--just who You are." Remember there's a song, "Oh to be like You." Like You in everything. Like You in everything. But even that still is a desire. Here it says, no, not just a desire. You can be transformed. You can even be conformed. Transformed so your inward spirit becomes strong and mature and rich. Conformed means now, you can say, "I live, and my life is Christ." You know, brothers, sorry, in this message I cannot give you any stories because we don't have time for it. Next week, sorry you have to wait for a week, when we come together, we will come to the story of Zechariah, how he has a vision, eventually a revelation, and eventually he brings in John, the forerunner. What does "John" mean? "John" means "God is

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gracious, God gives grace.” Means not only “he is loved,” but “he is in grace.” He is loved in grace, he lives in grace, he expresses grace, his labor is in grace. This grace brings in the coming of Jesus and brings in the new era, the New Testament age. May the Lord be with us. The Lord bless you. Amen.