Message Six

Leadership in the Lord's Recovery

Scripture Reading: Neh. 8:1-10; 13:14, 29-31; Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-13; Heb. 13:7

I. In God's New Testament economy and in the Lord's recovery, leadership depends upon spiritual capacity; the leadership is not official, permanent, organizational, or hierarchical—1 Thes. 1:5; 2:1-14; 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24:

A. The Lord's concept of leadership is the opposite of the natural concept; among God's people there is actually no leadership in the natural sense—Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-13:

1. In God's New Testament economy, leadership means slavery; anyone who would be a leader must be willing to be a slave—Mark 10:35-45.
2. A leadership is shaped by the growth in life and is an issue of the need; if there is no need, no leadership can be manifested—1 Pet. 5:1-3.
3. In order to set aside the human concept of leadership, God ordained that the leadership among His people should depend always upon spiritual capacity—Acts 13:2, 9; 14:12; Gal. 2:11-14.
4. There is no organized leadership in the Lord's recovery, and there is no unifying organization; instead, there is one Head who gives orders to all the members directly, and there is one organism, the Body—Eph. 1:22-23.

B. According to the New Testament the authority of the apostles is spiritual and is in their ministry of the word—Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 13:5-6; 1 Thes. 2:13:

1. They have no authority in position to interfere with the church affairs; only the word ministered by them has authority—Col. 4:16; Heb. 13:7.
2. The churches follow the apostles because the apostles have the New Testament teaching—Phil. 2:12; Acts 20:17-36.
3. If a church goes astray or is misled, the apostles have the obligation and responsibility to deal with the situation according to God's word, which has authority—vv. 26-27; 2 Cor. 10:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:2.
4. The leadership is produced, strengthened, and restricted in the apostles' teaching—Titus 1:9.

C. In the New Testament there is one ministry with one leadership—Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1:

1. Today's Christianity is divided because there are so many leaderships.
2. Because the ministry is one, there should not be more than one leadership.
3. There is one leadership since God, the Lord, and the Spirit are all one—Eph. 4:4-6.
4. The one leadership is for the keeping of the oneness of the Spirit for the Body of Christ—v. 3.
5. The New Testament shows us God's delegated authority in the leading ones in the ministry, an authority that is for building up—2 Cor. 13:10:
   a. God's delegated authority was in the teaching of the leading ones—1 Cor. 4:17b-21; 7:17b; 11:2; 16:1; 2 Thes. 3:6, 9, 12, 14.

b. Teaching the same thing everywhere in every church was the demonstration of Paul's delegated authority—1 Cor. 4:17b.
c. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is in the New Testament teaching more than in the leading ones of the New Testament ministry themselves—Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:10.

6. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is the leadership of a controlling revelation, not the leadership of a controlling person—Acts 26:19:
   a. In the Lord's recovery we have the leadership of the one controlling revelation in the one ministry through those who bring in the revelation—Eph. 3:3-5.
   b. The leadership in the Lord's recovery is the leadership of the God-given revelation that restricts us, directs us, and controls us so that confusion and division are avoided—Prov. 29:18a.

II. The central and crucial point of the recovery books of Ezra and Nehemiah is the proper and adequate leadership—Neh. 8:1-10:

A. Only under the leadership of such persons as Nehemiah and Ezra could Israel be reconstituted to be the testimony of God, the expression of God on earth; this is a type of what God wants the church to be today—13:14, 29-31; 1 Tim. 3:15.

B. Nehemiah was the perfect leader, the best leader in human history; it is surely worthwhile for us, especially the leading ones in the churches, to consider his example—Neh. 5:19; 13:14.

C. Although Nehemiah was the ruler, he was altogether not ambitious; this is indicated by the fact that in reconstituting the nation he recognized his need of Ezra—8:1-10; Phil. 2:3-4:
   1. Nehemiah knew that without Ezra he could not reconstitute the people of God:
      a. In reconstituting the nation, Nehemiah realized that he did not know God's Word.
      b. Ezra was renowned for his knowledge of the Word of God, and Nehemiah was willing to turn to him for help.
   2. According to the divine principle, the proper representation of the Body is always by those who are matched with others—1 Cor. 1:1; Exo. 4:14b-16:
      a. To be alone is to be individualistic, but to be sent forth with another is to be sent according to the principle of the Body—Luke 10:1; Acts 13:1-3; Rom. 12:5; 1 Thes. 1:1.
      b. To act individualistically is to violate the principle of the Body.
      c. In the Lord's recovery there is an urgent need for the true work of building up the Body; however, this building work can be carried out only by co-workers who have been matched—Phil. 2:19-22.

D. "The Lord has shown me that He has prepared many brothers who will serve as fellow slaves with me in a blended way. I feel that this is the Lord's sovereign provision for His Body and the up-to-date way to fulfill His ministry"—Witness Lee, March 24, 1997.

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