

KNOWING AND CARING FOR THE CHURCH

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

Knowing the Church as the House of God

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19

- I. The church is the house of God, and we need to know this aspect of the church in a deep and thorough way—1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:1-6.**
- II. The church of God is the house of the living God, the household of God—1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19:**
 - A. The church as the assembly is seen, but the church as the house of God is unseen; we realize the house of God not by sight but by faith—2 Cor. 5:7.
 - B. The house and the household (the family) are one entity—the regenerated children of God indwelt by God Himself—1 Pet. 1:3; 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:16; Rom. 8:10; 12:4-5; 2 Cor. 6:16:
 1. In order to be part of God’s house, we must be born of God—John 1:12-13.
 2. The house of God is a composition of the believers, and the believers are children of God, born of Him and having His life and nature; thus, they become members of the household of God—1 John 3:1; Eph. 2:19:
 - a. God put Himself into us, germinating us, begetting us as His children; it is in this way that we have become His household—Rom. 8:11, 16.
 - b. The Father is not a separate member of His household but is in all the children—2 Cor. 6:16.
 - c. Intrinsically speaking, the church as God’s household is in our God-created, God-regenerated, and God-indwelt spirit—Eph. 2:22.
 - C. God’s household is a matter of life and enjoyment; all believers were born of God into His household to enjoy His riches—3:8.
 - D. The household of God is the household of the faith, the universal family of God, composed of the Father and the believers in Christ, the many sons of God; in the divine family the Father is God, and all the sons are God in life and nature but not in the Godhead—Gal. 6:10; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10-12.
 - E. The church as the house of God, His household, enables God’s life to be propagated—John 14:2-3; 1:12-13; 20:17:
 1. When we touch the house of God, we touch the life of God—Eph. 2:19; cf. 4:18.
 2. God’s house is a place for the continuation and multiplication of His life.
 - F. As the house of God, the church is the dwelling place of God—the place where God can have His rest and put His trust—2:22:
 1. In this dwelling place God lives and moves to accomplish His will and to satisfy the desire of His heart—1:5, 9, 11; Phil. 2:13.
 2. In the church as His dwelling place, God expresses Himself in all that He is and is doing; God’s desires and inclinations are expressed in His house—1 Cor. 3:16; 14:24-25; Eph. 1:5; Phil. 2:12-13.

- G. The church as the house of God—the Father’s house—is the enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation as the issue of Christ’s being glorified by the Father with the divine glory—John 12:23; 13:31-32; 14:2:
 1. The Father’s house is for the processed and consummated Triune God to have a mutual abode with the believers in Christ—vv. 2-3, 23.
 2. The Father’s house is for the invisible and mysterious Triune God to have a visible and solid household constituted by the children of God, the species of God, with His divine life for their growth in life and for His rest, satisfaction, and manifestation—Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15.
- H. If we would care for the church in a proper way, we need to realize that the church is the house of God, and we should not do anything that hinders God’s life from being propagated or that hinders God from speaking, from being expressed, and from having rest in the church—v. 15; 4:6-8, 12-16.

III. The house of God defined in 1 Timothy 3:15-16 is the genuine church in its divine nature and essential character, whereas the great house in 2 Timothy 2:20-21 refers to the deteriorated church in its mixed character, as illustrated by the abnormally large tree in Matthew 13:31-32:

- A. In the great house there are not only precious vessels but also base ones; the great house is certainly not the house of the living God, for such a house cannot contain vessels unto dishonor.
- B. The great house must refer to Christendom; furthermore, this great house is equal to the large tree in Matthew 13:31-32:
 1. The genuine church today is the house of the living God, whereas apostate Christendom is the great house—1 Cor. 1:2.
 2. Just as unclean birds lodge in the large tree, so in the great house there are vessels unto dishonor, wooden and earthen vessels; in the genuine church, however, there are only gold and silver vessels—2 Tim. 2:20-21.

IV. In the church as the house of God, we enter into the corporate experience of God—Gen. 35:1, 3, 7, 11:

- A. We need to make a crucial and radical turn from the individual experience of God to the corporate experience of God—the experience of God as the God of Bethel—vv. 1, 3, 7, 11; Eph. 3:17-21; 4:4-6.
- B. In Genesis 35:7 we have a new divine title—*El-bethel*, God of the house of God; this indicates that God is no longer merely the God of individuals but is the God of a corporate body, the God of the house of God.
- C. We need to advance from the individual experience of God to the corporate experience of God, to the experience of the corporate God—1 Cor. 12:12:
 1. The altar that Jacob built at Shechem was called *El-Elohe-Israel*, the name of God as related to an individual—Gen. 33:17-20.
 2. The altar that Jacob built at Bethel was called *El-bethel*, the name of God as related to a corporate body; the altar at Bethel is thus a corporate altar—the altar for the house of God—35:6-7.
- D. The All-sufficient God is revealed for His house—v. 11a:

1. We cannot experience God in His all-sufficiency in an individualistic way; in order to experience the all-sufficient God, we must be in the church as the house of God—1 Tim. 3:15.
2. God's all-sufficiency requires the Body; we need the house of God in order to experience this aspect of Him—Phil. 1:19.