

KNOWING AND CARING FOR THE CHURCH

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Nine

The Recovery and Preservation of the All-inclusive Oneness

Scripture Reading: Psa. 133:1, 3b; John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3-6

I. God is one; His nature is oneness—Deut. 6:4; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:3-6:

- A. God is always true to His nature and never acts contrary to it.
- B. Because God's way is oneness, oneness is the basic element of God's acts; in all of God's acts we see one origin, one element, and one essence—Gen. 1:26; 12:1-2.
- C. In producing the church as the new creation, God acted according to His nature of oneness; thus, the beginning of the church was in the unique oneness that is according to the nature of God—Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 2:42, 46; 4:32.

II. The genuine oneness is the mingling of the processed and consummated Triune God with the redeemed, regenerated believers—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3-6:

- A. The Lord has given us the glory that the Father has given Him so that we may be one in the Father and in the Son; this points to a oneness in the divine nature and the Divine Being—John 17:22.
- B. The oneness in Ephesians 4:1-6 is intimately related to what is covered in 3:14-21:
 - 1. In 3:14-21 Paul refers to the three of the Triune God, and in 4:1-6 he refers to the Triune God in relation to the oneness of the Spirit and to the Body.
 - 2. The fact that the Body and the Triune God are mentioned together indicates that oneness is actually the mingling of the processed and consummated Triune God with the believers.

III. The genuine oneness—the oneness according to the nature of God—is an all-inclusive, comprehensive oneness that includes all positive things—Psa. 23:6; 36:8-9; 43:3-4; 84:1-8, 10-12; 92:10; 133:1, 3b:

- A. When the oneness is recovered, all the spiritual riches and all the positive things are recovered with it, because they all exist in the oneness—Eph. 4:3; 3:8.
- B. All the godly things and all the spiritual riches are ours on the genuine ground of oneness—Deut. 8:7-9; 12:12, 26-28.
- C. The genuine oneness is not a partial oneness; it is a great, complete, comprehensive oneness, a oneness in entirety—Psa. 133:1:
 - 1. This oneness, as revealed in Ephesians 4:3-6, includes God the Father, Christ the Lord, and the Spirit as the Giver of life.
 - 2. The all-inclusive oneness gives us access to all positive virtues and attributes—vv. 1-2.
 - 3. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate consummation and expression of the genuine, all-inclusive oneness and of all things included in it—Rev. 21:2, 10-11.

- D. Psalm 133 is a psalm on the oneness that includes all positive attributes and virtues.
- E. If we see the vision of the oneness of entirety, all the germs of division will be killed, and we will be delivered from every kind of division.

IV. Division is all-inclusive; it includes all negative things—such as Satan, sin, worldliness, the flesh, the self, the old man, and evil temper—Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10:

- A. We should not think that division stands by itself and is not related to the flesh, the self, and worldliness—Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 16:23-24; 1 John 2:15-16.
- B. If we are enlightened concerning the nature of division, we will see that it is not only related to all negative things but includes all negative things.
- C. To be in division is to be in death; Christianity is filled with death and darkness because the genuine oneness in life is lacking.

V. To be in the genuine oneness is to be in life—John 17:3, 21-23:

- A. The ground of the church is the base of our experience of life; to remain in oneness is to remain in life—Psa. 133:1, 3b.
- B. When we are in the oneness, we are in life, we enjoy every positive virtue and attribute, and our spiritual condition gradually improves—Eph. 4:3, 15-16.

VI. For the recovery and preservation of the genuine, all-inclusive oneness, we must destroy the high places—1 Kings 11:7-8; 12:26-33; 13:33-34; 14:22-23; 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kings 12:2-3; 14:3-4; 15:3-4, 34-35:

- A. In His wisdom God required His people to destroy all the places in which the nations served their gods—Deut. 12:1-3.
- B. To set up a high place is to have a division; hence, the significance of high places is division.
- C. To preserve the oneness of His people, God required that they come to the unique place of His choice; the high places were a substitute and an alternative for this unique place—vv. 8, 11, 13-14, 18.
- D. A high place is an elevation, something lifted above the common level:
 1. This indicates that a high place involves the exaltation of something.
 2. In principle, every high place, every division, in Christianity involves the uplifting, the exaltation, of something other than Christ—cf. Col. 1:18.
- E. The record of the building of the high places under Solomon and Jeroboam has a spiritual significance; it was written for our spiritual instruction—Rom. 15:4-6:
 1. According to this record, division is caused by lust and ambition; Solomon is an example of the former, and Jeroboam is an example of the latter.
 2. The high places built by Solomon and Jeroboam seriously damaged the ground of oneness—1 Kings 11:7-8; 12:26-33.
 3. Every division in today's Christianity is an elevation of some kind.
 4. In the church life we should not have any high places; instead, we should all be on one level to exalt Christ—Col. 1:18; 3:10-11.
 5. Any high place, even those at which genuine sacrifices are offered, causes damage to the ground of oneness.

6. The divisions in Christianity are caused by selfishness and ambition—Phil. 2:21; 3 John 9-10:
 - a. Because certain ones are ambitious to have their own kingdom to satisfy their selfish desire, they neglect God’s choice—Rom. 16:17-18.
 - b. Jeroboam, an ambitious, selfish, and self-seeking man, set up another center of worship as a cover-up for his ambition—1 Kings 12:26-33.
 - c. Because of their selfishness and ambition, many Christian leaders have set up centers of worship to fulfill their desire to have an empire.
- F. The destruction of the high places involved three main things: the places, the images, and the names—Deut. 12:2-3:
 1. Spiritually speaking, we must destroy every place other than the church and every name other than the name of Christ; this means that we must destroy our culture, disposition, temperament, habits, natural characteristics, preferences, religious background with its influence—everything that damages the genuine oneness—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14.
 2. In order to fulfill the word in Colossians 3:11, every other place must be utterly destroyed:
 - a. We must destroy everything that is not the church with Christ.
 - b. We should simply be in the church life enjoying Christ as the riches of the good land—Deut. 8:7-9; Eph. 3:8.
 3. The church life has been weakened because of the lack of willingness to destroy the high places—1 Kings 15:14; 22:43:
 - a. In our human life and culture there are many places that remain, which need to be destroyed; we must destroy them all and then go to the unique place of God’s choice, the church—Gal. 5:24; Matt. 16:18.
 - b. In every place that is to be destroyed there is a dedicated pillar, a symbol, or an image; in our character or disposition there may be such pillars, symbols, or images that must be destroyed.
 - c. In the church there cannot be anything other than Christ; Christ must be all and in all—Col. 1:18, 27; 2:2; 3:11.
 4. On the ground of oneness it is not possible to have division, for the basis of division has been destroyed.
- G. In the Lord’s recovery we elevate Christ and Christ alone—1:18:
 1. We can testify that, in contrast to today’s Christianity, we have no “high places,” elevations where something other than Christ is uplifted.
 2. Having come to the church, we should have nothing other than the person of Christ and the unique way of the cross—1 Cor. 1:30; 2:4; Col. 1:20; 2:11; 3:11.
 3. In the church we enjoy Christ as the rich produce of the land; our enjoyment of Christ in the presence of God becomes our worship, our church life, and even our Christian living, and we grow and mature on the ground of oneness—Eph. 3:8; 4:3, 14-16.

VII. We praise the Lord for the vision concerning the destruction of the high places and concerning the recovery and preservation of the genuine, all-inclusive oneness; it is our privilege to share in this recovery today—Psa. 133:1, 3b; John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3-6.