

Message Five

The Genuine Ground of Oneness—the Ground of the Church

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:3; John 17:6, 11, 14-24; 16:13; Zech. 4:2-6; Rev. 1:11-12

I. The word *ground* that we use in reference to the church ground does not carry the denotation of a foundation, like the foundation of a building; it bears the denotation of a site, like the site on which the foundation of a building is laid.

II. According to the divine revelation of the New Testament, the ground of the church, as the genuine ground of oneness, is constituted of three crucial elements:

- A. The first element of the constitution of the church ground is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, which is called “the oneness of the Spirit”—Eph. 4:3:
1. This is the oneness that the Lord prayed for in John 17; it is a oneness of the mingling of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ.
 2. This oneness is in the name of the Father, denoting the Father’s person, in which is the Father’s life—vv. 6, 11:
 - a. To be kept in the Father’s name is to be kept by His life, because only those who are born of the Father and have the Father’s life can participate in the Father’s name.
 - b. In this aspect of oneness the believers, born of the Father’s life, enjoy the Father’s name, that is, the Father Himself, as the factor of their oneness.
 3. This oneness is in the Triune God through sanctification by His holy word as the truth—vv. 14-21:
 - a. To be sanctified (Eph. 5:26; 1 Thes. 5:23) is to be separated from the world and its usurpation unto God and His purpose, not only positionally (Matt. 23:17, 19) but also dispositionally (Rom. 6:19, 22).
 - b. God’s living word works within the believers to separate them from anything worldly and from the evil of the world’s division (John 17:15).
 4. This oneness is ultimately in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God—vv. 22-24:
 - a. The Son has given the Father’s glory to His believers so that they may have the sonship with the Father’s life and divine nature (v. 2; 2 Pet. 1:4) to express the Father in the Son in the Son’s fullness (John 1:16).
 - b. In this aspect of oneness the believers, their self having been fully denied, enjoy the glory of the Father as the factor of their perfected oneness and thus express God in a corporate, built-up way (17:22).
 5. Such a oneness was imparted into the spirit of all the believers in Christ, in their regeneration by the Spirit of life with Christ as the divine life; this oneness has become the basic element of the church ground.
- B. The second element of the church ground is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists:
1. The New Testament presents a clear picture that all the local churches, as the expressions of the universal church—the universal Body of Christ—are located in their respective cities.
 2. Hence, we see the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (13:1), the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), and the seven churches in Asia in seven respective cities (Rev. 1:4, 11).
 3. Every city as the boundary in which a church exists is the local ground of that church; such a unique ground of locality preserves the church from being divided by

many different matters as different grounds in the way that divisive denominations such as the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, the Methodists, and the Episcopalians are divided.

4. The book of Revelation being sent to the seven churches equals its being sent to the seven cities—v. 11:
 - a. This shows clearly that the practice of the church life in the early days was the practice of having one church for one city, one city with only one church; in no city was there more than one church; this is the local church, with the city, not the street or the area, as the unit.
 - b. The jurisdiction of a local church should cover the whole city in which the church is located; it should not be greater or lesser than the boundary of the city; all the believers within that boundary should constitute the one unique local church within that one city.
- C. The third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit of oneness, expressing the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ on the unique ground of locality of a local church:
 1. The third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity; it is by this Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living—1 John 5:6; John 16:13:
 - a. The lampstand in the tabernacle in Exodus typifies Christ (25:31-37), the lampstand in Zechariah signifies the Spirit (4:2-6), and the lampstands in Revelation signify the churches (1:11-12).
 - b. Thus, we may say that every local church as a golden lampstand is the reproduction of Christ and the reprint of the Spirit.
 - c. When we say that we are the church as the golden lampstand, we must realize that we have to be fully in the Spirit.
 - d. Because the church is the reprint of the Spirit, we can say, “No Spirit, no church. More Spirit, more church.”
 2. It is also through this Spirit that the ground of locality is applied in life and not in legality; furthermore, it is by this Spirit that the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God—Eph. 4:3-6.

III. The above-defined ground of the church keeps, in practicality, the genuine oneness of the church both locally and universally (v. 3), without any division; this is the only way to avoid today’s situation of division and confusion among the members of Christ.

IV. The above-defined ground of the church is also the base of the genuine and proper fellowship of all the believers, which is called “the fellowship of the apostles” in the divine revelation (Acts 2:42), a fellowship that is with the Triune God and with all the members of the Body of Christ (1 John 1:1-3); this is the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ locally and universally:

- A. Because of the many divisive grounds of today’s Christianity, the fellowship among the members of Christ also is divided into many divisive fellowships; the way to be saved out of all these divisive fellowships is to take and keep the unique, genuine, and proper ground of the church.
- B. This is not a matter of doctrine and regulation; it is a spiritual fact and a practical necessity.