

Message Eleven

**Apostasy, the High Places,
and the Recovery of the Genuine Ground of Oneness**

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 12:25-33; 13:33-34; Deut. 12:2-18

- I. The apostasy of Jeroboam can be considered a type of today's Christianity—1 Kings 12:25-33; 13:33-34:**
- A. Apostasy means to leave the way of God and to take another way to follow things other than God, and it is to do things for the self under the name of Jesus Christ and under the cloak of worshipping God—Acts 9:2; 18:26; 2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21; Jude 11; Judg. 18:30-31.
 - B. Jeroboam's apostasy consisted of five things:
 - 1. Jeroboam made two calves of gold (idols), putting one in Bethel and the other in Dan, in order to distract the people from worshipping in Jerusalem, thus breaking God's ordination of having one unique worship center in the Holy Land for keeping the oneness of the children of Israel—1 Kings 12:26-30; Deut. 12:2-18.
 - 2. Jeroboam built a temple at the high places and appointed priests from among the common people who were not of the tribe of Levi—1 Kings 12:31; 13:33b; 2 Chron. 13:9.
 - 3. Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month (the month he had devised in his own heart) like the feast that was in Judah—1 Kings 12:32a, 33b.
 - 4. Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar at Bethel to the calves that he had made, and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places—vv. 32b-33a.
 - 5. Jeroboam went up to the altar although he was not a priest—v. 33b.
 - C. Jeroboam's apostasy became a serious sin that caused his entire family to be destroyed under God's judgment and eventually led to Israel's being carried away into captivity—13:34; 14:7-11, 15-16; 15:29-30; 2 Kings 17:20-23.
 - D. The centers of worship set up by present-day "Jeroboams" are actually centers of ambition:
 - 1. The divisions in Christianity are caused by selfishness and ambition.
 - 2. Because certain ones are ambitious to have an empire to satisfy their selfish desire, they neglect God's choice.
 - E. In God's New Testament economy, all true believers in Christ are made priests to God, but degraded Christianity has built up a system to ordain some believers to do the service of God, making them a clerical hierarchy and leaving the rest of the believers as laymen; this is an apostate practice, which we must abhor and abandon—1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 2:6, 15.
 - F. Because today's Christianity is filled with apostasy, the Lord needs a recovery—the recovery of life and truth—Jer. 2:11, 13, 19; Rev. 2:6, 15; 1 John 1:1-2, 5-6; John 18:37b; 10:10b.
 - G. The provision of life and the revelation of truth are the antidotes the apostles used in dealing with apostasy and the decline of the church—1 John 1:1-2, 5-6; John 18:37b; 10:10b; 2 Pet. 1:3-21; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10; 2:15, 25.

II. 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. High places were the places where the Gentile people worshipped their idols.
- B. When the children of Israel entered into the land of Canaan to possess it, God commanded them to destroy all the high places of the nations—Deut. 12:1-3:
 - 1. To set up a high place is to have a division; hence, the significance of high places is division.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. In 1 Kings, two kings—Solomon and Jeroboam—took the lead to set up the high places, the former because of the indulgence of lust and the latter because of ambition—11:7-8; 12:27.
- C. 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.
- D. 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. The high places built by Solomon and Jeroboam seriously damaged the ground of oneness—1 Kings 11:7-8; 12:26-33.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. Any high place, even those at which genuine sacrifices are offered, causes damage to the ground of oneness.
- E. 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.

III. Because of the apostasy, the high places, and the divisions throughout Christendom, there is the need for the recovery of the genuine ground of oneness—Eph. 4:2-6, 13; John 17:11, 14-23; 1 Cor. 10:16-17:

- A. According to the divine revelation in the New Testament, the church ground—the genuine ground of oneness—is constituted of three crucial elements:
 - 1. The first element of the constitution of the church ground is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ—Eph. 4:4:
 - a. This oneness is called “the oneness of the Spirit”—v. 3.
 - b. This oneness is the oneness that the Lord prayed for in John 17—a oneness in the mingling of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ—vv. 6, 11, 14-24.
 - c. This 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.
 - 2. The second element of the church ground is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11.
 - 3. 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 John 5:6; John 16:13:
 - a. By the Spirit of reality, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity, the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living.
 - b. Through this Spirit the ground of the church is applied in life and not in legality.
 - c. By this Spirit the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God—Eph. 4:3-6.
- B. The church, the organic Body of Christ, is undivided and indivisible; this unique Body is expressed in many local churches in the divine oneness as it is with the Triune God and in the divine nature, element, essence, expression, function, and testimony—Rev. 1:11; John 17:11, 21, 23.
- C. 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:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. The genuine oneness is not a partial oneness; it is a great, complete, comprehensive oneness, a oneness in entirety—Psa. 133:1:
 - a. This oneness, as revealed in Ephesians 4:3-6, includes God the Father, Christ the Lord, and the Spirit as the Giver of life.
 - b. The all-inclusive oneness gives us access to all positive virtues and attributes—vv. 1-2.

D. We thank and 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 know, experience, and enjoy this oneness in the Lord's recovery today—Psa. 133:1, 3b; John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3-6.