

Message Three

The Foundation and Ground of the Divine Building

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; Rev. 1:11

I. The foundation of the church—the divine building—is the redeeming and saving Christ, revealed and ministered through the apostles and prophets—1 Cor. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:20:

- A. As the Christ and the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus is the unique foundation laid by God for the building of the church; no one can lay another foundation—Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:10-11:
 - 1. Christ is the all-inclusive One, and nothing and no one can compare with Him—Col. 1:15-19; 2:9, 16-17; 3:4, 10-11.
 - 2. Only Christ is qualified to be the foundation of the divine building according to God's eternal economy—1 Cor. 1:24, 30; 2:2; 3:10-11.
- B. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with their revelation received of Christ as the rock and with their teaching—Eph. 2:20; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42:
 - 1. Because the mystery of Christ was revealed to the apostles and prophets, the revelation they received is considered the foundation on which the church is built—Eph. 3:4-5; 2:20.
 - 2. In eternity there will be the unique New Jerusalem, built upon the foundation of many ministries laid one on top of the other, leading to the unique testimony in the unique expression—Rev. 21:14, 18-20.
 - 3. In building the church, God works according to a prescribed and revealed plan—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20; cf. Exo. 25:8-9:
 - a. The most important thing in our spiritual work is a knowledge of the pattern shown in the mountain—Heb. 8:5.
 - b. The pattern shown in the mountain is God's plan; if we do not understand God's plan, it will be impossible for us to do God's work—Eph. 3:4.

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

- A. According to the divine revelation in the New Testament, the church ground 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—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 constitution 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 constitution 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 as 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. Regarding the ground of the church, Deuteronomy 12 corresponds in at least four ways to the revelation in the New Testament:
1. In Deuteronomy 12 and in the New Testament, we see that the people of God should always be one:
 - a. In His wisdom God did not allow His people to have their own choice or preference but required them to come to the unique worship center.
 - b. Regardless of their number, God's children, the believers in Christ, must be one and have the same center for the worship of God.
 2. Both in Deuteronomy 12 and in the New Testament, God's way to keep the oneness of His people is to have a place with His name, the unique name—Deut. 12:5, 11, 21:
 - a. To be gathered into different names is to be divided, because these names are the base of divisions.
 - b. Not designating ourselves by any title or name, we should be gathered together into the name of the Lord Jesus—Matt. 18:20.
 3. Both Deuteronomy 12 and the New Testament reveal that the place chosen by God for our worship of Him is the place of His habitation—Deut. 12:5:
 - a. The fulfillment of the type in Deuteronomy 12 is not a matter of a geographic place—it is a matter of our spirit—Eph. 2:22; John 4:21-24.
 - b. In gathering together for the worship of God by enjoying Christ, we must gather into the name of Christ, and we must be in the spirit; otherwise, we will lose the proper ground of the church.
 4. In Deuteronomy 12 and in the New Testament, we have the altar, the cross—Matt. 10:38:
 - a. At the entrance of the church is the cross, and everyone who would come into the church must experience the cross and be crucified—Gal. 6:14.
 - b. To experience the cross is to be set aside, to be annulled, to be reduced to nothing—1 Cor. 1:18, 23; 2:2.
 5. Jeroboam's apostasy broke God's ordination of having one unique worship center in the Holy Land for keeping the oneness of the children of Israel; this apostasy can be considered a type of the apostasy in today's Christendom—1 Kings 12:25-33.