

Outline of the Messages for the Thanksgiving Conference November 25-28, 2010

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE NEED FOR A FRESH VISION OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

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

- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
- John 17:6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.
- John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are.
- John 17:14 I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.
- John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of *the hands of the evil one*.
- John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
- John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
- John 17:18 As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.
- John 17:19 And for their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.
- John 17:20 And I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word,
- John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
- John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.
- John 17:24 Father, *concerning* that which You have given Me, I desire that they also may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
- John 16:13 But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming.
- Zech 4:2 And he said to me, What do you see? And I said, I see that there is a lampstand all of gold, with its bowl on top of it and its seven lamps upon it, with seven pipes for each of the lamps on top of it;
- Zech 4:3 And there are two olive trees beside it, one to the right of the bowl and one to the left.
- Zech 4:4 And I answered and spoke to the angel who spoke with me, saying, What are these, sir?
- Zech 4:5 And the angel who spoke with me answered and said to me, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, sir.
- Zech 4:6 And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.
- Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
- Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,

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:
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
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.
- John 17:1 These things Jesus spoke, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You;

- John 17:2 Even as You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.
- John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Him whom You have sent, Jesus Christ.
- John 17:4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.
- John 17:5 And now, glorify Me along with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.
- John 17:6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.
- John 17:7 Now they have come to know that all that You have given Me is from You,
- John 17:8 For the words which You gave Me I have given to them, and they received *them* and knew truly that I came forth from You, and they have believed that You sent Me.
- John 17:9 I ask concerning them; I do not ask concerning the world, but concerning *those* whom You have given Me, for they are Yours;
- John 17:10 And all that is Mine is Yours, and Yours Mine; and I have been glorified in them.
- John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are.
- John 17:12 When I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given to Me, and I guarded *them*; and not one of them perished, except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
- John 17:13 But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy made full in themselves.
- John 17:14 I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.
- John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of *the hands of the evil one*.
- John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
- John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
- John 17:18 As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.
- John 17:19 And for their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.
- John 17:20 And I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word,
- John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
- John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.
- John 17:24 Father, *concerning* that which You have given Me, I desire that they also may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
- John 17:25 Righteous Father, though the world has not known You, yet I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me.
- John 17:26 And I have made Your name known to them and will *yet* make *it* known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.
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:
- John 17:6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.
- John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are.
- 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:
- John 17:14 I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.
- John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of *the hands of the evil one*.
- John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
- John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
- John 17:18 As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.
- John 17:19 And for their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.
- John 17:20 And I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word,
- John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- 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).
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word,
- 1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Matt 23:17 Fools and blind men, which is greater, the gold or the temple which sanctifies the gold?
- Matt 23:19 Blind men, which is greater, the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift?
- Rom 6:19 I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.
- Rom 6:22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.
- 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).
- John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of *the hands of the evil one*.
4. This oneness is ultimately in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God—vv. 22-24:
- John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
- John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.
- John 17:24 Father, *concerning* that which You have given Me, I desire that they also may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
- 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).
- John 17:2 Even as You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.
- 2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
- John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
- 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).
- John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;

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).

Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, *who is* theirs and ours:

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
 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:

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

 - 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:

1 John 5:6 This is He who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood; and the Spirit is He who testifies, because the Spirit is the reality.

John 16:13 But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming.

a. The lampstand in the tabernacle in Exodus typifies Christ (25:31-37), the lamp-stand in Zechariah signifies the Spirit (4:2-6), and the lampstands in Revelation signify the churches (1:11-12).

Exo 25:31 And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand with its base and its shaft shall be made of beaten work; its cups, its calyxes, and its blossom buds shall be of one piece with it.

Exo 25:32 And there shall be six branches going out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand out of one of its sides, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side;

Exo 25:33 Three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a calyx and a blossom bud; and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a calyx and a blossom bud—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand.

Exo 25:34 And there shall be on the lampstand four cups made like almond blossoms, its calyxes and its blossom buds;

Exo 25:35 And a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, and a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, and a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the lampstand.

Exo 25:36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it one beaten work of pure gold.

Exo 25:37 And you shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in front of it.

Zech 4:2 And he said to me, What do you see? And I said, I see that there is a lampstand all of gold, with its bowl on top of it and its seven lamps upon it, with seven pipes for each of the lamps on top of it;

Zech 4:3 And there are two olive trees beside it, one to the right of the bowl and one to the left.

Zech 4:4 And I answered and spoke to the angel who spoke with me, saying, What are these, sir?

Zech 4:5 And the angel who spoke with me answered and said to me, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, sir.

Zech 4:6 And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,

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.

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

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.

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

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:

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life

1 John 1:2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

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.