

Message Five

Five Aspects of the Church

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Gal. 6:10, 16

I. The church of God is the house of the living God—1 Tim. 3:15:

- A. The house of God is the household of God—Eph. 2:19:
 - 1. The dwelling place—the house—and the family—the household—are one entity—a group of called, regenerated ones indwelt by God Himself—1 Pet. 1:3; 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:16.
 - 2. The household of God is composed of the many sons of God as the many brothers of Christ, the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10-12.
 - 3. Just as Christ is not separate from the members of His Body but dwells in them, the Father is not a separate member of His household but is in all the children—Rom. 8:10; 12:4-5; 2 Cor. 6:16.
 - 4. In speaking of the church as the house of God, Paul refers to God as the living God; because God is living, the church as the house of God is also living in Him, by Him, and with Him; a living God and a living church live, move, and work together—1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 3:16.
- B. As the house of God, the church is the dwelling place of God—the place where God can have His rest and put His trust—Eph. 2:22.
- C. The church as the house of the living God—the Father's house—is the enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation—John 14:2, 20.

II. The church is the supporting pillar and the holding base of the truth—1 Tim. 3:15:

- A. The truth is the Triune God, having Christ as the embodiment, center, and expression, to produce the church as the Body of Christ, the house of God, and the kingdom of God—Col. 2:9; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3, 5.
- B. *Truth* in 1 Timothy 3:15 refers to the real things revealed in the New Testament concerning Christ and the church according to God's New Testament economy—Matt. 16:16, 18; Eph. 5:32.
- C. The church bears Christ as the reality; the church testifies to the whole universe that Christ, and Christ alone, is the reality—John 1:14, 17; 14:6.
- D. As the pillar, which bears the truth, and the base, which upholds the pillar, the church testifies the reality, the truth, of Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.

III. The church is the manifestation of God in the flesh—the mystery of godliness—1 Tim. 3:15-16:

- A. God's manifestation was first in Christ as an individual expression in the flesh—v. 16; Col. 2:9; John 1:1, 14.
- B. God is manifested in the church—the house of God and the Body of Christ—as the enlarged, corporate expression in the flesh—Eph. 2:19; 1:22-23:
 - 1. The manifestation of God in the flesh, which began with Christ, continues with the church, which is the increase, enlargement, and multiplication of the manifestation of God in the flesh—John 14:9; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.

2. This is Christ lived out of the church as the manifestation of God—God manifested in the flesh in a wider way according to the New Testament principle of incarnation—1 Cor. 7:40; Gal. 2:20.
- C. The great mystery of godliness is that God has become man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce a corporate God-man for the manifestation of God in the flesh—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; Eph. 4:24.

IV. The church is the household of the faith—Gal. 6:10:

- A. The believers are the members of the family, the household, of the faith; the house of God, the eternal Bethel as the desire of God's heart, is the house of faith—Gen. 28:11-12, 16-19a; Gal. 6:10.
- B. Faith bears two denotations—objective and subjective—1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Pet. 1:1:
 1. In the objective denotation, “the faith” refers to the things in which we believe—Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 16:13; Jude 3, 20; Eph. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:7.
 2. In the subjective denotation, “faith” refers to the believing action of the believers, the act of believing—Gal. 2:20; Rom. 1:17.
- C. The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith—3:22; Gal. 2:16.
- D. Faith is to believe that God is; to believe that God is, is to believe that He is everything to us and that we are nothing—Heb. 11:6; John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2.
- E. Our spirit of faith is the organ we must exercise to substantiate everything of the unseen God, transferring all that He is objectively into us to become our subjective experience—John 4:24; Heb. 11:1, 27; 1 Pet. 1:8; 2:7; 2 Cor. 4:13.
- F. We all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us—Rom. 12:3; Acts 6:5; Col. 2:19.

V. The church is the Israel of God—Gal. 6:16:

- A. The apostle Paul considers the many individual believers in Christ collectively as the Israel of God—vv. 8, 16:
 1. The Israel of God is the real Israel including all the Gentile and Jewish believers in Christ, who are the true sons of Abraham and the household of the faith—Rom. 9:6b; 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:15-16, 10; 3:7, 29.
 2. The real Israel, the spiritual Israel, is the church—6:16; Matt. 16:18.
 3. In God's New Testament economy we have been made both the sons of God and the Israel of God; our destiny is to be sons of God expressing God and also kings reigning in the kingdom of God—Gal. 3:26; 6:16; Rev. 21:7; 22:5b; 12:5a.
 4. As the Israel of God, we represent God, exercise His authority, and carry out His administration on earth for the fulfillment of His purpose—Gen. 1:26, 28; Luke 10:19; Rev. 12:5, 7-11.
 5. God's New Testament economy is not only to make us sons of God but also to make us the Israel of God; we need to be such an Israel, a prince, to execute God's government on earth—Eph. 1:5; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 3:26; 4:6-7; 6:16; Matt. 6:9-10.
- B. The church as the Israel of God is a miniature of the coming New Jerusalem, which will be the ultimate consummation of the Israel of God—Rev. 21:2.