

DEUTERONOMY

Message Ten

**Avoiding Division,
Which Is versus the Oneness That We Keep,
and Rejecting Apostasy,
Which Is versus the Faith That We Contend For**

Scripture Reading: Deut. 12—13; Psa. 133; John 17:21-23;
Eph. 4:3-6; Jude 1-3, 19-21

I. According to Moses' word in Deuteronomy 12 and 13, we must avoid division and reject apostasy:

- A. We must keep the unique oneness of God's people and the unique faith in the person and redemptive work of Christ.
- B. Apostasy in the Old Testament denotes giving up God and turning away from God to idols; in the New Testament apostasy is heresy, denoting the denial of Christ's deity and not believing that Jesus Christ is God incarnated to be a man—John 1:1, 14; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:2-3.
- C. Apostasy, or heresy, insults and damages the person of Christ, and division destroys the Body of Christ as Christ's corporate expression; thus, apostasy and division damage the entire economy of God.
- D. Because of this, the apostle Paul charges us to turn away from the divisive ones (Rom. 16:17), and the apostle John enjoins us to reject the heretical ones (2 John 9-11).
- E. Like Moses in Deuteronomy and the apostles in the New Testament, we must be very strict concerning division and apostasy; we must keep the unique oneness of God's people and the unique faith in the person and redemptive work of Christ—Eph. 4:3, 13.

II. Division is all-inclusive; it includes all negative things, such as Satan, sin, worldliness, the flesh, the self, the old man, and evil temper—Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10:

- A. We should not think that division stands by itself and is not related to the flesh, the self, and worldliness—Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 16:23-24; 1 John 2:15-16.
- B. If we are enlightened concerning the nature of division, we will see that it is not only related to all negative things but includes all negative things.
- C. To be in division is to be in death; Christianity is filled with death and darkness because the genuine oneness in life is lacking.
- D. Divisions come out of different teachings, teachings other than God's economy—1 Tim. 1:3-4:

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1. Whatever we teach should not be measured by whether it is wrong or right; it must be measured by whether it is divisive or not; only one kind of ministry builds up and never divides—this is the unique ministry of God’s economy.
 2. It kills people to teach differently; to teach differently tears down God’s building and annuls God’s entire economy; we all must realize that even a small amount of teaching in a different way destroys the recovery.
 3. The only way that can preserve us in the recovery is the unique ministry; if we say that we are in the recovery, yet we teach something so lightly, even in a concealed way, that is different from God’s economy, we sow the seed that will grow up in division; therefore, the only way that we can be preserved in the eternal oneness is to teach the same thing in God’s economy.
 4. The different teachings of the dissenting ones are winds used by God’s enemy to distract His people and carry them away from His economy—Eph. 4:14.
 5. The dividing teachings are organized and systematized by Satan to cause serious error and thus damage the practical oneness of the Body life—v. 14.
 6. The different teachings are the major source of the church’s decline, degradation, and deterioration—1 Tim. 1:3-4, 6-7; 6:3-5, 20-21.
- E. The apostles taught the same thing to all the saints in all the places and in all the churches—1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33b-34:
1. We also must teach the same thing in all the churches in every country throughout the earth—Matt. 28:19-20.
 2. There is no thought in the New Testament that a teaching is good for one church but not for the other churches; rather, the New Testament reveals that all the churches were the same in receiving the teachings—Titus 1:9.

III. The genuine oneness 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:

- A. The Lord has given us the glory that the Father has given Him so that we may be one in the Father and in the Son; this points to a oneness in the divine nature and the Divine Being; oneness is

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actually the mingling of the processed and consummated Triune God with the believers—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3-6.

- B. 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—v. 3; 3:8:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. The genuine oneness is not a partial oneness; it is a great, complete, comprehensive oneness, a oneness in entirety.
- C. Psalm 133 is a psalm on the oneness that includes all positive attributes and virtues; if we see the vision of the oneness of entirety, all the germs of division will be killed, and we will be delivered from every kind of division.
- D. 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:
 - 1. In His wisdom God required His people to destroy all the places in which the nations served their gods; to set up a high place is to have a division; hence, the significance of high places is division—Deut. 12:1-3.
 - 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. A high place is an elevation, something lifted above the common level; in principle, every high place, every division, involves the uplifting, the exaltation, of something other than Christ—cf. Col. 1:18.
 - 4. 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:
 - a. According to this record, division is caused by lust and ambition; Solomon is an example of the former, and Jeroboam is an example of the latter.
 - b. The high places built by Solomon and Jeroboam seriously damaged the ground of oneness—1 Kings 11:7-8; 12:26-33.
 - c. 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.

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- d. The divisions in Christianity are caused by selfishness and ambition—Phil. 2:21; 3 John 9-10; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Kings 12:26-33.
- 5. 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, and religious background with its influence—everything that damages the genuine oneness—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14.
- E. In the Lord's recovery we elevate Christ and Christ alone—Col. 1:18:
 - 1. We can testify that, in contrast to today's Christianity, we have no high places.
 - 2. Having come to the church, we should have no "high places," elevations where something other than Christ is uplifted; we should have nothing other than the person of Christ and the unique way of the cross—1 Cor. 1:30; 2:4; Col. 1:20; 2:11; 3:11.
 - 3. In the church we enjoy Christ as the rich produce of the land; our enjoyment of Christ in the presence of God becomes our worship, our church life, and even our Christian living, and we grow and mature on the ground of oneness—Eph. 3:8; 4:3, 14-16.

IV. We must be fully exercised to separate ourselves from any heresy (apostasy) and heretics (apostates):

- A. Heretics do not confess that Jesus is God incarnate (not confessing that He has come in the flesh through the divine conception of the Holy Spirit); thus, they deny the deity of Christ—1 John 4:3; 2 John 7; cf. Luke 1:31-35; John 20:28-29; Rom. 9:5.
- B. The Spirit works in the believers to confess to them that Christ came in the flesh—1 John 4:1-2:
 - 1. Anyone who rejects Christ's incarnation and thereby rejects His redemption also denies Christ's resurrection.
 - 2. If anyone denies Christ's incarnation, that one denies Christ's holy birth, humanity, human living, redemption through crucifixion, and resurrection; this utterly annuls the enjoyment of the life-giving Spirit as the reality of the processed Triune God—2:23.

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- C. A heretic is one who denies the divine conception and deity of Christ, as today's modernists do; such a one we must reject, not receiving him into our house nor greeting him; thus, we will not have any contact with him or any share in his heresy, heresy that is blasphemous to God and contagious like leprosy—2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 John 10.
- D. Just as bringing to others the divine truth of the wonderful Christ is an excellent deed (Rom. 10:15), so spreading the satanic heresy, which defiles the glorious deity of Christ, is an evil work; it is a blasphemy and abomination to God; it is also a damage and curse to men.
- E. No one who is a believer in Christ and a child of God should have any share in this evil! Even to greet such an evil one is prohibited! A severe and clear separation from this evil should be maintained!—2 John 8-11.

V. Jude exhorts us to earnestly contend for the faith—Jude 1-3:

- A. "The faith" in Jude is not subjective faith as our believing but objective faith as our belief, referring to the things we believe in, the contents of the New Testament as our faith, in which we believe for our common salvation—Acts 6:7; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13.
- B. Our Christian faith is composed of our belief concerning six basic items: the Bible, God, Christ, the work of Christ, salvation, and the church—Eph. 4:13:
 - 1. The Bible, word by word, is divinely inspired by God, as the breath of God—2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16.
 - 2. God is uniquely one but triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18; 3:14-17; Rev. 1:4-5.
 - 3. Christ was the very God in eternity (John 1:1) and became a man in time (v. 14); His deity is complete, and His humanity is perfect; hence, He is both God and man (20:28; Rom. 9:5; John 19:5; 1 Tim. 2:5), possessing both divinity and humanity.
 - 4. Christ first became a man in incarnation (John 1:14) and died on the cross for our redemption (1 Pet. 2:24; Rev. 5:9); then He rose from the dead for our regeneration (1 Pet. 1:3), ascended to the heavens to be the Lord of all (Acts 2:33, 36; 10:36), and will come back as the Bridegroom to the church

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(John 3:29; Rev. 19:7) and the King of kings to all the nations (v. 16); these are the main aspects of the work of Christ.

5. A sinner must repent to God (Acts 2:38; 26:20) and believe into Christ (John 3:16; Acts 16:31) for forgiveness of sins (10:43), for redemption (Rom. 3:24), for justification (Acts 13:39), and for regeneration (John 3:6) in order that he may have eternal life (v. 36) to become a child of God (1:12) and a member of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27); this is our salvation through faith (Eph. 2:4-9).
6. The church, composed of all the genuine believers in Christ, as the Body of Christ (1:22-23; Col. 1:24), is universally one (Eph. 4:4), and a local church as the expression of the Body of Christ is locally one—one city, one church (Rev. 1:11):
 - a. This does not mean, however, that a real believer in Christ who does not agree with one city, one church is not saved; he or she is saved, but there is something lacking, not for salvation but for the proper church life.
 - b. By standing on the proper ground of the church, we are choosing to love all the brothers, not only those who are meeting with us.
- C. This faith, not any doctrine, has been delivered once for all to the saints; for this faith we should earnestly contend—1 Tim. 6:12.
- D. We build up ourselves upon the foundation of this most holy faith by enjoying the entire Blessed Trinity so that we may become the New Jerusalem as the totality of the eternal life—Jude 19-21; cf. John 4:14b.
- E. The entire Blessed Trinity is employed and enjoyed by us as we exercise our spirit by “praying in the Holy Spirit” to keep ourselves “in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”—Jude 20-21:
 1. *Unto eternal life* (v. 21), or *into eternal life* (John 4:14b), is a particular expression; *unto*, or *into*, speaks of destination and also means “to become.”
 2. By exercising our spirit to enjoy the Blessed Trinity and contend for the faith, we become the New Jerusalem as the totality of the eternal life—Rev. 22:1-2a; 21:10-11.