

Message Four

**The Teaching and the Fellowship
of the Apostles**

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:42;
1 Tim. 1:3-4; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7-8; 1 John 1:3

I. The teaching of the apostles is the unique and healthy teaching of God's eternal economy—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4:

- A. The teaching of the apostles is the entire teaching of the New Testament as God's speaking in the Son to His New Testament people—Heb. 1:1-2:
 - 1. God firstly spoke in the Son as a man in the four Gospels—John 14:10; 5:24; 16:12; 10:30.
 - 2. God secondly spoke in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles in Acts and the twenty-one Epistles (Romans through Jude)—John 16:12-15; Matt. 28:19-20; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Col. 1:25-27.
 - 3. God thirdly spoke in the Son as the seven Spirits through the apostle John in Revelation—1:1-2, 4; 2:1, 7.
- B. The teaching of the apostles is the unique, divine revelation of God's New Testament economy from the incarnation of God to the consummation of the New Jerusalem—the teaching of the full ministry of Christ in His three divine and mystical stages:
 - 1. The stage of incarnation is for Christ to bring God into man, to unite and mingle God with man, to express God in humanity, and to accomplish His judicial redemption—John 1:14, 29; 5:19; Matt. 1:18, 20.
 - 2. The stage of inclusion is for Christ to be begotten as God's firstborn Son, to become the life-giving Spirit, and to regenerate the believers for His Body—Acts 13:33; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 Pet. 1:3.
 - 3. The stage of intensification is for Christ to intensify His organic salvation, to produce the overcomers, and to consummate the New Jerusalem—Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; 2:7, 17; 3:20; 21:2, 9-10.
- C. The teaching of the apostles is the holding factor of the one accord, causing us to have one heart, one way, and one goal—Acts 1:14; 2:42a, 46a; Jer. 32:39.
- D. Different teachings, other than the teaching of the apostles, are the major source of the church's decline, degradation, and deterioration—1 Tim. 1:3-7; 6:3-5, 20-21a:

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1. The striking point of the churches' degradation is different teachings; these teachings crept in because the churches turned away from Paul's teaching, the unique teaching of God's eternal economy—Rev. 2:14-15, 20; 2 Tim. 1:15.
 2. Different teachings separate us from the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as our life and our everything—2 Cor. 11:2-3.
 3. The Lord appreciated the church in Philadelphia because they kept the word, which means that they did not turn away from the healthy teaching of God's economy, the teaching of the apostles—Rev. 3:8; 1 Tim. 6:3.
- E. We must be those who are "holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles"—Titus 1:9:
1. The churches were established according to the apostles' teaching and followed their teaching, and the order of the churches was maintained by the faithful word, which was given according to the apostles' teaching.
 2. We must speak the things that are fitting to the healthy teaching of the apostles, the teaching of God's economy—2:1, 7-8; 1 Tim. 6:3.

II. The fellowship of the apostles is the unique and universal fellowship of the Body of Christ—the reality of living in the Body of Christ—Acts 2:42:

- A. Teaching creates fellowship, and fellowship comes from teaching; if we teach wrongly or differently from the apostles' teaching, our teaching will produce a sectarian, divisive fellowship—1 Cor. 4:17; 1:9; 10:16; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3.
- B. The fellowship is the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possess the divine life—1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14; cf. Rev. 22:1.
- C. The initial experience of the apostles was the vertical fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, but when the apostles reported the eternal life to others, they experienced the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship—1 John 1:2-3:
 1. Our horizontal fellowship with the saints brings us into vertical fellowship with the Lord; then our vertical fellowship with the Lord brings us into horizontal fellowship with the saints—vv. 7, 9.

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2. In this divine fellowship God is interwoven with us; this interweaving is the mingling of God and man—cf. Lev. 2:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17.
- D. The coordination of the four living creatures presents a beautiful picture of the practical fellowship of the Body of Christ; fellowship means doing everything through the cross and by the Spirit to dispense Christ into others for the sake of His Body—Ezek. 1:5a, 9, 11b-14, 19-22, 25-26; 1 Cor. 12:14-30:
 1. The eagle's wings are the means by which the four living creatures are coordinated and move as one, signifying that their coordination is in the divine power, the divine strength, and the divine supply (not in themselves)—Ezek. 1:9, 11; Exo. 19:4; Isa. 40:31; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.
 2. Each of the living creatures faces one direction; as they face these four directions, two of their wings spread out and touch the adjacent creatures' wings, forming a square.
 3. When the living creatures move, they do not need to turn; one moves straight forward while the opposite creature moves backward and the other two move sideways—Ezek. 1:9.
 4. In the church service we all need to learn not only how to walk "straight forward" but also how to walk "backward" and "sideways"; in coordination there is no freedom or convenience; coordination keeps us from making turns—cf. Eph. 3:18:
 - a. To walk backward and sideways is to say Amen to another member's particular function (or ministry) and burden—Rom. 12:4; cf. 1 Cor. 14:29-31.
 - b. If we care only for our particular service and do not have these four kinds of walk, eventually we will become a problem in the church—cf. 3 John 9.
 - c. The one who is walking straight forward has the responsibility of following the Spirit—Ezek. 1:12; cf. Acts 16:6-10.
 5. If brothers with different functions do not know how to coordinate in fellowship, they will compete and even strive against each other, which could result in division—cf. Phil. 1:17; 2:2; Gal. 5:25-26.
 6. Fellowship blends us, mingles us, adjusts us, tempers us, harmonizes us, limits us, protects us, supplies us, and

blesses us, giving us the power and the impact of the Spirit; the Body is in the fellowship—1 Cor. 12:24-25; Ezek. 1:13-14.

7. We should apply this matter of coordination not only in a particular local church but also among the churches; this means that we are followers of the churches and that the local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ—1 Thes. 2:14; 1 Cor. 10:16.