

Message Three

The God of Bethel—the God of the House of God

Scripture Reading: Gen. 35:1, 3, 7, 11; Eph. 4:4-6

I. In Genesis 35 there is a crucial and radical turn from the individual experience of God to the corporate experience of God—the experience of God as the God of Bethel—John 14:2-3, 20; Eph. 3:17-21; 4:4-6.

II. In Genesis 35:7 we have a new divine *title*—*El-bethel*, God of the house of God:

- A. Before this chapter God was the God of individuals—28:13a.
- B. Here God is no longer just the God of individuals but *El-bethel*, the God of a corporate body, the God of the house of God—Psa. 84:1-4, 10.
- C. When Jacob reached Bethel, he came to know God as the God of His house.
- D. Our God is the God of Bethel, the God of the church—1 Tim. 3:15.

III. Bethel signifies the corporate life, which is the Body of Christ; thus, in calling God the God of Bethel, Jacob advanced from the individual experience to the corporate experience—1 Cor. 12:12:

- A. The altar Jacob built at Shechem was called *El-Elohe-Israel*, the name of God as related to an individual—Gen. 33:17-20.
- B. The altar Jacob built at Bethel was called *El-bethel*, the name of God as related to a corporate body—35:6-7.
- C. The altar at Shechem was an individual altar, but the altar at Bethel was a corporate altar—the altar for the house of God.

IV. The All-sufficient God is revealed for the building of Bethel; only at Bethel is it possible for us to realize the all-sufficiency of our God—v. 11a:

- A. The purpose of God's revealing Himself as the All-sufficient One is for His building; the All-sufficient God is for God's building.
- B. We cannot experience the All-sufficient God in an individualistic way; in order to experience the All-sufficient God, we must be in Bethel, in the church life.
- C. God's all-sufficiency requires the Body; we need the house, the building, in order to experience this aspect of Him—Phil. 1:19.

V. The Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the church are four-in-one—Eph. 4:4-6:

- A. Ultimately, the church is a group of people who are in union with the Triune God and mingled with the Triune God—3:16-21:
 - 1. The Father is embodied in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and They are all in us; God and man are united, mingled, and incorporated—John 14:9-11, 16-20.
 - 2. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one and abide in us; therefore, we are four-in-one, a divine and human constitution—vv. 2-3, 20.
- B. Because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one with the Body of Christ, we may say that the Triune God is now the "four-in-one God"; these four are the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body—Eph. 4:4-6.