

HWMR: CRYSTALLIZATION –STUDY OF 1 AND 2 KINGS, (Week 11)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 12:25-33; 13:33-34; Deut. 12:2-18

**APOSTASY, THE HIGH PLACES,
AND THE RECOVERY OF THE GENUINE GROUND OF ONENESS**

1 Kings 12:25	Then Jeroboam built up Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and he dwelt in it; and he went forth from there and built up Penuel.
1 Kings 12:26	And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.
1 Kings 12:27	If this people go up to make sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will return to their lord, to Rehoboam the king of Judah; and they will slay me and return to Rehoboam the king of Judah.
1 Kings 12:28	And the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!
1 Kings 12:29	And he set one in Bethel, and he put the other one in Dan.
1 Kings 12:30	And this thing became a sin; and the people went to worship the one as far as Dan.
1 Kings 12:31	And he made a house of high places and appointed priests from among the people who were not from the sons of Levi.
1 Kings 12:32	And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; he did likewise at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.
1 Kings 12:33	And he went up to the altar that he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day, in the eighth month, that is, the month he had devised in his own heart; and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.
1 Kings 13:33	After this matter Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but he again made priests for the high places from among the people; whoever desired it, he consecrated to be priests of the high places.
1 Kings 12:34	And this matter became a sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as even to cut it off and destroy it from the face of the earth.
Deuteronomy 12:2	You shall completely destroy all the places where the nations whom you will dispossess have served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every flourishing tree.
Deuteronomy 12:3	And you shall tear down their altars and crush their pillars; and their Asherahs you shall burn with fire, and the idols of their gods you shall cut down; and you shall destroy their name from that place.
Deuteronomy 12:4	You shall not do so to Jehovah your God.
Deuteronomy 12:5	But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.
Deuteronomy 12:6	And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and your vows and your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock;
Deuteronomy 12:7	And there you shall eat before Jehovah your God, and you and your households shall rejoice in all your undertakings, in which Jehovah your God has blessed you.
Deuteronomy 12:8	You shall not do according to all that we do here today, each man doing all that is right in his own eyes;
Deuteronomy 12:9	For until now you have not come to the rest and to the inheritance that Jehovah your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 12:10	But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies surrounding you so that you dwell securely;
Deuteronomy 12:11	Then to the place where Jehovah your God will choose to cause His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I am commanding you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and all your choice vows which you vow to Jehovah.
Deuteronomy 12:12	And you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons and daughters, and your male servants and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no portion nor inheritance with you.
Deuteronomy 12:13	Be careful that you do not offer up your burnt offerings in every place that you see;
Deuteronomy 12:14	But in the place which Jehovah will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer up your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.
Deuteronomy 12:15	Yet you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, in all that your soul desires, according to the blessing of Jehovah your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat it as the gazelle and the deer are eaten.
Deuteronomy 12:16	However, you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water.
Deuteronomy 12:17	You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or of your new wine or of your fresh oil, nor the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vows which you vow or of your freewill offerings or of the heave offering of your hand;
Deuteronomy 12:18	But you shall eat them before Jehovah your God in the place which Jehovah your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male servant and female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God in all your undertakings.

Day 1

Deuteronomy 12:5-7 - But to the **place** which **Jehovah your God** will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go. And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and your vows and your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock; And there you shall eat before Jehovah your God, and you and your households shall rejoice in all your undertakings, in which Jehovah your God has blessed you.

I. The **apostasy** of Jeroboam can be considered a type of today's Christianity—1 Kings 12:25-33; 13:33-34:

- A. Apostasy means to leave the way of God and to take another way to follow things other than God, and it is to **do things for the self** under the name of Jesus Christ and under the cloak of worshipping God—Acts 9:2; 18:26; 2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21; Jude 11; Judg. 18:30-31.
- B. Jeroboam's **apostasy** consisted of five things:
 - 1. Jeroboam made **two calves of gold** (idols), putting one in Bethel and the other in Dan, in order to distract the people from worshipping in Jerusalem, thus breaking God's ordination of having one unique worship center in the Holy Land for keeping the oneness of the children of Israel—1 Kings 12:26-30; Deut. 12:2-18.
 - 2. Jeroboam **built a temple at the high places** and appointed priests from among the common people who were not of the tribe of Levi—1 Kings 12:31; 13:33b; 2 Chron. 13:9.
 - 3. Jeroboam **ordained a feast** on the fifteenth day of the eighth month (the month he had devised in his own heart) like the feast that was in Judah—1 Kings 12:32a, 33b.
 - 4. Jeroboam **offered sacrifices** on the altar at Bethel to the calves that he had made, and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places—vv. 32b-33a.
 - 5. Jeroboam **went up to the altar** although he was not a priest—v. 33b.
- C. Jeroboam's apostasy became a serious sin that caused his entire family to be destroyed under God's judgment and eventually led to Israel's being carried away into captivity—13:34; 14:7-11, 15-16; 15:29-30; 2 Kings 17:20-23.

Day 2

Revelation 1:6 - And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 2:6 - But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

- D. The centers of worship set up by present-day "Jeroboams" are actually centers of **ambition**:
 - 1. The divisions in Christianity are caused by **selfishness** and **ambition**.
 - 2. Because certain ones are ambitious to have an empire to satisfy their selfish desire, they neglect God's choice.

- E. In God's New Testament economy, all true believers in Christ are made priests to God, but degraded Christianity has built up a system to ordain some believers to do the service of God, making them a clerical hierarchy and leaving the rest of the believers as laymen; this is an apostate practice, which **we must abhor and abandon**—1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 2:6, 15.
- F. Because today's Christianity is filled with apostasy, the Lord needs a **recovery**—the recovery of life and truth—Jer. 2:11, 13, 19; Rev. 2:6, 15; 1 John 1:1-2, 5-6; John 18:37b; 10:10b.
- G. The provision of life and the revelation of truth are the antidotes the apostles used in dealing with apostasy and the decline of the church—1 John 1:1-2, 5-6; John 18:37b; 10:10b; 2 Pet. 1:3-21; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10; 2:15, 25.

The **high places** were the source of all manner of evil. Since the high places **signify** division, this indicates that division is a source of evil. The high places came in through man's flesh and ambition. Solomon set up high places because of lust, whereas Jeroboam did so because of **ambition**. Hence, lust and ambition were the main factors of the building of the high places. In today's terms, division is the result of the flesh and of ambition. In Christianity today there are high places everywhere, for Christianity is filled with divisions. **All these high places are elevations where something other than Christ is exalted.** By this we see that the situation of today's Christianity is a definite fulfillment of the type in the Old Testament.

First, the oneness of God's people was damaged by the high places. This damage provoked God to wrath. Unable to tolerate the situation, He sent the Assyrian army to invade the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel's experience should have been a warning to Judah, the southern kingdom. Nevertheless, those in Judah went on worshipping at the high places. Although some were carried away to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco, the people refused to heed even this warning. Eventually, the Babylonian army not only conquered the land of Judah but also destroyed the temple and carried away a large number of people to captivity in Babylon. Furthermore, the vessels of the temple were taken to Babylon and put in the house of idols. Thus, the ground of oneness was **not only** damaged **but** fully lost.

This is a picture of the situation among today's Christians. The denominations and independent groups are **high places, divisions**. In each of these high places something other than Christ is exalted. Even very good and spiritual things are elevated and used to cause division. (*The Genuine Ground of Oneness, chapter 9*)

Day 3

Deuteronomy 12:2 - You shall **completely destroy** all the places where the nations whom you will dispossess have served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every flourishing tree.

Colossians 1:18 - And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

II. 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:

- A. **High places** were the places where the Gentile people worshipped their idols.
- B. When the children of Israel entered into the land of Canaan to possess it, **God** commanded them to destroy all the high places of the nations—Deut. 12:1-3:

1. To set up a high place is to have a **division**; hence, the **significance** of high places is division.
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. In 1 Kings, two kings—**Solomon** and **Jeroboam**—took the lead to set up the high places, the former because of the **indulgence of lust** and the latter because of **ambition**—11:7-8; 12:27.

C. A **high place** is an elevation, something lifted above the common level:

1. This indicates that a high place involves the **exaltation** of something.
2. In principle, every high place, every division, in Christianity involves the **uplifting, the exaltation, of something other than Christ**—cf. Col. 1:18.

When we turned to the way of the Lord's recovery and came into the church life, the negative things associated with division were spontaneously set aside. However, as we have pointed out, those who **forsake** the proper oneness **automatically** become subject to the very evil things that once were put away from them. This should cause us to see that division is an extremely serious matter. Nothing is more dreadful than **division**. Satan knows that even the thought of division is sufficient to undermine our Christian life. It is like a termite that eats away at the very structure of a house. Therefore, even the thought of division must be repudiated.

When we are in the oneness, we are in life, and we enjoy every positive virtue and attribute. Furthermore, our spiritual condition **gradually** improves. However, simply by accepting a divisive thought, the way is opened for evil to enter in once again.

We should never think that the church ground is not a matter of life. The ground of the church is the very base of our experience of life. To **remain in oneness** is to remain in life. Apart from the ground of the church, it is vain to talk about holiness or spirituality. Such things are directly related to oneness. It is marvelous to stay in the oneness, but it is terrible to be involved in division. Many of today's Christians have lost the Lord's blessing and grace simply because of division. **This must be a warning to us in the Lord's recovery.** Let us not repeat the history of the divisiveness of Christianity. May we all look to the Lord that He may preserve us in His oneness. We need to loathe even the thought of divisiveness. Praise the Lord for the oneness! May the Lord keep us in His presence by keeping us in this oneness. (*The Genuine Ground of Oneness, chapter 3*)

Day 4

Romans 15:4

- For the things that were written previously were written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Colossians 3:11

- Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but **Christ is all and in all**.

D. 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:

1. The high places built by Solomon and Jeroboam **seriously damaged** the ground of oneness—1 Kings 11:7-8; 12:26-33.
2. 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.
3. **Any** high place, even those at which genuine sacrifices are offered, causes damage to the ground of oneness.

- E. The destruction of the high places involved three main things: the **places**, the **images**, and the **names**—Deut. 12:2-3:
1. 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, religious background with its influence—**everything that damages the genuine oneness**—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14.
 2. In order to fulfill the word in Colossians 3:11, every other place must be utterly destroyed:
 - a. **We must destroy everything that is not the church with Christ.**
 - b. **We should simply be in the church life** enjoying Christ as the riches of the good land—Deut. 8:7-9; Eph. 3:8.
 3. The church life has been weakened because of the **lack of willingness** to destroy the high places—1 Kings 15:14; 22:43:
 - a. In our human life and culture there are many places that remain, which need to be destroyed; we must destroy them all and then go to the unique place of God's choice, the church—Gal. 5:24; Matt. 16:18.
 - b. In every place that is to be destroyed, there is a dedicated pillar, a symbol, or an image; in our character or disposition there may be such pillars, symbols, or images that must be destroyed.
 - c. In the church there cannot be anything other than Christ; **Christ** must be all and in all—Col. 1:18, 27; 2:2; 3:11.

First, both in this chapter [Deuteronomy 12] and in the New Testament we see that the people of God **should always be one**. In order to preserve the oneness of the children of Israel, God did not allow each of the twelve tribes to have its own worship center. If each tribe had had its own center for the worship of God, there would have been twelve divisions among God's people, for each center would have been the ground and the base of a division. In His wisdom, God did not allow His people to have their own choice or preference but **required them to take His choice and to come three times a year to the unique worship center**, even though travel to that place was inconvenient for many of them.

The principle is the same in the New Testament. Regardless of their number, God's children, the believers in Christ, **must be one and have the same center for the worship of God**. However, the actual situation among Christians today is division. There are many worship centers, and this has led to divisions.

The divisions among God's people are the result of having **different preferences**. Many prefer to have their own way instead of God's way. Whenever the believers have their own way and their own preference, there will be division. All denominations are according to man's preferences. The situation in the Lord's recovery is altogether different. The Lord's recovery is a matter of coming back to God's way according to God's preference. (*Life-Study of Deuteronomy, chapter 10*)

Day 5

- Ephesians 4:3-4* - *Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace: One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*
- 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.*

III. Because of the apostasy, the high places, and the divisions throughout Christendom, there is the need for the **recovery of the genuine ground of oneness—Eph. 4:2-6, 13; John 17:11, 14-23; 1 Cor. 10:16-17:**

- A. According to the divine revelation in the New Testament, the church ground—the genuine ground of oneness—is constituted of three crucial elements:
1. The first element of the constitution of the church ground is the **unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ**—Eph. 4:4:
 - a. This oneness is called “the oneness of the Spirit”—v. 3.
 - b. This oneness is the oneness that the Lord prayed for in John 17—a oneness in the **mingling** of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ—vv. 6, 11, 14-24.
 - c. This 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.
 2. The second element of the church ground is the **unique ground of the locality** in which a local church is established and exists—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11.
 3. 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 John 5:6; John 16:13:
 - a. By the Spirit of reality, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity, the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living.
 - b. **Through** this Spirit the ground of the church is applied in life and not in legality.
 - c. By this Spirit the genuine ground of the church is **linked** with the Triune God—Eph. 4:3-6.
- B. The church, the organic Body of Christ, is **undivided** and **indivisible**; this unique Body is expressed in many local churches in the divine oneness as it is with the Triune God and in the divine nature, element, essence, expression, function, and testimony—Rev. 1:11; John 17:11, 21, 23.

Day 6

<i>Psalms 133:1</i>	- Behold, how good and how pleasant it is / For brothers to dwell in unity !
<i>Psalms 133:3</i>	- Like the dew of Hermon / That came down upon the mountains of Zion. / For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: / Life forever.
<i>Psalms 23:6</i>	- Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me / All the days of my life, / And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah / For the length of my days.

- C. The **genuine oneness**—the oneness according to the nature of God—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:
1. 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—Eph. 4:3; 3:8.
 2. 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.
 3. The genuine oneness is not a partial oneness; it is a **great, complete, comprehensive oneness, a oneness in entirety**—Psa. 133:1:

- a. This oneness, as revealed in Ephesians 4:3-6, includes God the Father, Christ the Lord, and the Spirit as the Giver of life.
- b. The all-inclusive oneness gives us access to all positive virtues and attributes—vv. 1-2.

D. We thank and praise the Lord for the vision concerning the destruction of the high places and concerning the recovery and preservation of the genuine, all-inclusive oneness; **it is our privilege to know, experience, and enjoy this oneness in the Lord's recovery today**—Psa. 133:1, 3b; John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3-6.

We have pointed out that when God's people in the Old Testament lost the ground of oneness, they spontaneously lost so many spiritual and holy things. However, when they returned to Jerusalem, to the ground of oneness, all these holy and spiritual things spontaneously returned. The principle is the same in the Lord's recovery today. Today our God, the Triune God, is the Father embodied in the Son and the Son realized as the all-inclusive Spirit. **Today this Spirit is speaking to the churches.** Hence, in order to hear the Spirit's speaking, **we must be in one of the churches.** Eventually, the Spirit and the bride, constituted of all the churches with all the saints, will be one and will speak with one voice. Today we are listening to the speaking of the Spirit. But the day is coming when together the Spirit and the bride will say, "Come!" Praise the Lord for this vision! With such a clear vision in front of us, we know where we must be today—in the local oneness, that is, in the local church on the ground of oneness.

If we are not in the **local oneness**, we are not in the church in a genuine and practical way. Furthermore, we cannot have the full experience of the processed, all-inclusive Triune God. The reason many Christians today are in spiritual poverty is that they have **neither** the genuine oneness nor the full experience of the all-inclusive Spirit. They have the Bible, but they do not have much experience of Christ as life. They have the name of Christ, but they have very little reality of His person. So many spiritual things are lacking because the ground of oneness has been damaged and even lost. Only on this ground can we have the full experience of the processed Triune God. Remember, the dispensation of the Triune God, according to Revelation 1:4 and 5, is to **local churches**.

How pitiful is the situation of most Christians today! Because they are not in the church life, they are orphans without a home. This was our condition before we came into the church life in the Lord's recovery. Not only were we orphans—we were wanderers. Before we came into the local churches, we never had the sense that we had come home or that we had reached our destination. But the day we came into the church life, we knew that we had come home. After wandering for years, we had finally reached our destination. Something deep within said, "This is the place." Many seeking Christians today, on the contrary, are still travelers; they are traveling from one denomination or group to another. But the day we came into the church life, our wandering ceased. **The local churches are what God desires today.** This is the last station of His revelation. (*The Genuine Ground of Oneness, chapter 10*)