

# LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH

(Saturday—Afternoon Session)

Message Nine

## The Function of the Church

(2)

### The Corporate Manifestation of God in the Flesh

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 6:17; 7:25, 40

#### I. God's manifestation was first in Christ as an individual expression in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 2:9; John 1:1, 14:

- A. The New Testament does not say that the Son of God was incarnated; it reveals that God was manifested in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:15-16:
  - 1. God was manifested in the flesh not only as the Son but as the entire God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.
  - 2. The entire God and not only God the Son was incarnated; hence, Christ in His incarnation was the entire God manifested in the flesh:
    - a. In His ministry in the stage of incarnation, Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man; in Christ, the infinite God and the finite man became one—John 8:58; 7:6; 12:24.
    - b. Through incarnation the divine incorporation—God in His Divine Trinity coinhering mutually and working together as one—was brought into humanity; Christ is therefore the incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man—14:10-11.
- B. The Word, who is God, became flesh—1:1, 14:
  - 1. *Became flesh* (v. 14) means in the likeness, in the fashion, of man—Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7-8.
  - 2. In the form of a man Christ appeared to people, yet He was God manifested in a man—2 Cor. 5:16.
  - 3. The God who the Word is, is not a partial God but the entire God—God the Son, God the Father, and God the Spirit.
  - 4. The Word is God's definition, explanation, and expression; hence, the Word who became flesh—God manifested in the flesh—is God's definition, explanation, and expression in the flesh—John 1:18.
- C. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily—Col. 2:9:
  - 1. *All the fullness of the Godhead* refers to the entire Godhead, to the complete God.
  - 2. Since the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.
  - 3. That all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the Triune God is embodied in Him—John 14:10.
  - 4. As the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, Christ is not only the Son of God but also the entire God.

**II. First Timothy 3:15-16 indicates that not only Christ Himself as the Head is the manifestation of God in the flesh but also that the church as the Body of Christ and the house of God is the manifestation of God in the flesh—the mystery of godliness:**

- A. *Godliness* in verse 16 refers not only to piety but also to the living of God in the church, that is, God as life lived out in the church to be expressed:
  - 1. Both Christ and the church are the mystery of godliness, expressing God in the flesh.
  - 2. The church life is the expression of God; therefore, the mystery of godliness is the living of a proper church—1 Cor. 16; 14:24-25.
- 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 began with Christ when He was on earth—John 14:9.
  - 2. The manifestation of God in the flesh continues with the church, which is the increase, enlargement, and multiplication of the manifestation of God in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- C. When a church is taken care of according to what is written in 1 Timothy 1—3, the church will function as the house of the living God for His move on earth and as the pillar and base of the truth, bearing the reality of Christ and His Body—3:15.
- D. Such a church becomes the continuation of Christ’s manifestation of God in the flesh—Christ lived out of the church as the manifestation of God—Eph. 5:32.
- E. This is God manifested in the flesh in a wider way according to the New Testament principle of incarnation—1 Cor. 7:40; Gal. 2:20:
  - 1. The principle of incarnation is that God enters into man and mingles Himself with man to make man one with Himself; thus, God is in man, and man is in God—John 15:4-5.
  - 2. The principle of incarnation means that divinity is brought into humanity and works with humanity—1 Cor. 6:17; 7:40; 1 Tim. 4:1.
  - 3. The New Testament principle of incarnation is that, in Christ and through Christ, the divine life and nature are mingled with the human life and nature so that we and God may have one life and one living—1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 2:20.
  - 4. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 7 in the principle of incarnation:
    - a. The principle in verse 10 is the same as that in Galatians 2:20: the principle of incarnation—two persons living as one person.
    - b. In verses 25 and 40 of 1 Corinthians 7 we see the spirituality of a person who is so one with the Lord and permeated with Him that even his opinion expresses the Lord’s mind.
    - c. If we are saturated with the Spirit, what we express will be our thought, but it will also be something of the Lord because we are one with Him—6:17.
- F. 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.

- G. Ultimately, God will be manifested in the New Jerusalem as the consummated corporate expression of the processed and consummated Triune God in the new heaven and new earth—Rev. 21:1-2, 10-11.