

Message Eight

The New Jerusalem—the Consummation of the Organic Building Up of the Body of Christ in the Local Churches

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; 4:11-12, 15-16; Col. 2:19; Rev. 1:11; 21:2-3

I. The local churches are the procedure for God to accomplish the building up of the Body of Christ for the building of the New Jerusalem:

- A. According to the major visions in the book of Revelation, we can be in only one of three places in this age—the local churches (chs. 1–3), the world (chs. 4–16), or Babylon the Great (chs. 17–20); the local churches are the stepping stones to the New Jerusalem (chs. 21–22):
 1. The Body of Christ needs the local churches for its existence and function—Acts 8:1; 13:1.
 2. The local churches are the many expressions in many localities of the one Body of Christ—Rev. 1:4, 11.
 3. According to the divine revelation of the New Testament the ground of the church, which keeps the genuine oneness of the church in practicality, is constituted of three crucial elements:
 - a. The first element is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, which is called “the oneness of the Spirit”—Eph. 4:3; cf. John 17:6, 11, 14-21, 22-24.
 - b. The second element is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2.
 - c. The third element is the reality of the Spirit of oneness, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity—1 John 5:6; John 16:13; Eph. 4:4-6.
- B. Ephesians 1:22b-23a says, “the church, which is His Body”—this indicates that the Body is the intrinsic significance of the church:
 1. The church of God is the frame and the Body of Christ is the organism—Eph. 4:4-6.
 - a. If there were no Body, the church would have no meaning.
 - b. We need to be in the local churches so that we can be brought into the reality of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:1-5.
 - c. The local churches are nearly ninety percent physical, but they should be for something spiritual—the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:12-13.
 2. In the first chapter of Revelation, we see the local churches, but in the last two chapters, we see only one city—Rev. 1:11; 21:2:
 - a. Eventually, the local churches will be over; only the Body will remain forever.
 - b. The Body of Christ in its ultimate consummation is the unique tabernacle of God, as God’s dwelling place on this earth, the unique bride of the Lamb—Rev. 21:2-3.
- C. The Lord’s desire is to gain the New Jerusalem through the precursor of the organic Body of Christ produced in the local churches:

1. The overcoming God-men build up the Body of Christ for the building and consummating of the New Jerusalem—cf. Gen.2:22; Matt. 16:18; Rev. 19:7; 21:2.
2. Even today the New Jerusalem is still under construction; the organic building up of the Body of Christ consummates the New Jerusalem—1 Cor. 3:9, 12.

II. As we grow in the divine life and minister the Triune God to others for their growth in the divine life, we are building up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem:

- A. The organic building up of the Body of Christ is the increase of the Triune God in the believers for their growth in Christ as life for them to become the New Jerusalem—Col. 2:19; Eph. 2:21-22:
 1. The organic building up of the Body is the growth of the Body through the members of the Body growing into Christ, the Head, in all things—Eph. 4:15-16.
 2. The organic building up of the Body of Christ is through the members of the Body feeding on the milk and food of the holy Word, the embodiment of Christ as the living Word of God—1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13-14.
- B. The organic building up of the Body of Christ is also through the saints being perfected to do the work of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers for them to build the New Jerusalem—Eph. 4:8, 11-12, 16; 2 Tim. 2:1-2:
 1. The saints are perfected by the perfecting gifts with the life supply as the nourishment for the growth in life—1 Cor. 3:2, 6.
 2. The Body is built directly by all the members of Christ functioning, each in his own measure, mainly in prophesying, speaking for the Lord—Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 14:4b, 31.
 3. According to the type of the priesthood in the Old Testament, we need to be perfected in the New Testament priesthood of the gospel (Rom. 15:16) to do four main items:
 - a. Just as the priests were perfected to offer the sacrifices at the altar (Lev. 6:8—7:38), we need to be perfected to enjoy Christ as the reality of all the offerings and to offer the saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices through the preaching of the gospel—Rom. 15:16.
 - b. Just as the priests were perfected to display the bread of the Presence (Lev. 24:5-8; Exo. 25:30), we need to be perfected to dispense Christ into people as the life supply—Acts 5:20; 6:4.
 - c. Just as the priests were perfected to trim the wicks and fill the lamps with oil to make the lampstand shine brightly (Lev. 24:1-4), we need to be perfected to be filled with the Spirit as the oil and to minister Christ as the divine light with and in the Spirit to the saints—Acts 26:18.
 - d. Just as the priests were perfected to burn the incense (Exo. 30:6-8), we need to be perfected to fellowship with God in prayer, talking to Him in a conversational way to enjoy His presence for the carrying out of His interests—Eph. 6:17-18; Dan. 6:10.

4. We are being perfected to do the work of the New Testament ministry, that is, to build up the Body of Christ for the building of the New Jerusalem—Eph. 4:11-12.