

## KNOWING THE BODY—THE PRINCIPLES OF THE BODY

Morning Session—Message One

### The Vision of the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:3-4; Acts 9:1-19; 26:16-19; 1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 3:10-11

**I. “By revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, by which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ”—Eph. 3:3-4:**

- A. Only those who have received revelation from God will see the Body of Christ, and only they will enter into the reality of the Body—Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13.
- B. We need revelation to know the reality of the Body of Christ and to usher us into the realm of the Body, and only then will the Body of Christ become our experience—Eph. 1:17; 3:5; Matt. 11:25; Prov. 29:18a.
- C. The vision of the Body will break us; we need to be broken under the vision of the Body so that we may live a life according to God’s heart and will—Eph. 1:9-11; 3:9-11.

**II. “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision”—Acts 26:19; 9:1-19; 22:6-16:**

- A. While Saul of Tarsus was on the way to Damascus, a heavenly vision came to him, and this vision revolutionized him—9:1-5:
  - 1. After he saw the vision, he became blind, unable to see anything, and impotent, unable to do anything—vv. 5, 8; 22:10-11.
  - 2. A blessed blindness comes upon those who are met by the heavenly vision:
    - a. After this blindness comes upon us, there will be the inner anointing and the inner shining, the inner enlightening.
    - b. The inner vision will increase more and more and will revolutionize the way we serve the Lord.
  - 3. For three days Saul did not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything; all he could do was pray—9:9, 11:
    - a. Under the inspiration of the essential Spirit, his only interest was to pray in order to know the significance of what he had seen and heard—22:14-15.
    - b. It is likely that as Saul was praying, vision after vision and revelation after revelation came to him concerning Christ as the embodiment of God, the mystery of God, and the church as the Body of Christ, the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 5:32.
    - c. Each crucial point of Paul’s vision recorded in Acts 9 should not merely be a teaching to us; rather, every point should be a vision that we see on the heavenly television.
- B. In our reading of Acts 9 we need to see the heavenly vision concerning three items—“Me” (v. 4), “Jesus” (v. 5), and the “chosen vessel” (v. 15):
  - 1. “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”—v. 4:
    - a. This is a corporate “Me” comprising Jesus the Lord and all His believers.
    - b. Saul began to see that the Lord Jesus and His believers are one great person—the wonderful “Me”—1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 3:10-11.

- c. This must have impressed and affected him for his future ministry concerning Christ and the church as the great mystery of God (Eph. 5:32) and laid a solid foundation for his unique ministry.
  - d. Paul is the only writer of the New Testament to use the term *the Body of Christ*—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4, 16; Col. 1:18a.
  - e. He placed great emphasis on the Body because at the time of his conversion he heard a message concerning the corporate Me, a message concerning the Body of Christ.
  - f. Immediately after Saul was saved, the Lord began to educate him concerning the Body of Christ—Acts 9:6, 17-18, 24-25; 22:14-16; 2 Cor. 11:32-33.
2. “And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute”—Acts 9:5:
- a. The name *Jesus* embodies the full message of the gospel.
  - b. Saul saw that Jesus is Jehovah the Savior and that as the One who is now in the heavens, He has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ.
  - c. Paul saw that Jesus is the very God who has been processed and consummated to be the ascended Lord, the Head of the Body, and the life-giving Spirit to be dispensed into all His members—Rom. 10:12-13; Col. 1:18a; 1 Cor. 15:45b.
3. “This man is a chosen vessel to Me”—Acts 9:15:
- a. God’s intention in saving Saul of Tarsus was to fill him with Himself and thereby make him an outstanding vessel—Col. 1:25; Eph. 3:8-9.
  - b. In Paul’s writings we see the development of the spiritual significance of the word *vessel*:
    - (1) Paul saw that man is a vessel to contain and be filled with Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21.
    - (2) The Body of Christ is God’s great corporate vessel to contain Him and be filled with Him for His expression—Eph. 3:16-19.