

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE LOCAL CHURCHES

Evening Session—Message One

The Church of God—the Church in the Triune God

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1

I. The church is the church of God—“the church of God which is in Corinth”—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16:

- A. The expression *the church of God* indicates not only that the church is possessed by God but also that the church has the nature of God, that it is constituted with the element of God:
 - 1. The church is *of* God because it is produced of God as the source and has God as its nature and essence, which are divine, universal, and eternal.
 - 2. God is the nature and essence of the church; therefore, the church is divine.
 - 3. The content of the church essentially is God Himself.
- B. First Corinthians 1:2a speaks of “the church of God which is in Corinth”:
 - 1. The church in Corinth could be called the church of God because the divine essence which makes the assembled believers the church of God was actually there.
 - 2. The locality of Corinth was for the existence, expression, and practice of the church; such a locality becomes the local ground of the local churches on which they are built respectively—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:11.
 - 3. The church is constituted of the universal God, but it exists on earth in many localities:
 - a. In nature the church is universal in God, but in practice the church is local in a definite place.
 - b. The church has two aspects—the universal and the local—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22:
 - (1) Without the universal aspect, the church is void of content.
 - (2) Without the local aspect, it is impossible for the church to have any expression and practice.
- C. A genuine church is of God, on its local ground, and with the saints as the constituents—1 Cor. 1:2:
 - 1. Those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, are the constituents of the framework of the church.
 - 2. *To the church of God* equals *to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus*; this indicates that the church is a composition of the saints and that the saints are the constituents of the church.
- D. A genuine church is related with all the saints who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in every place around the globe—v. 2:
 - 1. We are related by God to every kind of Christian, and no matter where we are, we cannot be isolated from them.
 - 2. Being related with all the saints keeps us from being sectarian, isolated, or divided.