

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE LOCAL CHURCHES

Evening Session—Message Two

The Unique Body of Christ Expressed as the Local Churches

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; 2:22; Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4, 16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:16; 12:13, 27

I. God's economy as God's plan, His administration, is to produce a Body for His Son—Eph. 3:9; 1:22-23:

- A. The Body of Christ fulfills God's desire for His expression and for the destruction of Satan—Gen. 1:26.
- B. The Lord has an urgent need on earth: He needs the reality of the Body to be expressed in the local churches—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27:
 1. What the Lord wants today is not only the churches on the ground of locality—one locality, one church—but also the Body as His fullness.
 2. Unless there is a substantial expression of the Body, the Lord Jesus will not return—Eph. 1:23; 4:16; 5:27, 30; Rev. 19:7.

II. The Lord's recovery is based upon the truth that Christ has only one Body—Eph. 1:23; 4:4:

- A. The one Body is the one church of God manifested in many localities as many local churches—1 Cor. 10:32b; Rev. 1:11, 4.
- B. The recovery is for the Body, not for any individual or merely for any individual local church—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19.
- C. To know the Body is the proper recovery of the Lord; the Lord desires to recover the Body of Christ and the oneness of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:4.
- D. All the problems of the church today are due to ignorance concerning the Body; the biggest problem is not knowing the Body and not caring for the Body.

III. The Body is the intrinsic significance of the church—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1:

- A. Without the Body, the church makes no sense and has no meaning.
- B. We need to have a trance and be transferred into another sphere to see what the Body of Christ is intrinsically—Acts 10:9-10; 22:17; Eph. 1:17-18, 22-23.

IV. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32b, 17; 12:12-13, 20, 27:

- A. The church revealed in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the unique Body of Christ, whereas the church revealed in 18:17 is the local church, the expression of the unique Body of Christ in a certain locality.
- B. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many local churches—local expressions of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16.
- C. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many localities as the local churches—Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11:
 1. The Body is the source of the local churches—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22.
 2. The universal Body is like the father to all the churches, and all the churches are like the children to the father—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:4.

- V. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many local churches (Rev. 1:11) in the divine oneness as it is with the Triune God (John 17:11, 21, 23) and in the divine nature, element, essence, expression, function, and testimony; there are many churches, yet they have one divine nature, one divine element, one divine essence, one divine expression, one divine function, and one divine testimony because they are one Body.**
- VI. All the local churches are the unique Body of Christ in the universe—Eph. 4:4:**
- A. Every local church is part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression of this Body—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.
 - B. Universally, all the local churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of the universal Body; therefore, a local church is not the Body but only a part of the Body, an expression of the Body.
 - C. The universal Christ has a part of Himself in every local church; every local church is a part of Christ, and all these parts constitute the Body—Eph. 1:23; 2:22.
- VII. For the church to be real and practical, there is the need of the local churches—Matt. 16:18; 18:17:**
- A. Without the local churches we cannot have the universal church, for the universal church is composed of all the local churches.
 - B. We cannot live directly in the universal church; it is impossible for us to live in the universal church without living in a local church—Rev. 1:11; 2:1.
- VIII. The local ground of the church is basically the unique oneness of the Body of Christ practiced in the local churches—Eph. 4:4; 1 Thes. 1:1:**
- A. Both the universal Body of Christ and the local churches are uniquely one.
 - B. There is one unique Body in the whole universe, and there is one unique local church in each locality respectively.
 - C. This unique oneness is the basic element in the church life—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-2.
- IX. The churches in different localities are for the universal expression of Christ—Eph. 1:23; Rev. 1:4, 11; 22:16a.**
- A. The churches are local, but they do not express a “local” Christ.
 - B. A local church that makes everything local and that expresses only its locality has become a local sect, a local division.
 - C. All the basic things for the Body are not local—the Spirit, Christ, God, the Bible, the apostles’ teaching, and the apostles’ fellowship.
- X. In our consideration the Body should be first and the local churches should be second—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 4:4, 16; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1:2:**
- A. Local churches are the procedure God takes to reach the goal of His economy—the Body of Christ—Rom. 16:1, 4, 16; 12:4-5.
 - B. We must pay more attention to the Body of Christ than to the local churches.
 - C. Our thought needs to be revolutionized: We should consider our local church as a part of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:16-17; 12:12-13, 20, 27.