

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND THE WORK

Message Two

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

The Body and the Churches

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 12:27; 1:2

- I. The basic principle of the churches is the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; 1:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; Col. 3:15; 4:15-16.**
- II. The essential, crystallized significance of the Body of Christ is that the Triune God is constituted with His chosen and redeemed people to become a constituted entity; unless we see this crystallized significance of the Body of Christ, there is no way to carry out what we are trying to do in the church today—Eph. 4:4-6; 1:3-14, 22-23.**
- III. The Body of Christ is not a matter of being universal or local but of the outward framework and the inward element—4:4-6:**
 - A. The constitution of the Body of Christ has the believers, whom God has redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, and transformed, as the outward element and the processed and consummated Triune God as the inward element.
 - B. The one Body is the framework, and the inward element is the Father as the source, the Son as the element from the Father, and the Spirit as the essence of the element.
 - C. The Triune God is in us, and we are in Him; this is the joining and mingling of the outward framework and the inward element so that they become one—John 14:20; 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- IV. The Body is the intrinsic significance of the church—Eph. 1:22-23:**
 - A. The church is the Body; this indicates that the Body is the church's intrinsic significance.
 - B. If there were no Body, the church would make no sense and have no meaning; the church without the Body means nothing—1 Cor. 12:12, 27; 1:2.
- V. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many localities as the local churches—Col. 4:15-16; Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11:**
 - A. The Body of Christ is the source of the local churches—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4-5.
 - B. The one Body is the one church of God, manifested in many localities as many local churches—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27:
 1. 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.
 2. The one universal church becomes the many local churches; God is expressed in Christ, Christ is expressed in the church, and the church is expressed in the local churches.

3. Every local church is a part of the unique Body, a local expression of the Body; therefore, a local church is not the Body but only a part of the Body, an expression of the unique Body—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.

VI. We stand on the ground of the church because of the Body—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11:

- A. Because there is one unique, universal Body, the expression of the Body in a locality must be uniquely one—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1:2.
- B. The local ground of the church is the unique oneness of the Body of Christ—the oneness of the Spirit—practiced in the local churches—Eph. 4:3-4:
 1. Both the universal Body of Christ and the local churches as expressions of the Body are uniquely one.
 2. There is one unique Body in the whole universe, and there is one unique local church in each locality, respectively; this unique oneness is the basic element of the church life.
- C. The ground of the church is not merely local but also universal—2:21-22:
 1. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality; universally, the ground of the church is the oneness of the unique Body of Christ—4:3-4.
 2. The church is one locally based upon its locality, the city, and it is one universally based upon the one Body of Christ; this local and universal oneness is the genuine ground of the church.
 3. The ground of locality is the outward expression of oneness; the inward reality of oneness is the Spirit—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13; Eph. 4:3-4.

VII. The Lord needs the reality of the Body to be expressed in the local churches—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 4:16; 5:27; Rev. 19:7:

- A. 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—1:11; Eph. 1:22-23.
- B. The local churches in different localities are for the universal expression of Christ—Col. 3:10-11:
 1. The universal Christ has a part of Himself in every local church—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:10; 1 Cor. 1:2, 10-13.
 2. All the churches should express the same person—the all-inclusive Christ—Col. 3:10-11.

VIII. Knowing the Body changes our church life—1 Cor. 12:12-27:

- A. If we do not know the Body, we will not be able to thoroughly know the church—Eph. 1:22-23.
- B. In the local churches, we should consider ourselves as one Body and not do anything locally without caring for the feeling of the Body universally.
- C. We should consider our local church as part of the Body of Christ, recognizing the profit of the Body to the local churches and the profit of the local churches to the Body—2:21-22.
- D. 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, 27; 1:2.

- E. We are members of the Body, and the Body is not only a local church; the Body is the Body of Christ, constituted by the Triune God with all the believers and all the local churches—12:27; 1:2; Eph. 1:22-23.