

Message 3

The Third Level—the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 3:19; 4:10, 12, 16; Col. 2:19; 3:15; Rev. 21:10

- I. **In Ephesians 4:11-12 Paul says that different gifted persons perfect the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ; this is the third level of the meaning of God's New Testament economy.¹**
- II. **The economy of God is for the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:9-11; 4:16:²**
 - A. The eternal economy of God is to produce an organic Body to be an organism to God for His increase and expression by God becoming man that man might become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 12:4-5.
 - B. We are here to carry out God's eternal economy with the purpose of gaining the Body for His Son, Christ, and this Body has to be consolidated into the local churches—Eph. 1:22-23; Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.
- III. **The Body of Christ is a divine constitution of the Triune God with the believers in Christ—Eph. 4:4-6:³**
 - A. The Father, the Son, the Spirit, and man are blended and built together to become the Body of Christ—1:23; 4:12, 16.
 - B. The building up of the Body is the constitution of the Triune God and the tripartite man in the Spirit of God and the spirit of man—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:16:
 1. This constitution is the union, mingling, and incorporation of God and man—John 14:20.
 2. Such a constitution is a matter of divinity constituted into humanity to be man's dwelling place and of humanity built into divinity to be God's dwelling place—Eph. 3:16-17; 2:21-22; John 14:23; Rev. 21:2-3, 22.
 - C. The Body of Christ is an organism, both divine and human, to express Christ—John 15:1; Eph. 1:23; 3:19-21.
- IV. **The Body of Christ fulfills God's desire for His expression and the destruction of Satan—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4, 16; Col. 1:18; 2:19; Gen. 1:26-28:**
 - A. The work of the Triune God in us is to produce and build up the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:16-21; Rom. 8:11; 12:4-5.
 - B. The ministry of the new covenant is for the producing of the Body of Christ; without the new covenant ministry, there is no possibility to bring forth the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:12-27; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9; 4:1; 5:18.
 - C. The Body is the intrinsic significance of the church; without the Body, the church makes no sense and has no meaning—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27.
 - D. All the problems in the church today are due to ignorance concerning the Body; the biggest problem, the unique problem, is not knowing the Body, not caring for the Body, and not honoring the Body—Eph. 1:17-23; 1 Cor. 12:24-27.
 - E. 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—Eph. 1:23; 4:4.
 - F. The Lord has an urgent need on earth; He desires that the reality of the Body of Christ will 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—Eph. 1:23; 3:19.
 2. Unless there is a substantial expression of the Body, the Lord Jesus will not return—1:23; 4:16; 5:27, 30; Rev. 19:7.

- V. 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 local churches—1 Cor. 10:32b; Rev. 1:4, 11.
 - B. The Lord's recovery is for the building up of the Body of Christ; the recovery is for the Body, not for any individual or merely for any individual local church—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19.
 - C. In our consideration the Body should be first, and the local churches should be second—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 2:21-22.
 - D. The Body of Christ is the goal of God's economy, and the local churches are the procedure God takes to reach the goal of His economy—1 Cor. 12:12-13; 1:2; Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4-5, 16b.
 - E. All the local churches are the unique Body of Christ in the universe—Eph. 4:4.
- VI. We need to be universal Christians with a universal view of the universal Body of Christ—1:17-23; 2:21-22:**
- A. The Body of Christ is the mystical Body of the universal, all-inclusive, all-extensive Christ—Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19; Col. 3:11:
 1. Christ, the Head, ascended far above all the heavens, and we are the mystical Body, the fullness, of this Christ—Eph. 1:22-23, 3:19; 4:10.
 2. The Body is the fullness, the expression of the Christ who fills all things—1:22-23; 4:10:
 - a. Christ is the Head over all things to the church, the church is the Body of this universal Christ, and the Body of this universal Christ is the fullness of the one who fills all in all—1:23.
 - b. Christ Himself is universally vast, universally extensive, and the Body is the fullness of this universally vast and extensive Christ; this means that the Body also is universal—3:18-19; 4:16.
 - B. A universal Christian is one who has the universal view presented in Ephesians 1:22-23 and 4:10:
 1. Although we may have a view of the Body, our view may be very small compared to the universal view of the Body of Christ—1:23.
 2. We need to get out of our small, narrow self and be in an ecstasy, seeing and touching the universal Body of Christ—the fullness, the expression, of the universal, unlimited Christ—3:19.
 3. We need to be overwhelmed by the vision of the immensity of the universal Body of Christ—Rev. 21:10:
 - a. Like John, who was carried away in spirit unto a high mountain to see the New Jerusalem, we need to be carried away in spirit to a “high mountain” to have a universal view of the universal Body of Christ—v. 10; Eph. 1:22-23.
 - b. In our spirit we need to have a view of the universal Body, which is infinitely greater than anything that has ever entered into our mind concerning the Body of Christ.
- VII. The goal of God's economy is to build up the universal Body of Christ, and it is such a universal Body that will consummate in the New Jerusalem—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12, 16; Rev. 21:2, 10:**
- A. The Body is the church, and the church is a miniature of the New Jerusalem.⁴
 - B. The New Jerusalem is coming, and the church, exists today as its precursor; the New Jerusalem will be the full consummation of this precursor, the Body of Christ.