

Message Three

The Vision of the Church, the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph.1:17-18, 22-23; 4:16; Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 12:12-13

I. The church is the heart's desire of God; the desire of God in this age is to have the church—Eph. 1:5, 9, 22-23:

- A. The church is the hidden mystery in God's eternal economy—vv. 11, 22-23; 3:4, 9-11; Col. 2:2.
- B. According to Ephesians 3:9, there is a relationship between creation and the church; God's intention in His creation of all things, including man, was that man would be mingled with God to produce the church—Rev. 4:11; Rom. 12:2.
- C. Concerning God's purpose for the church in the economy of God, there are three main items:
 - 1. God's purpose for the church is that the church would have the sonship and that God would be expressed through many matured sons—Eph. 1:5:
 - a. God's eternal purpose is to work Himself in Christ into us so that He may be thoroughly mingled with us and expressed through us—3:16-17, 21.
 - b. We were predestinated, marked out, by God to be sons of God before we were created; hence, as God's creatures, we need to be regenerated by Him that we may have His life to be His sons—1:5; John 3:3, 6.
 - c. Sonship implies having not only the life of a son but also the position of a son; God's marked-out ones have the life to be His sons and the position to inherit Him—Rom. 8:14-15, 17, 29; Heb. 2:10.
 - 2. God's purpose for the church is to make His wisdom known to the enemy and to deal with His enemy through the church—Eph. 3:10; Gen. 1:26:
 - a. The church is the means through which God's multifarious wisdom is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies—Eph. 3:9.
 - b. The church in the economy of God is God's greatest boast in making known His multifarious wisdom for the shame and defeat of His enemy—v. 10; Rom. 16:20.
 - c. We need a vision of how the Lord will use the church to defeat His enemy and recover the earth—Gen. 1:26-27; Rev. 11:15; 12:10.
 - 3. God's purpose for the church is to head up all things in Christ through the church—Eph. 1:10, 22:
 - a. Verse 22 reveals that this heading up is to the church so that the church may share in all that is of Christ as the Head.
 - b. The church is for the heading up of all things in Christ through the working of Himself into us as life that we may be full of light—vv. 10, 22-23.
 - c. The church is built up by this life, and we are under the control of the light of life under Christ's headship—4:15-16; John 8:12; Col. 1:13.
- D. The church is both universal and local—Matt. 16:18; 18:17.
- E. We need to be captured by the vision of the church and pay the price to be governed by this vision and live according to it—Acts 26:18a; Rom. 12:2.

II. After we have seen the vision of the church, we need to see the vision of the Body—Eph. 1:17-18, 22-23; 4:16; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13, 27:

- A. The Body of Christ is the intrinsic significance of the church—Eph. 1:22-23:
 - 1. The church of God is the frame, and the Body of Christ is the organism:
 - a. If there were no Body, the church would have no meaning.
 - b. Without the Body, the church makes no sense, but with the Body, there is the intrinsic significance of the church.
 - 2. If we consider ourselves as individual churches or as individual believers, we are through; we should consider ourselves as one Body—Rom. 12:4-5.
- B. The Body of Christ is a divine constitution of the Triune God with the believers in Christ—Eph. 4:4-6:
 - 1. The Father, the Son, the Spirit, and man are blended and built together to become the Body of Christ, a four-in-one corporate organic entity—vv. 4-6.
 - 2. The building up of the Body of Christ 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.
 - 3. The Body of Christ is an organism, both divine and human, to express Christ—Eph. 1:23.
- C. The Body of Christ is the means for God to carry out His administration—Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 25, 27:
 - 1. The Body of Christ is thoroughly and absolutely related to God's administration; apart from the Body of Christ, God has no means, no way, to carry out His administration.
 - 2. God's eternal purpose is to have a group of saved and regenerated people who have become one to be an organic Body to carry out His administration—Eph. 3:10-11; 4:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27.
 - 3. The Body of Christ, the church, is for Christ's move on earth; the Head is now operating God's administration through the Body—11:3; 12:12.
- D. The Body of Christ is the corporate Christ—vv. 12-13:
 - 1. In verse 12 *the Christ* refers not to the individual Christ but to the corporate Christ, the Body-Christ.
 - 2. The corporate Christ is composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as His members—Acts 9:4.
 - 3. All the believers in Christ are organically united with Him (Rom. 12:4-5) and constituted with His life and element (Col. 3:4, 11) and have thus become His Body, an organism to express Him; hence, Christ is not only the Head but also the Body—the corporate Christ—1 Cor. 12:12.
- E. The unique Body of Christ, the universal church, is expressed in many localities as the local churches—Col. 4:15-16; Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11:
 - 1. The one Body is the one church of God, manifested as many local churches—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 1:2.
 - 2. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality—v. 2; 10:32b, 17; 12:12-13, 20, 27.
 - 3. The local churches are many in existence but are still one Body universally in element; the local churches are and should be one Body universally, doctrinally, and practically—Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1.