

## Message Four

### **The Practice of the Church Life in the Reality of the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6, 16; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27

- 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.
- 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.
  - C. The ground of the church is not merely local but also universal—2:21-22.
- 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.

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

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.

**IX. The local church is a procedure and not the goal; the goal of a local church is the building up of the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; 18:17:**

- A. The local churches are the procedure for God to accomplish the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16.
- B. We need to be in the local churches so that we can be ushered into the reality of the Body of Christ.
- C. In the Lord's recovery we are building the local churches for the building up of the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem—v. 12.

**X. The practice of the God-ordained way in the church life delivers the believers from hierarchy, the papal system, and the clergy-laity system for the building up of the Body of Christ—Rev. 2:6, 15; Rom. 12:4-6:**

- A. The God-ordained way as revealed in the Bible is the proper practice of the church life against the papal and clergy-laity systems—Matt. 20:25-28.
- B. The begetting, nourishing, and perfecting are for God's building—16:18.

**XI. As members of the Body, we need to have the consciousness of the Body and have a feeling for the Body—1 Cor. 12:25-26; Rom. 12:15; Phil. 1:8:**

- A. Whatever we do involves the Body; thus, in all that we do, we should care for the Body, taking the Body as the rule in our mind, thoughts, words, and actions—1 Cor. 12:12-27.
- B. Whenever we are about to do something in the church life, we need to consider how the Body might feel about what we intend to do—2 Cor. 8:21.

**XII. The process of building is a matter of love—Eph. 3:17b; 4:16:**

- A. Love is God in the Son being contacted, enjoyed, experienced, and touched by us.
- B. Being rooted and grounded in love means that we are fully immersed in the divine love.
- C. The love of God is indescribable like the breadth, length, height, and depth of the universe—v. 18.
- D. It is in this love that we are joined as one and built up together—4:2-3; Col. 3:14.
- E. Genuine building is in Christ and Christ is love; the building is Christ, God, and love.

**XIII. The blending of all the local churches should be as much as practicality allows, without boundaries of states or nations—1 Cor. 12:23-27:**

- A. None of the churches of the Body of Christ can be autonomous in relation to the other churches—Col. 4:15-16; Rev. 2:1a, 7a.
- B. In the church life we should not be divided by any kind of boundary; rather, all the local churches throughout the earth should be one—John 17:11, 21-23.
- C. In the spiritual element all the churches should be blended with one another for the manifestation of the reality of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:12-13.
- D. We need to be universal Christians with a universal view for the universal Body—vv. 17-23.
- E. Whoever cannot be blended with others will eventually be disqualified by the age.

**XIV. One of the tests of a genuine local church is that it should have fellowship with all the other local churches—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3:**

- A. In a proper local church, the administration of the church is local, but the fellowship of the church is universal—2 Cor. 13:14.
- B. The fellowship among the churches is the fellowship of the Body of Christ.
- C. Every church should be open to the other churches; if a church isolates itself from the other churches, it becomes a local sect—Col. 4:15-16.
- D. The local churches should fellowship with all the local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 10:16:

**XV. As members of the Body, we must allow ourselves to be limited by the other members and not go beyond our measure—2 Cor. 10:13:**

- A. A basic requirement for the growth and development of the Body is that we recognize our measure and not go beyond it—Rom. 12:3, 6a; Eph. 4:7, 16.
- B. When we go beyond our measure, we go beyond the authority of the Head and interfere with the order of the Body.

We all should move and act according to how much God has measured to us, staying within the limits of God's ruling, God's measuring—2 Cor. 10:13