

Message Four

The Church as the Body of Christ— the Mysterious Organism in God's New Testament Economy

I. The great turning wheel of God's economy has the Body of Christ as its axis:

- A. The move of God's New Testament economy is like the turning of a great wheel—cf. Ezek. 1:15-21.
- B. This turning wheel in God's economy has the Body of Christ as its axis:
 - 1. All of God's move and work today are joined to and for the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:22-23.
 - 2. The New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of God's work is the axis of God's move in the whole universe—Rev. 21:2, 11; 22:1.

II. The Body of Christ as the axis of God's economy is the organism of the Triune God:

- A. The church is not an organization manufactured by man but an organism produced by the Triune God as life.
- B. The true vine, a portrait of Christ, is an organism by which the Triune God accomplishes His eternal economy—John 15:1:
 - 1. A tree with life is organic and is able to produce fruit.
 - 2. A wooden table without life is organizational and is unable to produce fruit.
- C. This divine organism is the structure of the union and mingling of all the believers with the Triune God—Eph. 4:4-6:
 - 1. The Father is the person who is over all (managing and caring), through all (penetrating and joining), and in all (dwelling and living)—v. 6.
 - 2. The Son is the element of life; through believing, the believers are joined to the element of Christ's new life, and through baptism, they are cut off from the element of the old adamic life—v. 5.
 - 3. The Spirit is the essence of life; the Spirit of the life of Christ is the essence of the Body of Christ, and the hope is the saturation of the Body of Christ with the splendor of this essence so that the Body of Christ may enter into the glory of the life of Christ—v. 4; Col. 1:27.
- D. The metamorphic change of this divine organism is the mingling of God and man—
 - 1. This metamorphic change is the putting off of the old man, which is being corrupted according to lust, and the putting on of the new man, which was created according to God—vv. 22, 24.
 - 2. This metamorphic change is accomplished through the renewing of the believers in the spirit of their mind—v. 23.
 - 3. This metamorphic change is accomplished through the redemption by the saturating of the Holy Spirit of God as the seal—v. 30.
 - 4. This metamorphic change is accomplished through the nourishing, sanctifying, and washing of Christ's word of life—5:25b-27, 29:
 - a. Nourishing affords the supply in life and provides at the same time the warm, tender, and loving cherishing.
 - b. To be sanctified is to be separated unto and saturated with God and thus to be transformed—v. 26a.
 - c. Washing removes the spots and wrinkles in order that the divine organism may become holy and glorious.

- E. The growth of this divine organism and the organic building up of the organism by itself are in the divine life—4:11-16:
 - 1. The gifted ones in this divine organism perfect others to be like them to do the work of the ministry for the organic building up of the Body of Christ—vv. 11-12.
 - 2. The growth of this divine organism in the divine life equals the organic building up of the organism by itself in the divine life—vv. 13b-16:
 - a. We need to hold to truth in love and grow up into the Head, Christ, in all things—vv. 13b, 15.
 - b. Out from the Head, all the Body, being joined together through every joint of the rich supply and being knit together through the operation in the measure of each one part, grows gradually unto the organic building up of itself in love—v. 16.
- F. The living of this divine organism is the corporate and organic living of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:5:
 - 1. All the members live together by taking Christ as life—Col. 3:3-4a.
 - 2. All the members care for one another—1 Cor. 12:25-27.
 - 3. This living is an organic living produced by the union and mingling of the Triune God with the tripartite man—Rom. 8:2-13:
 - a. The law of the Spirit of life is the key to the mysterious organism in God's New Testament economy; we can cooperate with this law by prayer and by having a spirit of dependence—v. 2; 1 Thes. 5:17.
 - b. Through the law of the Spirit of life, we were first enlivened in our spirit by the Spirit of Christ—Rom. 8:2, 9-10.
 - c. Next, we are enlivened in the mind of our soul by the spreading Spirit of God—v. 6b.
 - d. Lastly, we are enlivened in our mortal body by the indwelling Spirit of God—v. 11.
 - e. For this reason, we have to set our mind on the spirit, walk according to the spirit, and put to death the practices of the body through the indwelling Spirit of God—vv. 6b, 4b, 11, 13.
- G. The service of this divine organism is the corporate organic service of the Body of Christ—12:4-8:
 - 1. Every member is necessary—1 Cor. 12:14-22.
 - 2. Every member functions organically according to the operation in the measure of each one part.
 - 3. This service is the organic service of the New Testament priesthood of the gospel—1 Pet. 2:5, 9:
 - a. We need to preach the gospel to save sinners and offer them as sacrifices to God—Rom. 15:16.
 - b. We need to nourish the believers and help them to grow so that they can offer themselves as living sacrifices to God—John 21:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; Rom. 12:1.
 - c. We need to perfect the saints so that they may do the work of the ministry unto the organic building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:11-16.
 - d. We need to lead the saints to prophesy, to speak for God, for the organic building up of the church—1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 12, 24, 31.
 - e. We need to labor and struggle in all wisdom to present to God every saint full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:28-29.