

# **THE BODY OF CHRIST**

**By Titus Chu**

## **MESSAGE ONE: THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

Many know of the term “Body of Christ,” but few accurately know what it refers to, so it is important that we have a proper understanding of this great matter. Because of a lack of understanding, some misuse the term “the Body,” just as some in China used the term “the people” in a way that did not represent the people and even did harm to the people!

### **THE CHURCH AS THE BODY, THE INCREASE OF CHRIST**

The Body of Christ is the most important matter in the universe, for it is the increase and enlargement of Christ, and the fullness of the One who fills all in all! Thus it is not something that is easy to fully grasp or apprehend. In these three meetings we will touch upon the reality of the Body of Christ, how it is expressed, and how it can be practically lived out among us.

The first thing we need to realize is that the Body of Christ today is the church! The church today is the reality of the Body of Christ. The word “church” refers to the outer expression of this reality, while the word “Body” denotes its essence. The “church,” or “called-out congregation” (Greek, ecclesia) denotes more the outward aspect we see. Within this visible aspect, however, there is a life! For instance, I can see you, yet within you is a life that substantiates you as your inward reality. This is one way to think of the distinction between the terms “the church” and “the Body”. Without the Body as the reality, any so-called “church gathering” would be something merely human and social. The Body of Christ is the inward essence of the church! Therefore, as those in the church life, we are in something that expresses the real yet mysterious Body of Christ! How marvelous this is!

**CONSTITUTED WITH GOD'S OWN LIFE, EXISTING IN  
THE REALM OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION**

Why is the Body of Christ so profound and mystical? Because it is constituted with God's very own life! The Triune God is the life and substance of the church as the Body of Christ. Whenever we touch upon matter of the Body, we must realize that we are touching something that directly involves God Himself. The Body of Christ is constituted with God's divine life as its substance, and its realm is that of Christ's own resurrection. Have you ever realized that the Body of Christ is a realm? Watchman Nee and Witness Lee both have spoken this. Watchman Nee spoke of the Body of Christ as a realm, and Witness Lee spoke on the divine and mystical realm. These are not two separate realms: the Body of Christ is this divine and mystical realm constituted with God's life and existing in Christ's resurrection. Because the Body of Christ is such a realm, it is something we can live within and gain a rich supply from. In the realm of the Body of Christ, we can live a normal, healthy, heavenly life that is according to God Himself. In this realm, it is possible for us to be one with God.

How did we end up here in the Body of Christ? We were saved right into it! Christ's resurrection is the power that ushered us into this realm of the Body of Christ so that we might participate in it. Isn't it marvelous that, in spite of all our failure and defeat, we are able to rise up continuously to enjoy and participate in the church life? In this realm, Christ's resurrection is always operating. Many times we feel like telling the Lord, "I just do not see how it is I can still follow You or love You, or how I can be with the saints," yet there is an operating element that continually keeps bringing us back up and continually brings us together. We may be "professional failures," and corporately we may even appear to be defeated, yet the Body is something in Christ's resurrection; the moment we were regenerated we were brought right into this resurrection, and into this Body. Praise the Lord, as members of the Body of Christ, we can live in a realm of resurrection! The Body of Christ itself is such a realm, and as those who possess Christ, we together manifest this Body.

### **INCLUDING ALL BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT THE AGES**

The Body is something simply beyond man's natural concept. It is something that includes everyone who has believed from the church's beginning on the day of the Lord's resurrection onward. In other words, everyone who has received the Lord throughout history, including whoever was added this very day, is a member of the Body of Christ. One day, we will see all the believers who make up the Lord's Body - we shall see brothers Paul, Peter, John, Luther, Zinzendorf, and Nee...and as we greet one another on that day we will be able to say, "Hallelujah! How glorious that we are all in one Body!"

In light of this, it should be clear that no subset of believers can claim that only they are the Body. The Body of Christ is inclusive! There is only one Body in this universe, and even as we speak, this Body is growing. Both in life (within its members) and in number (of believers), it is increasing. Even today, all around the globe people are receiving the Lord and being added to the Body. And, regardless how different we are from one another...some, for instance, came here expectantly, some less willingly; some to enjoy the Lord's ministry, some perhaps even with impure motives...but it does not matter, for as long as we are believers in Christ, we all are one Body in the Lord, and as we all touch the Lord and open our hearts to Him, He is increasing within us, and the Body thus is growing!

How marvelous is the Body as God's masterpiece! We appreciate so many other things in our lives, do we not? For instance, you may appreciate your family dog. It may indeed be dear to you and your family, but how peculiar it would be if we appreciated so many other things that in no way can be compared to God's greatest masterpiece, the church! Others may even appreciate a teaching or a particular spiritual writing, but God would say, "If it is of value, it is only because it is for My masterpiece, the church, the Body of Christ!"

## **THE HIGHEST MEANING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE**

If a person has not been elevated to the extent that he is one with the Body of Christ, he is missing the meaning of human life. The highest existence we can experience is to participate in the growth and progress of the Body of Christ, and to be surrounded with all its members so that all its “parts” may grow together unto the fullness of God! This is the real purpose of our human existence, and only such a life can truly be called marvelous.

As we have said already, the church as the Body is constituted with the divine life of the Triune God. Therefore, anything that is not of divine life is not of the Body. Often Christians say, “The body of believers I belong to” or “I respect this particular church-body,” but there is only one Body, and this Body is constituted with the divine life of the Triune God as its substance. If in the church life we are not experiencing the divine life of God, we are short of the reality of the Body of Christ. We may be caught with some mission or practice, or seeking some mood, and thus miss the reality of the Body! We may still be able to say we are Christians meeting together, but to be together in a way that is not in or of life is to be apart from the substance of the Body of Christ.

## **GOD ALONE IS ITS SUBSTANCE**

Shaker Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, is named after a group of Christians called Shakers. The Shakers would literally shake their chairs in order to bring about a kind of release in their meetings, much like those who get together to speak in tongues do. They do such things because they are Christians, yet we cannot say that getting together in this way has much to do with the reality of the Body. Young people like to sing one type of song to achieve a certain atmosphere, and older people like to sing other kinds of songs to achieve another kind of atmosphere. Some want to see miracles when they gather, and others like to hear Bible teaching. We have to consider that whatever others do, they do to God (Rom. 14:6). As long as the Lord has

received them, who are we to judge? The big question regarding our being together should be: While we are singing a certain way, or while we are practicing whatever we practice, is God our substance? For instance, young people, when you sing at a young people's event, is God your substance, or is the music your substance? Since the church is the Body of Christ, we must always check with ourselves in whatever we do: How much God is involved? The substance of the Body of Christ is not a practice, but rather it is the life of the Triune God. Regardless the practice, the primary thing we should be concerned about is whether the life-element is present.

### **RESURRECTION: OUR POWER TO LIVE THE BODY LIFE**

We also need to consider the matter of resurrection being our realm. I have been participating in the Body life for fifty years now. We should realize that there is something marvelous about remaining in the Body life for such a length of time. How is it possible, after experiencing so many mistakes, so much failure, and falling down so many times, that someone like me could still be loving the Lord in the church life? If you claim you have always been a prevailing Christian, it is evident you have not even begun your Christian life, for you obviously have been laying on the ground the whole time, and this is why you feel you never have fallen! When someone really pursues the Lord, he falls down a lot! Yet for some reason, we still find we are able to love the Lord and get up to pursue Him. Why is this? It is because as members of the Body of Christ, we are in the realm of resurrection.

### **KNOWING THE BODY BY KNOWING CHRIST**

How can we be brought into the full realization of this realm that is the Body of Christ? It is not something that comes instantly, for the ultimate apprehension of the Body of Christ comes by means of the full knowledge of Christ (Eph. 1:17). If you do not

know Christ, you do not know the Body, and the more you know Christ, the more you know the Body. Eventually, the full realization of Christ results in the full realization of the Body of Christ. There is no way to disassociate Christ from His Body!

Suppose you meet a brother. You will gain some impression of him from his bodily appearance, but it is those who know him best, his wife and children, who really enjoy his bodily presence. What they see coming out of him and what you see coming out of him will be two different things, for they really know him, and you do not. You may shake his hand and think, “My, what a big hand he has,” and that is the extent of your knowledge of his body. To really know him as the one who is with you in body, you have to get to know him in his person. Otherwise, to you his bodily presence will not have much meaning! It is usually not until after marriage that a person realizes that he or she never really knew their spouse! Before that time, their mate simply did not reveal who he or she really was, regardless how long they dated. After marriage, however, one discovers so many things about the other. They truly become “one flesh,” because they really come to know the person they only thought they knew before.

Suppose a wife finds out that her husband does not like pork, and yet forces bacon on him every morning, insisting it is “the flow”! Spiritually speaking, many Christians do such things. Since the person rejects pork, his body does also. His body will say, “I don’t want it,” but it is not really the body, but the person who rejects it. If a wife wants to walk in perfect harmony with her husband, she will realize that this harmony comes not so much by abiding with his physical body as by engaging with the person of that body! She has to work with the inward being of her husband. If we want to enjoy the Body of Christ, know the Body of Christ, participate in the Body of Christ, and be totally one with the Body of Christ, we must fully know CHRIST. If you do not know Him, you can never be fully one with His Body. The one we pursue is Christ, and the more we enjoy Christ, know Christ, participate in Christ, and are one with Christ, the more we will certainly apprehend His Body.

### **WE NEED A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION IN THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM**

How is it that we are able to apprehend Christ? By continually experiencing a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). Let us suppose that we already know Christ to some degree. With that premise, we can talk about what wisdom and revelation refer to here. Wisdom is for understanding, and revelation is for seeing. If I am someone's friend, I already have some revelation concerning my friend, yet the more I see of him, the more I understand him. Likewise, based on my further understanding, the more yet I see about my friend. We know Christ, but we need to know Him more! For this we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation until we know Him in full.

Some say we should not talk about the Body, for to do so may cause division! But we know the Body by knowing Christ, whom we seek. Therefore, how much we need to have a spirit of revelation in the full knowledge of Him! To the degree we know and see Christ, we know and see His Body.

### **THE LORD'S INHERITANCE**

Ephesians 1:18 tells us that the Body of Christ is constituted with the riches of the glory of the Lord's inheritance in the saints. What is it that Christ can inherit? He only can inherit what is of Him, for within us, only what is of Him has eternal value. We may offer other things to Him, but what He seeks is what has been worked into us of Himself. Therefore, His inheritance in the saints is something glorious and heavenly! In the coming years, His inheritance must grow in us. We may offer ourselves to Him today and tell Him we love Him, but He will look at us and say, "What then is there for Me in you? What can I receive from you?" Eventually, may we all be able to say, "My life has not been in vain, for I have used it to gain Christ, and now I have a hope of glory, for He has gained a rich inheritance in me! When I first began to love the Lord, He could inherit but little, yet now He has gained so much of His inheritance in me!"

## **THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF RESURRECTION POWER**

The church as the Body of Christ is also constituted with the surpassing greatness of His power as the operation of the might of His strength for us to participate in (Eph. 1:19). Whenever we consider the Body of Christ, we must consider it a matter of divine life, and whenever we consider this divine life, we must realize the surpassing greatness of its power!

Sometimes I receive discouraging phone calls...in one place perhaps I hear that some sisters have risen up and are making issues within the church, or some such troublesome matter. However, I can testify that I am happy. How can I be a peaceful and even joyful? It is because of this power. If I were to depart from this power, I would immediately become totally deflated. Perhaps instead of coming down from my room in the hotel to speak to you all, I would tell the brothers to cancel the meeting or carry it themselves, because I would not even be able to rise up from my bed. Something very interesting, however, has been taking place. During the past fifty years that I have been loving and following Jesus, this power has been increasing in me. In the beginning, by this power I was able to overcome certain things, but today my entire person is elevated and uplifted by the heavenly operation of this power! There is a surpassing power, a power of resurrection, operating among us in the church life. In His Body we are provided with the might of the strength of resurrection power for our operation. In the church life, there is such a power elevating us all the time. This power is the power of Christ's resurrection!

## **HAVING CHRIST AS ITS HEAD**

The church as the Body of Christ is also substantiated through the headship of the resurrected Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). In His resurrection, Christ has become our Head. Do we not have a wonderful Head? The word "head" does not mean so much the outward face as the inward accumulation of experience. After



seventy years, I may not be so handsome, but I now have a good head on my shoulders! If our head is based only upon our face, then we would lose everything as we aged and lost our beauty. A head, however, denotes the person. At age 32, I had not so much consideration for others as I have today, even though I was much more handsome at that age! Today, however, my “head” is much richer in virtue and experience. Christ, as the Head of the Body, is from eternity to eternity. Christ has supreme ability to take care of His Body, and does so with eternity in view. As Head of the Body, He possesses all divine attributes and all human virtue. How can the elders in a locality be peaceful? By realizing Christ is the Head of the Body, and not them! Yes, all the saints have problems, and cause headaches, but Christ is full of wisdom, and He as the Head is caring for your local church as the local expression of His Body.

### **THE FULLNESS OF THE ONE WHO FILLS ALL IN ALL**

The church, the Body of Christ, becomes the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 3:19). Only Christ is the realization of all positive things, all and any that bear lasting value. Christ is also the one who fills all positive things, and we as the church are the expression of this Christ who produces all that is worthy of existence in the universe. The Body of Christ is the fullness, the expression, of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23)!

If I know a man who is fifty years old, I see him as someone who has arrived at his complete stature and fullness. If I know someone who is only ten years old, I do not yet see that person as he will be when he is full-grown. He has neither arrived at his full stature nor his full weight. He has a body, but his representation in his body is not yet complete. One day, however, his body will achieve its fullness. The church as the Body of Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all the positive things and is in all positive things.

We have seen something now about what the Body of Christ is. When we begin to see the Body in such a way, we will realize how peculiar and unfitting it is for some to say such things as who is in or who is not in the Body, for the Body is something so very grand and inclusive!

## ASPECTS OF THE BODY

### **The New Man**

The Body of Christ, the church, is the new man created in Christ, having Christ as his life, element, and person to accomplish God's eternal purpose.

According to Ephesians 2:14-15, the Lord abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances that He might in Himself create the two (Jew and Gentile) into one new man, making peace. The new man, the church, is something that has been created. According to the Bible, strictly speaking, man was made by being formed from pre-existing matter (the dust of the ground) and woman was also built from pre-existing matter (from Adam's side). When God breathed into the human being He had made, man to become a living soul (Gen. 2:7). The new man, however, is totally new and has been created. Thus in the universe the crucial matters God has produced are man (male and female) and the new man. Man was made, woman was built, and the new man, the Body of Christ, was created!

In a sense, every man has to say, "I am not out of nothing; I am out of dirt." Therefore, even the most heavenly person can become quite earthly! The church however, is something created from Christ alone! Therefore we must be careful that we bring nothing of our natural being into the church life, for the church as the new man will reject anything that is not from Christ. Our natural ability or attractiveness are of no use in the new man.

Someone may wonder why it is that he can manage three hundred people in a company, but cannot do such a thing in the church! It is not you, but that which is created from the essence and element of Christ, which is the new man - that is what God treasures.

### **The Body of Christ has Been Produced by Means of Jesus Christ's Physical Body**

The mystical, universal Body of Christ was produced through the death of Christ's physical body upon the cross. When the Lord died on the cross, His spiritual Body was produced, for through His death on the cross, all the believers were reconciled to God in one Body (Eph. 2:16).

Instead of being separated by enmities, all those who believe are now one church! Due to our many backgrounds it seems we would disdain one another or look down upon one another or totally disagree with one another. Instead, in His flesh Christ has slain the enmities! Isn't this a great matter? If this were not the case, the only person we could be with in the church would be ourselves. Yet in the church life we find we are able to be together with so many who would normally have been far off from us, for Christ has made such a peace through His cross. Why are we able to love one another so readily? This is a great mystery, yet Christ has slain the enmity through the death of His physical body on the cross!

How foolish it is, then, to raise any issues that may re-introduce enmity among us! For instance, if one brother reads the King James Version of the Bible, and another reads the Recovery Version, they should not allow this to become a source of enmity. If some speak in tongues, and others do not, this should not become a reason some would begin to disapprove of others. Whenever someone raises an issue, we must learn to respond in love. The Lord died on the cross to accomplish a great reconciliation. How terrible a thing it is to introduce enmity into the oneness Christ's death produced! Yet even having been

saved and reconciled, we are peculiar people. We must learn to abide in the peace Christ has accomplished. Even if a brother wants to beat you up, you have to say, “Brother, If you want to beat me, I am ready, come and beat me” and if a brother desires to fellowship with you, you have to say, “Brother, if you want to fellowship with me, I am ready, come and fellowship with me.” We should harbor no feeling of ill will towards any saint, for we are all one Body in Christ.

### **The Kingdom of God**

The Body, the church, is also the kingdom of God, constituted with all the saints as its fellow citizens. Among the members of the Body of Christ, no one should feel like a stranger or a sojourner. In the Body, we should treat all the other believers in Christ as fellow-citizens.

I first came to the United States in 1963. For some time I felt like a stranger and sojourner here, for I couldn't speak Chinese with anyone, and no one understood what it was to be from China. I was so happy whenever I met another Chinese person on the street that I would immediately go up and talk to him. Why did I do this? Because we were fellow-citizens. We must treasure our relationship in the Body of Christ; no fellow-citizen should be treated as an outsider. No one among us should be rejected if they do not practice or teach as we do, and certainly no one should go to a certain place to damage the harmony of the fellow-citizens meeting there, causing some to become strangers and sojourners!

### **The Household of God**

The church is also the household of God, with all God's children as its members (Eph. 2:19). If you are married and have children, your abode includes you, your wife, and your children. If you are a grandparent, it would also include all your grandchildren! What gives a father the greatest comfort and enjoyment? It is

when his household is gathered in his home. Recently I experienced having all my family together at dinner, and I can testify how much contentment I enjoyed at that table, surrounded by my wife, my son, my daughters, my son-in-law, and my granddaughter. That was my household! When the Lord looks upon all of us together, gathered as His family, He is so satisfied. We should treasure one another in the household just as the Lord does.

### ***Being Built Upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets***

As God's house and God's temple (Eph. 2:21), the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20a). The temple is a matter of the Lord's testimony, and this testimony of the Lord is made possible by means of the labor of the apostles and prophets.

Who is your apostle? The person who raised you up is your apostle. Paul could say to the saints in Corinth he was an apostle, because their being in Christ was proof of his apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2). For the building up of the Body, we do need apostles and prophets to lay the foundation, for their work is governed by Christ as the cornerstone of this foundation (Eph. 2:20b). Anyone who is such an apostle and prophet must share the same goal, orientation and substance that Christ possesses, or else the building could not stand. If a cornerstone is granite, sandstone cannot be used for the foundation work; any foundation work must be of the same rock, and it must be aligned perfectly as an extension of the cornerstone. Christ is the chief cornerstone, and the apostles and prophets work in laying the foundation must be of Christ alone.

It is upon this foundation that all the saints are fitted together and grow into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21)! My labor among you is for your growth, because the more you grow with the growth of God, the more there is the reality of the Body of Christ (Col. 2:19).

### ***Being Built Together in Spirit***

How are the saints built together? This is something that takes place in spirit (Eph. 2:22). When the saints are built together in spirit, God has a dwelling place.

### **The Bride of Christ**

The church, the Body of Christ, is also the Bride of Christ for His contentment and satisfaction (Eph. 5:23). As the Bride of Christ, the church's affection is for the Lord, and the Lord finds His satisfaction in her affections. To the church as the Bride, the Lord is the Head of the Body and the Savior of the church, sanctifying her by the washing of the water in the Word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:23-26). Why is the Lord the Savior of the church and the Head of the Body? Just so that we might become such a pure 'young lady' before Him. As those who are going to marry the Lord, we should not have any spots or wrinkles! If a young bride had my seventy-year old face, we would all say, "What kind of bride is this?" The Lord is not after a wrinkled, spotted bride; He desires a Bride that is fully constituted with Him as the One who is always fresh and new. The longer we love the Lord, the less wrinkled and spotted we become! Outwardly we may become older-looking, but inwardly we are becoming this radiant Bride that He desires, by means of the washing of the water in the Word. Therefore, read the Bible, for it contains this "water of youth"! One day the Lord will marry those who have been prepared by this regenerating life to be His Bride. May the Lord be your beauty on that day as you take Him as your Savior day by day and as you repeatedly enjoy the washing of the water in the Word. Outwardly I may see in the mirror a wrinkled reflection, but inwardly I know that in my spirit there is no spot or wrinkle. My spirit is holy and without blemish. Oh, may we all grow in the reality of the Body and Bride of Christ!

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