

“The Mystery of the Body of Christ” – Part Two

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Remembering the Body of Christ:

(Rom 12:5 KJV) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

(1 Cor. 12:12,27 KJV) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ; Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

(1 Cor 10:16 KJV) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

(Luke 22:19 KJV) And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

The assembling of the body of Christ is the connecting of its various parts into one. Each saint is a member and all the members being properly joined together form one body. The function of this body is local in nature; *And when they had ordained them elders in every church; Unto the church of God which is at Corinth; And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church; he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church; a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Paul likewise broke the church down into location.* For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. What is the great mystery of this body, the Church that resides in various locations throughout the earth?

Jesus presented the most powerful truth about this mystery at the Last Supper. For over three years He had been ministering to His disciples about the Kingdom of God. He spoke to them at various times of His death, burial and resurrection that needed to be accomplished. Understanding His death, burial and resurrection is the framework for understanding the gospel; *(1 Cor. 15:1,3,4) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,*

how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Before He goes to His death and rises again, He eats one last meal with the twelve. It was not natural food but the Word of God in flesh that gave the disciples their real food. One last time they would have an opportunity to “partake of His flesh” in its present form, before a new order of communing with Jesus would be established.

It was Jesus, in verses from John chapter six, who explains this part of the mystery that is still hid from most of the church world. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Christians have understood this portion of scripture in numerous ways. Whether believing Jesus was speaking figuratively by saying that Christians must identify with His life and sacrifice or in teaching that we must literally eat the flesh of Jesus through a “divine” process of transubstantiation, all hold these words to be important, but vary greatly in their understanding. He tells us we must eat His flesh and that eating His flesh brings life, in fact if we don't eat His flesh we have no life in us. From His words it's easy to see how some even believe that partaking of communion is necessary for salvation.

The flesh of Jesus that housed the Word was about to go to its death. He told the disciples it was for their benefit that He would be leaving; *(John 16:7 KJV) Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Something greater was going to take the place of His flesh that was about to leave the earth. He was leaving the earth in the fleshly form, of His body but He would be returning in His Spirit; *(Jn. 14:16-18) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* The great mystery of His body, the Church, was unfolding. Jesus would be here on earth with us but not in the body of His flesh, but in His body, the Church.

It would be a body that would be able to have a greater affect on the world. Jesus, not just in one body of flesh but in the many membered body of the Church. The world has yet to see this body in its perfection. Jesus promised that if He would be lifted up – if His church would ever get into the place where what it was manifesting was only Jesus and not its own flesh and disorder – then He would draw all men unto Him.

The world does not see Jesus in His body the Church. It sees division, self-seeking, competition, jealousy, successful business practices but it doesn't as yet see Jesus. This is all changing. As the Church grasps its real purpose and seeks perfection rather than escape or material success, the Lord Jesus will become clearer to all who look upon His body. All who look upon His body will begin to see the great God of the universe, a God of power and love.

All doctrines that connect us in relationship, (such as marriage, baptism, communion, tithing, repentance, etc.), have a natural sign as a component of that doctrine. They each involve some act we do in the earth which in the Spirit provides for us a heavenly connection. This is what Jesus did for us when He instituted communion at the last supper. The natural sign or act that we are told to do is the partaking of bread, (His body), and wine, (the blood covenant).

It is clear from our traditions that many Christians do not understand what they are really doing when partaking of communion. Some believe they are actually eating the literal flesh and blood of Jesus. Many believe it to be a memorial, of His death from 1 Co. 11:26. When we participate in communion, we are not eating the literal flesh and blood of Jesus nor is it, in large degree, to remember the sacrifice of Jesus given for us. What Christian is there who does not know that Jesus died for us. The Church is not in danger of forgetting Jesus' death and therefore requires periodic participation in communion to reflect on that event to keep it alive in the minds of the saints. These are religious concepts for the most part are born out of tradition not spiritual concepts which come forth from the Word.

When Jesus sat before His disciples He took bread, blessed it, and broke it into pieces and gave it to each disciple. He said, *this is my body...this do in remembrance of me*". The bread illustrated His body that was to be given on the cross for them. Each disciple now possessed a piece of the bread of His body. What were they supposed to do with it? Take it and eat it and do this in remembrance of Jesus. The pieces of bread were all parts of the one body from which they came. We are told by Paul, *You are the body of Christ and members in particular*. We are the pieces that make up the body of Christ. What are the members of His body supposed to do? Remember Jesus. Remember - meaning to member again.

Remembering can mean bringing thoughts back into our conscious mind - which is how it is most often understood - it can also mean to bring back into physical being, as in the assembling of parts of a puzzle into the whole. When Jesus asks us to do this in *remembrance of me*, He is telling His followers, "put My body back together again"! "My body which is broken for you must now be remembered - the members have to be put together again - in the body of My Church!" The thief on the cross asked Jesus, *remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. He isn't just asking Jesus to think about him and the time they had together at Calvary, no he wants Jesus to take him with to His kingdom. He wants to literally come into existence in God's kingdom, not just to be a thought in Jesus' mind. This Jesus promised to do for Him, this is how he was remembered.

When we partake of communion, it is this process that we are to facilitate. Communion ought to be a time of coming into union with one another; *communion* - literally meaning, with union. It was originally celebrated as part of a meal along with

the fellowship of the saints. The passing out of wafers and little plastic cups full of grape juice was a later, religious development. The last supper of Jesus, this last meal that in His words, *with desire I have desired to eat this meal with you before I suffer*, was of such desire for Jesus because it would establish the framework for the manifestation of His body in the Church.

Listen to the Apostle Paul as He says, *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, **Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.** After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.** For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.*

This was the instruction given Paul by the Lord. We are to partake of communion until He comes. Until the Lord is manifested in His body, the Church, we are to be about the process of remembering ourselves into one unified body. Whoever eats and drinks this meal unworthily, (that is to treat it as a common or ordinary meal), is *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. Why? Because they work against the assembling of the body and because of this some are weak and sick and some have even died. Not that God is punishing them because they didn't pray long enough before they took communion or because they shared a laugh with someone and did not show "proper reverence" when they ate the bread.

No some are weak and sick and some have even died because, like so many they don't recognize and understand one another as members of the body of Christ. Some member could have ministered healing, some member of the body could have supplied the strength that was lacking, some member had God's answer to an overwhelming need, but it could not be received because they don't discern what the true body of Christ is. Some show their disdain for the body by holding it or some of its members in disdain. They judge the body so they are unable to receive from it. Or they separate themselves from the body. "We hear God. God ministers through us. We can have God without having relationship with a Church." They separate themselves from the body and the government of God and suffer the consequences usually without ever understanding why. These are those which have desire for association but not for relationship.

As we understand what the Lord is doing in our day and how He is going to return, then the importance of the body and our need to allow the Spirit to bring about its unity and perfection, takes on increased significance. In the fellowship of taking communion, we then ask ourselves questions such as, What is my part in the body? To whom am I joined, how and for what purpose? How can I better manifest Christ?

How can I better bring about the order of God through submission and service? How can I help the Church and its leadership to fulfill the vision for the Church given by God? We pray for the body. That it might become one. That it might manifest Jesus to the world. That it might grow in unity, understanding and love. We pray for the individual members of the body for our perfection is dependent upon them and theirs upon us. We increasingly see Jesus in our brothers and sisters. There is a growing desire to protect and nurture the body. We come to understand that the salvation of the world and the fulfillment of the Lord's promises to us are dependent upon this body of which we are a part. We desire the health of the body. We become more careful not to speak ill of the body or bring harm to the body by careless actions or speech. These and like considerations now form the basis for our participation in communion. Communion to us now becomes more than just the occasional eating of bread and grape juice but part of an ongoing spiritual exercise to bring for the completed, perfected, mature, body of Christ which is the Church.

The Many Membered Body of Christ:

(Rm. 12:1,3,5, KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

(1 Co. 12:12,18-20) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.

(Rm. 8:19) For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The bible tells us that with the fall of man not only did sin cause humankind to dwell under a curse but all of creation as well. The natural world was cursed for the benefit of man. Since that time *the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*. Why is it groaning and travailing? Because it is waiting for a redemption which will restore it to its pre-cursed state. Not only creation but the elect as well have this understanding and longing; *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Earthquakes, pestilence and the like are the travail of the earth waiting for an event that will reorder the universe. When will this happen? When the sons of God who are as yet hidden, become revealed. What will start this revealing? When the church which is the body of Christ is perfected to reveal Jesus to the world. Who makes up this body? The members of this body are God's elect who have heard His call to order. How have they heard this call? They have witnessed the spirit of Elijah turning the hearts of the fathers to sons and the hearts of sons to fathers. What is their goal? Their goal is not human perfection but relationship with the Lord and each other and the manifestation of Jesus in His body.

This body of Christ is a many membered body. In times past great men and women of God have arisen bringing forth great moves of God, particular revelations, or unique and gifted ministries. As great as they may have been, none of them were ever able to complete the plan of God for the world. In this last day it is not an exalted ministry but a manifested body which shall restore a truth and a power far in excess of anything seen heretofore. The Word tells us that what will be unique about this body is that it will not be individual members which are exalted, but the Lord Jesus himself who is and will be seen as the head of this body. Creation is waiting for this to happen and so are the saints who have gone on before us. *(Hebrews 11:40) God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Rev. 6:10,11b) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?... for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

We have to learn to look at the work the Lord has given us to do, in the context of the body of Christ and to look at ourselves not as independent workers for God's kingdom, but as particular members of this body. When we view ourselves as independent workers then all ministry and all that God is doing in the earth revolves around us. When I look at myself as one of many members of a body, then what God is doing is conditioned upon my relationship with the other members and the perfection of that body. The church has not yet seen itself in this light.

Most saints seek a calling from God and see that calling independent from the body. Because of a lack of understanding many feel if they have a call from God they have a sanction to cut ties with one group and seek association with another. This attitude comes from the disorder wrought out of patterning the Church after the order of men and not the order of God.

The body to many is equated with a particular church we attend in order to worship, hear preaching or receive teaching or in which we can perform some function related to ministry. It is viewed much as a club or organization that we can join rather than a living, spiritual entity into which we are born by the will of God. If it is something I choose to join, then I can also choose to disassociate myself with it and search for another "club" more to my liking. If however it is a living body into which I am placed by God, then its not a matter of my personal choice. My spiritual life and to some degree the life of those I am in relationship with is dependent upon maintaining the proper God ordained order of the body. Numerous churches today are, in truth, little more than religious orphanages. Many who attend these "orphanages" however, and many who have stopped attending these substitutes for Christ's body are hungering for relationship with the true body of Christ, a hunger the Lord is satisfying.

When we were saved one of the obligations and one of the privileges of that salvation was our relationship with the body of Christ. Just having a right does not necessarily mean we are functioning in that body according to the will of Him who called us. There is abundant scriptural direction as to how we are to function in the body and the dangers of not properly relating to the body or disassociating ourselves from the body. One of the revelations being brought forth by the Spirit in our day is an understanding of the true body of Christ, its operation and its government. We may

have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and rights to the body but have we allowed that Spirit to establish us in relationship with His true body? *(1 Cor 12:13 KJV) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* Those saints of like spirit, who are being led by the Spirit are being called into relationship out of church systems developed by man into a body ordained by God. God's church today is in this transition.

We see ourselves in our personal relationship with God, but many have difficulty in seeing their ministry as only a member or portion of a much greater ministry. If we saw ourselves this way, our personal agendas would take back seat to the greater purposes of God. We would not be trying to exalt self but Jesus in the body. Pride for all that we accomplish would disappear when it is apparent that all that is done, is done by the hand of Jesus through a many membered body. To walk in this type of relationship with the body is going to require the death of a lot of flesh. Yet this is exactly the body for which Jesus is coming and in which He will appear. Not an anemic and self-centered church but a *glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* This can only happen as we are obedient to present our *bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* Our agendas die, as our identities and ministries become entwined with His true body and our desire to see Jesus increasingly displayed through that body.

Related Scriptures:

The following are groupings of various scriptures related to the topic of the body of Christ and descriptions of these verses as they pertain to this topic.

The Body as the Man of God:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Ephesians 4:13 (KJV) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Revelation 21:7 (KJV) He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

2 Thessalonians 1:10 (KJV) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Matthew 1:17 (KJV) So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Acts 8:33 (KJV) In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

The appearing or revealing of Jesus will first come as Jesus is glorified in His saints, the body of Christ. In chapter one of Matthew are listed the generations of promise. When studying the list we find that Jesus is listed as the thirteenth generation from Babylon the fourteenth being Christ. Who is this Christ or anointed one? This Christ is not Jesus but the generation of Jesus. Is it possible that it is not all those who are saved but those who are overcomers – the perfected body of Christ – that make up what Jesus called, *my son*, in Revelations chapter 21? Is it possible that we cannot come to *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*, until the Church becomes *a perfect man*?

The Body of Christ as seen in the Husband and Wife Relationship:

Eph. 5:23,25,28,32 (KJV) For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the Church and He is the Savior of the body. Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. So husband ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Genesis 2:24 (KJV) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Ephesians 3:10 (KJV) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Philippians 1:20 (KJV) According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

The church requires change to bring perfection. God cares for us more than we care for our own flesh. As husband and wife so is the mystery of the Church. The church is the body of Christ. The church is also equated with a bride or wife. How it can be both is summed up in the mystery revealed by the phrase, *and they shall be one flesh*. Jesus loves His body the church and desires to be one flesh with it. Paul calls this relationship of Christ with the church, *a great mystery*. Jesus loves the church as His own body, which indeed it is. From the church the Father will receive glory and by the church show forth His wisdom that incorporates His body, the Church into His plan for the restoration of all things. Our pursuit then should be to magnify Jesus in our bodies, which are to be individual members of His body.

Jesus is Head of the Body and Builder of the Church:

Ephesians 1:22 (KJV) And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Matthew 16:18 (KJV) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 2:47 (KJV) Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Colossians 2:17 (KJV) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The only way that Jesus can truly be the head, is if He is given preeminence in the Church. The world must see Him, not dynamic ministries or gifted individuals, as the source of all that is being accomplished by God in the church. All glory, honor and praise belong to Him alone; *my glory will I not give to another*. It is the head that houses wisdom. It is the head that possesses knowledge. It is the head which gives direction to the body. The purpose of the body is to serve the head and fulfill its desires.

Jesus is the savior of the body. We are privileged to be able to participate in God's plan of restoration and salvation but it is Jesus who reaches and saves the lost. We don't build the church, Jesus does. We don't add people to the church, once again it is the Lord's work and He does it daily, without fail. When He's building the church, He's building His body.

The Church is Ruled as a Family:

Ephesians 3:14,15 (KJV) For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

1 Timothy 3:15 (KJV) But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:5 (KJV) (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God)

Hebrews 10:5 (KJV) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

The relationship of the Church to Jesus is like that of a husband and wife. The rule of this many membered body is like that of a family. It is not bible school, or psychology or ministerial gifting that equips us for rule in the body but our understanding and ability to function as a family in godly order. Rule should not be given in the body on the basis of having achieved a certain educational level or as a result of demonstrated gifting or even because of an ability to preach. Rule is given by God and should be given through leadership on the basis of understanding proper church order and being able to establish that order as would be done in a family. By equating the body with a family, the Lord is showing us our relationship is to be according to the closest of all interpersonal relationships. The Father wants a family. He is the Father of His family, the family of God.

Next Month: "We Shall Not All Die"

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