

## “The Mystery of the Body of Christ” – Part One

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### FATHER’S DOCTRINE SERIES

This is a series of teachings that I have shared with my ministry sons to help clarify and instruct according to the vision given us from the Lord. They are born, in part, out of a search for and desire to walk in the vision of Mark and Linda Hanby. Over the next several months we will be looking at various topics from the body of Christ to the coming of the Kingdom. For some readers these topics may offer confirmation of things being spoken to them by the Lord, to others they may offer some viewpoints that are contrary to what may be believed. If our attitudes are right however, in searching for truth, then it is my hope that these articles might be a source of growth and change for us all.

#### “The Mystery of the Body of Christ” - Part One

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#### **Our starting point is always found at Truth:**

Mark Hanby has exhorted his ministry sons many times that “truth is not a destination, truth is a highway”. Many look at truth as a goal or objective rather than as the unfolding revelation of God and His creation. When a person looks at truth as a destination, he uses whatever truth he may have as a vehicle to bring judgement on those who have not arrived at the same place as he. Truth to this person becomes a point of separation rather than an instrument for understanding the riches and wonders of God. This brings to mind the admonitions of Jesus, *If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* And in another place, *For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath*. As Mark Hanby has also shared, denominal labels don’t tell us what a certain church believes but rather where it stopped. Truth is an infinite road

along which are billeted a multitude of treasures, at various points, if we are willing and courageous enough to reach out and walk on into ever increasing heights in God.

If we are walking the highway of truth then we should not terminate our quest at markers set down by others but use these markers to propel us into even greater understanding. If truth to us is a destination, then we are likely to separate people according to what they believe but if it is a highway, then we will look at people according to what they are in Christ.

*(Psa 33:4 KJV) For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.*

*(Psa 51:6 KJV) Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*

*(John 14:6 KJV) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

*(Jn 8:31,32 KJV) Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

*(Jn 18:37b,38a KJV) To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?*

What is truth? Philosophers and sages throughout time have wrestled with this question regularly being at odds with one another. As Paul said, many in the world are, *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*, 2 Tim. 3:7. As Christians we know that truth is related to the Word of God, *thy word is truth*, Jn. 17:17. We know that Jesus is the truth, *I am...the truth*, Jn. 14:6; and we know that Jesus is also the Word, *the Word was made flesh*, Jn. 1:14. Do we as Christians understand truth to be correct biblical teachings or do we understand it as something more? It is possible, as with Pilate, to stare truth in the face and not realize it; to try to destroy truth because of an unwillingness to receive it; to pronounce a death sentence upon truth by making it a destination rather than a highway. Like the resurrection, or the Word of God, or eternal life, truth is not an event or a religious concept, but a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to grow in truth without first growing in Jesus.

Unfortunately, many in Christianity have made truth, the accumulation of factual knowledge rather than what it should be in our lives, which is a way of thinking. Knowing or believing things that are true does not mean that we have truth. A person who believes the earth rotates around the sun believes something that is true, but does he have truth? A person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, believes something that is true, but does he have truth? Many religious leaders in Jesus' day believed the Torah was God's word. They believed Yahweh was the one true God. They believed and taught the creation and the account of the flood. They believed many true things, but they did not possess truth; see 1 Jn. 2:4; Jn. 8:44-47, et al.

Truth to Christians must become more than just the accumulation of accurate Bible knowledge. If we use the correct biblical facts we possess to hold others in judgement we demonstrate our lack of the truth. Improper judgement of others is the clearest sign of a failure to discern truth. If I am incapable of receiving right things from someone who is not of my denominational stripe or may not understand all that I do or challenges me to think on a higher level, I demonstrate by my improper judgement a lack of willingness to walk in truth. We are not to believe or receive everything that is spoken to us but our attitude is a clear window to the truth we possess.

Only the most pompous and arrogant of souls would profess to understand all truth. It is possible to believe wrong things and still have truth; for truth is a way of thinking and not just the accumulation of accurate knowledge. In fact which of us has not been made aware by the Spirit of some error in our attitude, action and belief that required change? Walking in truth then, is walking in the thoughts of Jesus. Truth allows us to see others as He sees them, to understand God and His relationship to man as Jesus understood them, to have a life that is under the control of the Spirit rather than our carnal mind.

If we sought relationship over the accumulation of biblical knowledge we would find a significant increase in the revelation of God toward us. Truth in us comes as a consequence of a growing relationship with Jesus. Truth in the Body comes as a consequence of a growing relationship with each other. When the Spirit is free to move among us and through us without the fear of criticism, judgement or contention, the ability of the Body to receive revelation and grow in truth is multiplied. *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:* Truth in the inward or hidden parts is having our thinking transformed into true thinking. It is only in truth that the revelation and understanding of doctrine has any positive purpose. The works that Jesus would do in and through us can only be done in truth. Jesus promises us freedom in knowing the truth. Not in knowing true facts, but in having a thought process that is controlled by the truth.

### ***Hidden Truth of the Body:***

*(Mark 4:11a KJV) And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God:*

*(1 Cor 12:27 KJV) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

Mysteries in the Bible are hidden or secret truths. According to Jesus, disciples in relationship are in a position to know the mysteries of the Kingdom, a privilege that is not afforded to all, Mat. 13:11. Hidden truths, like the fruit of most trees, lay in the higher branches of God's wisdom. It does not require mental genius or personal perfection to attain these truths, but a right heart on a quest for order and knowledge of the Holy One. It is necessary to have a willingness and ability not to see through the distorted lens of our fears, religious beliefs or even personal experiences in order that truth, (not facts but a way of thinking), can become established in us.

There are many mysteries spoken of in the New Testament. The mystery of faith, the mystery of iniquity, the mystery of God, the mystery of the candlesticks, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the gospel, the mystery of Babylon, are some of the mysteries to which we are called to seek understanding. They each contain hidden truths that unlock vast areas in relating to and understanding God. As we study each one out in context we begin to see a unifying pattern that ties each to the others. Each mystery is in some way related to the gathering, perfection and manifestation of the body of Christ. An understanding of the body of Christ, which is itself a mystery, is central in discerning the unfolding hidden truths of God's Word.

When we study the Lord's relationship to the saints and His ministry in and through them we see a number of words that connect with each other to give enlightenment. Body, temple, house, habitation, abode, church, communion, vessel, heaven, member, bride, city, are all words describing, in some measure, the residency of God with us. The body of Christ is much more than just a gathering of believers. Not only have we not yet begun to fellowship the body of Christ, in some ways we do not even understand what it is or how it functions. A gathering of people, a denomination of churches or an association of believers are all referred to by some as the body of Christ, but what really constitutes the body of Christ? What mystery of God is revealed in and through the body?

### **We are the Temple of God:**

*(Ezek 37:27 KJV) My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*(Jer 24:7 KJV) And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.*

*(Rev 21:3 KJV) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

*(2 Cor 6:16 KJV) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

The Lord desires to not only dwell with us but in us. He has never been, as some teach, a detached God, looking on from afar. God is not like an artist who displays His many creative works for His own self-gratification. In God's eyes mankind has not merely been one of His many creations to be hung on the wall of His gallery of achievement. Man was created not only to worship God and to give Him glory but to be an eternal dwelling place for Him. As the Scripture has said, *ye are the temple of God; ye are the body of Christ; Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? we have this treasure in earthen vessels; ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.* God's will is to dwell in us and from us make an eternal habitation for His Spirit. This, (not beautiful mansions in the clouds), is the essence of heaven.

When God filled us with His Spirit, it was not a completed work that He achieved; *he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*. He's still working in His body to bring it to perfection. He gave us a taste of heavenly places so that we would desire to seek completion and perfection in Him; *ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance*, and also; *but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was never meant to be an end or a stopping point or a sign of our arrival but rather a beginning in the process that would lead to maturity and the completion of our purpose. We have not received our full inheritance in Him but only the down payment of a larger and greater glory and purpose to which He calls us.

As discussed in previous articles, the Word of God can be understood in at least three different levels or dimensions. When Jesus said; *destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up*, some who heard thought He was speaking of the natural temple others believe He was only speaking of His body at the resurrection. Without doubt He was also giving forth a prophetic announcement of His body the church which would be raised up in the third day or the third millennium. His natural body was taken from the earth at the resurrection. The body that now manifests His Spirit in the earth, is that of the Church. It was Jesus' testimony of raising up this body in the third day that brought accusation from the unlearned and jealous that He was worthy of death, Mat. 26:61. We are living in the third day from Jesus. It is in our day that His body is being raised up. Jesus is the one doing it. It is not of man or from man but only by the Spirit as He teaches us to enter the Kingdom and walk in all truth. As of now many do not yet understand what God is doing or how it will be accomplished. Like many in the days of Jesus, some think such a thing to be absurd, an impossibility only worthy of ridicule, yet God is doing exactly this with those who have eyes to see.

### **The Temple of the antichrist:**

Many are concerned in the natural about a temple that is to be built in Israel that will house the antichrist. Many do not consider that if we are the temple of God, then the greater temple in which the antichrist spirit may reside is not one made with hands but the carnal mind of man; *he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*. The greater rule of the antichrist is the deception that what the carnal mind thinks is God, is not God at all but an antichrist spirit portraying God. As Paul said in Romans; *the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. An illustration of this occurs in Mathew chapter sixteen where Jesus has been speaking of His death, burial and resurrection. Peter in his carnal mind is housing religious thoughts that appear so compassionate, "let this never happen to you" but they are really thoughts of satan. Peter tells the Lord what seem to be the consoling words of a friend; *Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee*; but satan is the one who is actually speaking from Peter's temple.

There may come a man, designated by some as antichrist, who will sit in a building in Jerusalem, but his power would only be temporal if he were not able to reign in the greater temple of the mind of man. Carnality affects not only the lost but also the Christian who has not come to perfection as well. This is by far the greater danger.

The spirit of antichrist has always been in the world and manifested at times through various people and rulers; *ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists*. While many Christians are taught to look for antichrist, appearing on the world's political and religious scene, dwelling in a temple in Jerusalem *made with hands*, most never consider his residence in the greater *temple made without hands* that displays this spirit through its carnality.

Can a Christian be affected by carnality? Wasn't carnality done away with at the time of our initial salvation? Listen to the Apostle Paul as he speaks to Christians in several of his writings; *are ye not carnal; but I am carnal, sold under sin; I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; for ye are yet carnal; are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* There is a death to the carnal mind that is required for saints and the church to come into perfection or maturity.

Much of what is spoken of as the power of the Spirit in modern Christianity is nothing more than attempts by Christians to demonstrate the Spirit while walking in the carnality of their mind. While professing liberty and truth, many are really bound by fears, traditions, desires for material prosperity and elevated positions of honor. Antichrist; *sitteth*, (resides and rules), *in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*.

Each of us, as Christians, need to be more concerned about the intrusion of an antichrist spirit in our temple and in the church which is the body of Christ than we do about a brick and mortar temple in the land of Israel. *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost*. Unfortunately many do not recognize the greater mystery and the greater temple of God. Remember the natural world reveals what is already happening in the spiritual realm. The natural helps us understand the spiritual, the natural is not greater and it does not control the spiritual. Signs represented by earthquakes and floods, our present fatherless generation, propagation of homosexual lifestyles and many others, are really signs that speak more of a weak and anemic, rudderless church than they do of a debase world. The natural world is only making visible the spiritual state of the church. If we truly want to change the world, we as Christians, need to allow the Lord to change His church into His image.

### **Assembling the Body:**

*(Heb 10:25 KJV) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

The Church is the body of Christ but it is not yet the perfected, manifested body of Christ. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. As the Kingdom is present within us but has not yet been manifested in the world, so in some ways is the Church. The Church is yet to be perfected; *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*. There is a great mystery of Christ and His church which is unfolding in our day. *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*. Many in our day are coming to understand in

greater measure what the true body of Christ is and its purpose in completing the will and prophecy of God.

Paul admonishes us not to forsake the *assembling of ourselves together*. On one level of understanding many interpret this to mean that we need to be in church services when they are scheduled. This may generally be true, but if we allow the Lord to stretch us and to lay hold of a higher realm of truth, we would see that the assembling together is a process that requires order, change and growth. The word assemble, means to fit together in one the various parts. It reminds us of Paul's instruction to the Ephesians to be; *fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Assembling ourselves together then, becomes the process by which we as individual members of Christ's body become joined through the Spirit into a body that is increasing toward perfection. A local church can have all its membership attend church at the same time and not be assembled together. Just being in the same building does not bring forth an assembling, but being of the same mind and vision does; *that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Paul tells us that the manner of some is to forsake this assembling together. As our spiritual eyes are enlightened to see the unfolding plan of God in our day we need to work toward a unity and relationship that will bring forth the manifestation of the body; *so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.* To be assembled together is going to involve much more than just meeting together in the same building once or twice a week. This assembling is going to require that we first have a true vision; second, that the church seek, understand and follow that vision; third, that the members of the body seek, understand and follow right biblical order. After these, the church must understand and practice the doctrine, see their individual places in the body, come forth in their particular ministries and complete the various other functions designated for the body. In this way the body can be of the same mind and in the same judgment; *fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.* This is a process and it must be ruled by the Spirit.

Next Month: "The Mystery of the Body of Christ" - Part Two

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