

THE BODY OF CHRIST

1. 1CO 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 1CO 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 1CO 11:25 In the same way {He took} the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink {it,} in remembrance of Me." 1CO 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 1CO 11:27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 1CO 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 1CO 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, **if he does not judge the body rightly.** 1CO 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

What does it mean to judge the body rightly? If we don't discern the body correctly disaster can befall us! If there is ignorance of the body there will surely be error in judging the body rightly. Could it really be true that ill health can be the result of ignorance of the body and not just something that is going around? The Holy Spirit must be very eager and concerned about revealing "the body" to us!

These scriptures are dealing with the Lord's Supper and about the proper way to participate and a warning about taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy way. We may eat and drink judgement upon ourselves and be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. This reveals the very seriousness of this fellowship of the cup and the bread.

1CO 10:16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 1CO 10:17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

There probably have been hundreds of books and thousands of articles written about the body of Christ. Still we are not much closer to understanding what that means or the great impact on society it was designed to produce. The bible says that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. That is an eternal and absolute reality in the mind of God. It is already a settled issue that will not and cannot be compromised. If the reality is that Christ is the head, then there is a parallel reality that the church is the body of Christ.

Most all true Christians will heartily agree with this statement regardless of their denominational affiliation. There is not much problem with the doctrine being clear. The problem is in getting this reality down into our experience so that we walk with the revelation that we are members of His body and therefore must act in a Christlike way.

If we did a survey of church members of hundreds of churches to get a consensus of definitions of what "the body of Christ" means and how it functions, we would end up with confusion. We would probably get the answer that it is "the church". This is doctrinally correct but still clouded in mystery, too vague and abstract as far as personal involvement. If we ask, "What is your personal involvement daily in the body of Christ", we would also find confusion. Is the "body of Christ" a living reality or just another nice

concept?

The body suggests connected members that function as a unit and are all interdependent. It suggests that all members share the same life, goals, vision and revelation. It suggests that when one member moves all the other members move with it. It suggests that if one member hurts all the other members feel the pain. Also if one member is honored all the other members will rejoice. Within the body, every member would be deeply concerned for every other member.

Now when we see the actual attitude within the church, which is supposed to be "the body of Christ", we have to wonder what went wrong! Instead of a living definition of the body, we see isolationism, competition, rejection, discrimination and planned division. Is the doctrine of the body a sham that has no practical outworking? Was Paul just speaking about an ideal that was a goal but not practical or achievable in daily life?

This might seem like a very plausible answer because in nearly 2000 years of history we haven't seen it worked out in life experience. Some say Paul was just speaking about a "mystical" unity within the "mystical" body that is really undefinable. Some say the body is a principle that will become a reality in eternity but is beyond present experience.

Since the body of Christ is not tangible and is something we can't see or touch, how can we identify it? Since the body of Christ is worldwide and not confined to one location, how can we be expected to participate in a personal and daily way? What is the catalyst that holds it all together so it is not a corpse but a living organism? The catalyst must certainly be "LIFE". His "LIFE".

It is obvious that there is the universal scope of the body of Christ that cannot be locally manifested. That aspect will surely have to remain abstract. However, on the local level, where there is ample opportunity for co-operation and function, how can we justify division?

"THE BODY" suggests that the same life that is in the head flows throughout the body and into each member. Whatever does not have the life of the head cannot be a member of the body. Whether it is a toe or an internal member, the same life immerses each member and each member functions because of that life. If we remove the life, the member cannot function and dies. Christ's body has no wooden legs without life or extra, artificial or transplanted parts. In fact no member of His body can have a defect.

Now if each of us has received His life and His Spirit, how is it that each one is not body conscious with a genuine concern for other members? We understand that an artificial leg will have no body consciousness and will feel nothing. Paul leaves no room for such a possibility. 1CO 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if {one} member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1CO 12:27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

One problem in the church is that we can learn all sorts of doctrines and know what is doctrinally correct but not have the inner life to manifest the truth of the doctrines we have learned. Many churches, therefore, teach the members how they ought to act in order to act like Christians. The doctrine may clearly exhort us to not move independently of other members because we are a body that moves as one. We can all learn the doctrine and quote the verses and then do our own thing and

declare our freedom in Christ. We learn the doctrine and reject the "bondage" of being joined to others.

We will never function as "the body" by learning doctrines about the body. We will only function as "the body" by following the life of the Head that He has put into us. Each of us should have a vital consciousness of that life of God that is in us. It is the life of God in us that is directed, taught, led and receives the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some seem to think that the Holy Spirit just takes us by the hand and jerks us in the right direction.

All who have His life should have an inner light, an inner consciousness which causes an inner motivation and knowing. Why do we have to tell people how they should act? Because this inner guidance is not working or it is being ignored. When this inner discernment is functioning we know the life of Christ is being manifested. We know the Holy Spirit is taking the things of Jesus and revealing them to the inner life. When we fellowship with other Christians we should touch this life. If no such life is manifest we must wonder what went wrong.

1JO 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death **into life**, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 1JO 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down **our lives** for the brethren. The life that is in us should have a manifestation. If it doesn't, we might suspect that death is still there. The manifestation of this life is love. This is not something that is taught but it is the normal manifestation of His life in us. We can't exhort believers into loving others or shame them into loving others. They either have the life or they don't. Teaching people who have no life, how to act like they did, is a big waste of time.

This woman in Georgia who drowned her two children in the automobile said she loved her children very much. The statement simply doesn't match the actions. If there is love within there should be the manifestation of love without.

In this same way, we know all the Christian cliches about love but if we don't have His life we won't have the love, itself. We may all know the doctrines about the body of Christ without having the "life of the body". Without the life of the body, which is the life of the Head, we won't even have the perception of the body. We may even think our group is all there is. If you are not a part of this group then you are not a part of the body. 1CO 12:15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. 1CO 12:16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. 1CO 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you!"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 1CO 12:22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; The blindness in the church is incredible. The statement we are most likely to hear is "Because you are not an ear, you cannot be a part of us because we are all ears".

Another reason so many do not recognize the body is because they are only self conscious and are not concerned about others. Some can't fellowship or participate in church activities unless everything revolves around them. Some can't pray with others with co-operation but must dominate the meeting. He feels his prayers are more important and more spiritual. He wants to be in the church but he functions as an individual. When someone speaks, they don't listen but are already planning what they

will say as soon as they can interrupt. God may have spoken very clearly in a meeting but afterwards the self centered person will have no idea what He said because he was caught up in his own thoughts. How can the body function that way? During the message they are either day dreaming or criticizing something about the speaker or the message. This individualistic spirit is a plague upon the assembly. The question we must ask is this; If they have the life of Christ in them, how can they act independently and not immediately know it?

Because of the seriousness of each one of us discerning the body of Christ, it is evident that we cannot come to full stature in Christ until this problem is reconciled. As long as we continue to function as individuals we cannot grow up in all things into Christ, who is the Head. Since the body is only one, it must also function as only one. When we look at all the division and detachment and isolation that is the normal from church to church, we may doubt that unity is possible.

When a minister only functions in order to promote his "ministry" he is working along individualistic lines and not along the function of the body. He is not discerning the body. If he monopolizes the work he cannot be pleasing to God because he has not judged the body rightly. We each should be faithful to function in the place God has set us but we must not try to do another members work. There is no competitiveness between members within the body of Christ. If there is competition it is outside the body.

When we look at the Lord's table in the light of the fellowship and sharing of various members of the body, we see there are many opportunities for error in rightly judging the body. If the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head and all life and direction comes from Him, then all the members are just functioning according to the commands of the Head.

In the past we have approached the "fellowship" (or Koionia in the Greek) as something objective like discussing certain things or playing volley ball together. Just being interested in what someone else has to say. The word means communion, fellowship, sharing, to communicate or a contribution. All these activities can be done in an objective way without being really joined together with joints and ligaments in such a way that life flows and we are receiving something so we can grow with a growth that is from God.

In this study we want to approach the Lord's table from a subjective viewpoint of the body as it is described in these various scriptures. The body truth is that no member can live, function, work, worship, pray, minister or do any thing as an isolated and independent member. In this case, fellowship, sharing, communion, communication or making a contribution would have to take place subjectively within the members. Not as an objective thing in a church service where you could retain your own individuality. This is not standing remote from the body and ministering to the body with words. In this study we want to see if it is possible to discern our own total inadequacy to function independently of other members. We are totally dependent upon all other members for our function. No member can function alone because he is joined to the body through other members. An isolated member not only has no function, it has no life or strength. Every separated member is helpless and is totally inadequate in itself. A foot, out walking by itself, is a strange sight. A mouth ministering separate from the body is a frightening thing to witness and yet it is a common thing. A mouth without the input from the ear or the

eye would certainly be speaking independent words. Without the input from the brain it would be speaking foolish things.

Of all the examples the scriptures could have given us, this example of a natural body as a picture of the functioning of the body of Christ is the most vivid. For example, if the scriptures said "You are the chariot of the Lord", it would not be as graphic. He could have many chariots but He can only have one body. Getting a clear picture of how the body functions is not a problem. We can all understand how our own body works and the necessity of every member functioning. The problem comes when we try to apply that logic to the abstract body of Jesus Christ. This would mean that all function would be through the different members as they perform their individual service but in concert with every other member. The doctrine is clear, but the body in that kind of function is difficult to imagine.

What would total dependence and cooperation with every other member really mean? Is this a practical concept or just illusion? This would have to mean that no member could just be a spectator or to sit passively and not participate. Some will say they are too shy and do not communicate well in public. We may have applied the doctrine of "You shall receive power to be my witnesses" just to evangelism and neglected the inner function of the body to the building up of itself in love. Should we have received power so there can be the proper working of each individual part? Should comatose members receive power of resurrection life to enable them to fulfil their function in the body? The answer can only be YES.

In order to properly discern the body we should begin with the subjective knowledge that I, personally, have a duty to perform within the body. I cannot assign that duty to another because he has his own unique duty to perform and cannot do his job and mine also. So many times the power of God is not released in times of ministry because the wrong member is trying to do some other member's function.

When this concept of the body comes to us as a revelation, we should immediately comprehend what our function in the body is. Knowing we are a member but having no idea what our function is, results in frustration. Deciding upon the place you would like to function is also frustration. We cannot choose a position. The first revelation we need following the revelation that we are members is a fresh revelation of the Head and His total authority over the body. We must seek The Head to find our position.

1CO 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, **just as He desired**. If we just select a position we will come into conflict with the Head and with His authority. This is also true if we come into conflict with any other member, we will immediately come into conflict with the Head. Disobedience to the Head affects our ability to function within the body. If we are ignorant of Christ's authority over the body and each of it's members, how can we properly discern the body? Even if only a few members of the Lord's body assemble together, we should recognize the order of His authority. If one member is always "in control" he probably has not discerned the body properly. The arm may at one time be in control but it is not always in control. Sometimes the leg or the mouth is in control. All other members should submit to that member that has the authority of function at that particular moment. His authority will pass to another when his function is completed.

Certain problems developed in the Charismatic Movement within the Shepherding Movement concerning the exercise of authority. COL 2:19 and **not holding fast to the head, from whom the**

entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. EPH 1:22 **And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,** EPH 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. No one can usurp that position of the authority of the Head without coming into conflict with the Holy Spirit. God has given Christ all authority in heaven and on earth and has made Him head over all things. As far as our experience is concerned, this begins in the church. If the church cannot successfully function under His Headship how will the rest of mankind recognize His headship? If every member does not personally hold fast to the Head how will the body grow. Individualistic members will cut themselves off from the growth that flows down from the Head because all that God has to give us and supply to us comes from the Head. All life, truth, intelligence, wisdom, sanctification and redemption is solely in Christ.

If we lose our direct joining to Him we cut ourselves off from the supply that is life. The vine cannot bear fruit of itself. If it is separated from the vine, for any reason, it will dry up and be of no value so will be cast into the fire. Fruit bearing is a direct result of holding fast to the Head.

One part of the discipline of the body, that is regularly ignored, is that if the Head has given no orders, the body doesn't move. The body is not obligated to "do something" even if it is wrong. "Well, we can't just sit here, we have to stay busy for the Lord", is ignoring the authority of the Head. Logically it makes sense but if we have revelation of the body, we will understand the authority of the Head to control every movement of every member.

COL 3:4 When Christ, **who is our life**, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. COL 2:6 As you therefore **have received Christ Jesus the Lord**, {so} walk in Him. This speaks to us of a continuous communication and connection with the Head. We not only must receive Christ Jesus, the Lord, "as our life" but we must then walk "in Him". It is foolhardy to develop doctrines that says we don't have to do anything but believe. To accept or receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior without maintaining a life flowing relationship, is to ignore the function of the body of Christ. To conclude that I can receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior and then walk independently of Him and do my own thing, ignores too many scriptures. We can develop doctrines that say that once we become a child of God we can never be anything less and can never be lost, but is it reasonable that God will accept them when He has clearly said otherwise.

To say that we can accept Jesus as Head and then ignore Him indicates that we have no revelation of the body. That doctrine indicates that we do not properly discern the body. No wonder many are sick and a number die before their time. Just logic tells us that no member of His body can function according to it's own will but must be subject to the Head. Multitudes are living in a false security, that has been promoted by the church, and do not rightly discern the body.

If the Lord's Table is an exercise that is exclusive and unique to functioning members of His body, then may God have mercy upon us and correct us and discipline us.

Then the question will arise about **who on earth** is the head. Is the Pastor the head? Is it really the Apostle who is the head. Is this the time for the prophet to be the head? No! There is no other Head except Jesus Christ. God has given Him to be Head over all things to the church and in every age. Both

in heaven and on earth through out the whole church age and in eternity future. Many object because there has to be authority in the church now. That is true but that authority is not the head. All authority is designed to be under The Head. Then what position does "that authority" have in the church? It has authority when it functions as a member! It also must submit to the authority of the other functioning members. All must hold fast to the Head without exception.

Many have been falsely indoctrinated to accept as head, someone alongside of Jesus Christ, who is His representative. That would make another head. The beast in Revelation has seven heads but the body of Christ only has one. It has many members but only one Head. That means that everyone else is just a member.

A few years ago the emphasis was upon having a proper and submissive relationship within a discipleship group. This came to mean "I will tell you what to do and when to do it". This was out of the divine plan for the body. The primary relationship is in holding fast to the Head. When all members hold fast to the Head it is possible to also hold together with one another without perverting the horizontal relationship. All members can relate to each other when all members are properly related to Christ. It is our relationship to Christ that brings balance to our relationship to each other.

Now having said all that we will look at the function of the body and it's value to the believer. Ever since the so-called "church services" have been held on the television, many have proclaimed that the T.V. is their church. If just listening to a message was all there was to a " church service" that might be acceptable. However, "the message" is just one part of the reason we assemble together. HEB 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; HEB 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, HEB 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging {one another}; **and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.** This isolation from the corporate group leaves a believer wide open for deception but the writer of Hebrews points out the assembling together is directly related to the coming of the Lord. How can we stimulate one another to love and goods deeds while living in isolation?

One deception is that we can be Christians all by ourselves. Soon after someone is hurt by some carnality in the church, they get the revelation that Christianity is just my relationship with Jesus. We want Christ but not the church!

It is true that we can do some things by ourselves. We can pray , we can read the bible, we can develop a personal relationship with Jesus and we can meditate on the things of God and even receive revelation and talk in tongues by ourselves. Why then should we put ourselves through the pain and suffering of trying to communicate and fellowship with others?

We need to see there are two sides to our calling from God. We have personally repented. We are personally given life by God. Our sins are personally forgiven. We have been personally redeemed by the blood of Jesus. All this is vertical and is experienced between God and me, personally. However, if we stay in isolation we will never develop, mature and grow up into Christ. Edification requires the input of the group. The message of 1 Cor. 12 & 13 & 14 is mutual edification. This is horizontal and requires the human fellowship. If you have ever tried to fellowship with one of these lone rangers you know their

spiritual life and knowledge of the Lord is quite superficial and in times of suffering and trial they backslide. How will such a one be ready for the coming of the Lord?

Therefore there is the corporate side of salvation that can only be experienced in a Christian body of believers. No one can be an independent Christian without the input and fellowship of the rest of the family of God. God doesn't have just one child but many children. He is a Father of a vast family. Whoever is born of God, is born into a great family of other children. The Father's desire is for each of His children to grow up in **All** things. If there is no communication or fellowship in a natural family, we know instinctively that something is wrong.

It is true that each of us become the habitation of God when we are born again. However, there is the church which is the corporate habitation of God. Paul refers to the church as the household of God. Each of us is a **dwelling place** while the church is a **HOUSEHOLD**. EPH 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and **are of God's household**, GAL 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. MAT 24:44 "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think {He will.} MAT 24:45 "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master **put in charge of his household** to give them their food at the proper time? MAT 24:46 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. MAT 24:47 "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. Jesus also refers to the eternal realms as the household of God. The household of God does not just refer to the present times but for eternity. For this reason it is critical that we learn to function within the household of God.

1PE 2:4 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, 1PE 2:5 you also, as living stones, are **being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. One of the imperfections, that is readily visible in the church, is that loose stones are not a building. We may consider them as building material but a large pile of stones are worthless as a building to house priests. What we often call "church" is just a gathering of living stones that are not yet built together. That is why we see stones wandering from one pile to another. Jesus spoke of the desolation of the Jewish temple when there would not be one stone left on top of another. This is similar to what we see in the church. When there is no building, just stones, the meaning is desolation. The fear is that if we permit ourselves to be built and cemented together, it is too permanent. We may lose our freedom in Christ. That is true, but what is more important, to have a temple and a holy priesthood for God or our freedom in Christ? The fact is that we prefer our freedom over God's purpose. One stone is not a temple. One priest is not a priesthood. Unrelated stones is not God's purpose.

EPH 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, EPH 1:23 which is His body, **the fullness of Him who fills all in all**. Why is it that we seldom see the fullness of Christ in the meetings? Because the fullness can only be seen in "the body". The body suggests a corporate group but is much better understood when seen as a temple built together. We don't really accept the significance or understand the weakness of being independent from other members. In fact we may reject a person, who has received the life of God, because he holds a different doctrine than ours. We may justify that by saying "We are very zealous for truth" but what

about the truth of the body?

When I was a young boy we used to hunt for old wooden barrels that had staves held together by steel bands. We would cut the bands and the wood staves would all fall apart. We made sleds and skis from the staves. As long as the staves were tightly held together the barrel would hold water or other liquid. If you just removed one stave the whole barrel would collapse and become useless to hold liquid. All the parts may be there but the function was ruined. Even if you took all the staves except one and tried to fasten them together they wouldn't hold liquid. It took every part before there was function. If one stave refused to participate, the whole function was ruined. Each stave could still be perfectly fashioned but each stave independently could not hold the fullness. This is exactly the problem with individual believers. To contain the fullness of God we must be fitly framed together. EPH 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; Another translation says " Every part of the building closely joined together. Another says " Closely bonded together". Another says " Each piece of the building properly fitting into it's neighbor".

The real revelation is that we are much more than just a building made up of living stones, we are the body of Jesus Christ.

When I was in college in Washington D.C. we went several weekends to the Smithsonian Museum. In the Medical Museum they had many body parts preserved in glass jars so you could see how various diseases affected the parts. I can remember a huge leg that had elephantitis. It was as large as a small person's body. They had a man's genitals that would have hung down between the ankles. There were all kinds of freak parts. There was a ear that was as large as a dinner plate. I saw a leg that had leprosy that the flesh was eaten up so you could see the bones. While there were hundreds of body parts there was not a useful body. Some of the body parts were very old and were preserved very well but all the old parts didn't make a mature body.

This is the confusion in the church. Old independent believers will never make a mature body. The fullness of Christ's life can only be manifested in a mature body and not in mature body parts. This research scientist that I listen to in Miami considers himself to be a mature body part. However, he can't fellowship with anyone who is not as smart as him. Stupid persons or stupid sermons disgusts him. He asks, why don't they read the bible and find out what it says before they preach or talk? Fellowship and being joined is a big problem for him. He has done much research but he has only the life that he holds and not fullness. The fullness of God's life overcomes the lack of research because the fullness of life brings revelation that transcends research.

HEB 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, **not laying again a foundation** of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, HEB 6:2 of instruction about baptisms, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. There are six foundations listed here which are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. These are required before anyone can go on to maturity. The instruction is don't keep laying these foundations over and over. Lay them once and then go on.

One weakness in the church is that not all the foundations are even laid once and the few that are laid are re-emphasized over and over again. We continue to preach on repentance, faith, forgiveness of

sins, the blood, salvation, water baptism, laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, Resurrection, and the second coming of Christ. There is little wonder that the church does not mature. Then why don't we just stop preaching foundations and get on with the strong meat of the word? Because the strong meat is only for the mature. The immature must continue to receive just the milk of the word.

HEB 5:12 For though by this time **you ought to be teachers**, you have need again for someone to **teach you the elementary principles** of the oracles of God, and you have **come to need milk and not solid food**. HEB 5:13 For everyone who partakes {only} of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. HEB 5:14 But **solid food is for the mature**, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Today there are several churches that teach that we are saved by faith and water baptism does nothing for the believer. If you want to be baptized it's O.K. but it is not required. The other foundations are handled the same way, as though they were not important. Consequently, there are multitudes that are deceived into thinking they are going on when they haven't even properly started. Now, to this carnality, we are trying to add new members. Then we try to add members, who have no concept of foundation for the Christian life, to those old members that have no concept of the foundations. To whom can we preach the meat of the word? We can't, in the church setting as we know it today! Then how is the church to mature? It can't unless the system is changed. Not the system the early church used but the system that so many use today.

Ever since the church has "systemized" the meeting in assembly to be pulpit and pew, talker and listeners, leaders and followers, we's and ye's, ministers and believers, the concept of the body of Christ has been lost, as far as function is concerned. The church has been "built" on the basis of ministry instead upon the basis of "the body". Why has such a thing happened since the scriptures are so clear? Because we do not discern the body rightly!

Many gather together around a certain ministry or a certain preacher. They gather in order to meet with a ministry rather than to meet with the Lord. Many meet together with a group where they only know a few people so they can be anonymous. Some choose a very large group so they won't be required to communicate, share, fellowship, contribute or be responsible to anyone. They certainly don't discern the body rightly. Is it then proper to attempt to take the Lord's Table under these conditions? It could be dangerous!

There are at least two aspects of meeting together. One is vertical, to meet with the Lord. The other is horizontal, to meet with the body. These are seen many places but we will look at these two viewpoints from the Lord's supper and then from the Lord's table. The Lord's supper in 1 Cor 11:23-30 and the Lord's table from 1 Cor 10:16-17, along with 1CO 10:21 You cannot drink **the cup of the Lord** and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of **the table of the Lord** and the table of demons.

Both types of meetings involve the cup and the bread, the eating and the drinking but the meetings are different. One meeting is centered upon the Christ and the vertical relationship and the other is focused upon Christ and the horizontal relationship. In one Christ is the one bread and in the other we are the one bread. In 1 cor 11 the bread represents the actual, physical body of the Lord Jesus Christ that has been given for us at Calvary. In 1Cor 10 the bread represents the spiritual body of Jesus Christ that has

been prepared for us, the church. There is one bread because there is only one body. If there is only one body there can only be one church. The Lord's supper is gathering around the cup and the bread to remember the Lord, His death, His New Covenant, and His coming again. The Table of the Lord or what we call "The Lord's Table" we acknowledge our part in the body of Christ here on the earth. This is a fellowship, sharing, communication, contribution, communion with other members. This would coincide with 1 Cor 14:26 and is part of the same teaching.

The theme of this teaching is 1CO 10:14 Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry**. 1CO 10:19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 1CO 10:20 {No,} but {I say} that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to demons**, and not to God; and I do not want you to **become sharers in demons**. 1CO 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and **the table of demons**. 1CO 10:22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

Paul's argument is that if we are partakers of Christ, we cannot also be partakers of demons. The question that he was answering has obviously to do with eating things sacrificed to idols. We can stand on God's side or we can stand on the Devil's side but we cannot stand on both sides.

If we stand on God's side, we must stand on the ground of the body and our sharing in Christ. Even the elements of the cup and the bread suggest our unity as one body because there is only one cup and only one bread. The cup focuses upon our sharing in the blood of Christ and the bread focuses upon our sharing in the body of Christ. Since there is only one loaf there can only be one body. The cup is related to the blood of Christ and the bread is related to the body of Christ. "We who are many" is related to the one bread that speaks of the one body. No one member of the body can then be related to the table of demons or it affects the whole body. 1CO 10:24 Let no one seek his own {good,} but that of his neighbor. Whatever we do we must recognize that we are part of a larger dimension of the body and we should be careful not to contaminate others. We certainly have the freedom to eat anything that is set before us but not if it will cause others in the body to stumble. There is definitely a horizontal aspect of this eating and drinking.

This teaching is not focused upon our remembering the Lord or His death or His coming again. It is not centered upon the New Covenant. It has to do with our relationship with other brethren.

1CO 11:18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that **divisions exist among you**; and in part, I believe it. 1CO 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you. 1CO 11:20 **Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper**, 1CO 11:21 for in your eating **each one takes his own supper** first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. This sounds like a picnic supper where everyone brings something to eat and each family eats their own stuff without regard for others. It seems obvious from the context that they were calling this "The Lord's Supper"! They were all eating together in a fashion but were not sharing. Paul was condemning this practice and saying that cannot possibly be the Lord's supper and what they were doing was an abomination. Then Paul explains to them how the revelation of the Lord's supper was given to him by the Lord and what it means.

From the whole context it is clear that what they were doing was taking the Lord's supper in an

unworthy way and they were not discerning the body rightly. Therefore, they were eating and drinking judgement upon themselves instead of blessing.

This is not primarily a teaching on the "doctrine of the Lord's supper" but is a teaching on the function of the body and how seriously the Lord views our position in the body. To receive this teaching just as the mechanics of taking the Lord's supper is too shallow. Unless the body is functioning, the Lord's Supper would be for the worse and not for the better and result in judgement.

There is nothing wrong with coming together for a fellowship meal but it must be in the context of sharing and on the basis of body and not on the pretext of the Lord's supper. This supper is to fill your stomach because of hunger and is not focused upon the Lord but upon our own needs. 1CO 11:34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come. The Lord's supper is an entirely different thing than this kind of corporate dinner.

The context of 1Cor 12 is spiritual gifts and how they function within the context of the body. Their focus is upon the edification of each member. The focus is not ministry but on edification of others. We have perverted the gifts to strengthen and embellish our ministry rather than strengthen and build up the body. The gifts then are objective and for the benefit of others. They are not designed to exalt the minister but to exalt the Lord who gives the gift. 1Cor 13 highlights the fact that the gifts all work properly through love for the brethren. The activating factor of the gifts is love. The gifts just don't work if we try to use them to draw attention to ourselves. Some things operate out of scriptural knowledge. Some things operate out of faith. Some operate out of personal sacrifice. The gifts work out of love for the one in need of the blessing of the gift.

1Cor 14 shows us the way the spiritual gifts and ministries function within the assembly of believers. The key word is edification and that not just for ourselves but for others. Others then seek to edify you and others.

There are five different kinds of meetings mentioned in the scriptures. (1) The evangelistic meeting. (2) The preaching and teaching meetings (3) 1Cor 14 or the mutual edification meeting (4) The prayer meeting (5) the different kinds of fellowship dinners (6) The Lord's supper meetings. This last one is not very clear in scripture. We know there was this kind of meeting but we don't know if it was a part of another meeting. Some think the early church took the Lord's supper at every believers meeting. Some of the early church fathers write that the early church came together early on the seventh day and sang some songs, prayed, shared testimony and took the Lord's Supper and went to work. The preaching and teaching meetings were not the normal weekly meeting but were held when a teacher was available. Since the normal meeting was held in the homes, the meetings were just a few people. It appears that letters from the Apostles were read and passed on to other home meetings. Our kind of meeting was very unusual because their meetings were based upon the body rather than based upon the ministry.

However, in Antioch it could have been different. ACT 13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was {there}, **prophets and teachers:** Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ACT 13:2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas

and Saul for the work to which I have called them." This was not a public meeting but we do see that there were prophets and teachers in the church. They were not just passing through so they were available for a church meeting. We don't know what the pattern for their meeting was but we know that when Paul and Barnabas came back they reported to the church. ACT 14:27 And when they had arrived and **gathered the church together**, they { began} to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ACT 14:28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

However the early church meetings were held it is not mandatory that we do the same. What is mandatory is that we are being led by the Spirit. Still, we may also have different kinds of meetings. From experience we see that most of these kinds of meetings are neglected in most churches. Even though some churches serve the Lord's supper every Sunday does not necessarily mean it is acceptable to God. Some churches have several fellowship dinners a year. Some never have a meeting where the gifts of the Spirit have freedom for mutual edification. Some prayer meetings have turned into teaching meetings or gossip meetings. Some churches never have a street evangelistic meeting. They are now called "Revival meetings" and are directed toward the believers. Without the evangelistic meeting the church lacks new souls. Ideally, every person functions as an evangelist.

The mutual edification meetings have been replaced with pulpit and pew where the "pastor" is appointed to edify everyone. We pick our pastors for their ability to preach and teach and not for their shepherding gifts. Our pastors must be professionally trained so they are expert in all areas of ministry so the believers have no need for individual gifts and graces. They would rather employ a "hireling" to do their work for them.

The normal stay for a pastor in a denominational church is just a few years. In some just two years. The reason they must be changed so often is because the church is not functioning on the basis of body but on the basis of ministry. When new people come into that kind of church they learn the system and accept that as normal so the tradition continues without any support from scripture. New believers should not be brought into one of these unscriptural meetings so that the error may be corrected. Once they start in our kind of meeting they will never want to take responsibility to fulfill their function in the body but just expect the "pastor" to do everything. Sometime this nonsense must stop. We have no support in scripture to make a "sermon" the center of all gatherings.

We are not saying that there never were sermons but that was not a normal gathering of believers. ACT 20:7 And on the first day of the week,(Sunday) when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul {began} talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he **prolonged his message** until midnight. ACT 20:8 And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. ACT 20:9 And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. ACT 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ACT 20:18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ACT 20:19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; ACT 20:20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and **teaching you**

publicly and from house to house, ACT 20:21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We see that our kind of meeting may have been the exception and not the rule. However, a normal Sunday church service is not defined. 1 Cor 14:26 is the only thing we have that shows a format. Nothing is relevant except what the Holy Spirit decides for any particular meeting. They don't all have to be the same but they should all be led by the Spirit. What may attract people may not attract God and if God doesn't show up the meeting is irrelevant, no matter what the format. Format then is not the goal. The presence of God is the goal. Mutual edification will be the result.

Preaching and teaching meetings are certainly acceptable but they are not the only kind of meeting we should recognize. Evangelistic meetings are certainly necessary but they are not the only kind of meeting we should recognize, etc. Some may advocate one kind of meeting and others may advocate another. All meetings, except evangelistic, are irrelevant if there is no body functioning. Evangelistic meetings should also be the result of the body functioning and not as an independent effort. It seems that today the evangelist finds very little function within the church and therefore works independently. We don't normally picture an evangelist being built, as a stone, into the house of God. That may appear too restrictive. However, if the evangelist is not a part of the body, his ministry is irrelevant. Our concept of what an evangelist is needs correction and not the ministry of the evangelist. If we read carefully we will see that the ministry of Phillip was on the basis of the body and not on the basis of ministry.

We see there are two aspects of God's grace. First there is the personal and individual grace we receive from the Lord. Second we see is the corporate grace that is given to the church to fulfill her purpose. This corporate grace can only be obtained within the assembly of joined believers. One problem we see is individuals with individual grace assembled together do not necessarily have corporate grace. Consequently there is confusion, conflict and dissention. There are personality clashes. The assembly cannot be in one place and in one accord and there can, therefore, be no agreement in prayer.

In addition to this there is a corporate grace to receive and minister the things of God. For example, we may personally study a certain scripture for sometime and receive no light. Then in assembly, when there is unity, we receive revelation light. Many times when I am preaching I discern that my words are falling to the ground and no light is being received. I have condemned myself for not praying enough or working enough to present the thoughts clearly. Just recently I understood that if the assembly is not in agreement no light is given because there is no corporate grace given. The Holy Spirit has the final word in every meeting. If we promote division we will receive no light. We may condemn the preacher but it has passed out of his hands. When every person is walking in the light as He, Himself, is in the light, the room is full of light. The degree of Divine Light is much greater than is available to one individual. Then it is not difficult to receive more light. Many times when I am sharing and we feel that special anointing, I receive greater light than I had when I came to the meeting.

If we just come to the meeting to receive more information and pile up more knowledge it makes little difference if there is unity. However, if we know the difference between information and light we will never be satisfied with mere knowledge. This is the first that I have understood why there is such a difference in ministry from one church to another.

Most of us recognize the difference between the outer court life and ministry and the Holy Place life and ministry. Most of us haven't seen the difference in grace. The lampstand is hammered out of one piece of gold and the lampstand is a picture of the functioning church. It would be difficult to define unity and harmony clearer than this. The light, therefore, in the Holy Place is very different than the natural light of the outer court. This is exactly why the revelations from the showbread can only be received in the Holy Place. This is exactly why the Altar of Incense is not in the outer court. This is why only the anointed and consecrated priest could function in the Holy Place life and ministry.

PSA 133:1 (A Song of Ascents, of David.) Behold, **how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!** PSA 133:2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, {Even} Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. PSA 133:3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the \Lord\ commanded the blessing-- life forever. This is a revelation of our Great High Priest and His body. The oil is poured out upon the head. From there it flows down over the head, down over the shoulders, down over the garments even to the bottom edge of His robe. The body is baptized (or immersed by the anointing) similar to the dew descending upon the mountain. Every part is touched. God is not anointing body parts but He is anointing His body. If we try to separate the anointing from the unity we get what we see in the church today. Thousands of words falling on the ground but very little light. Life and blessing flow within the anointing when there is unity. Many receive neither life or blessing in the meeting because they are just individuals attending a meeting to evaluate it from a distance. For years I have wondered why some receive light and some don't, some receive life and some don't, some are blessed and some are offended. Just now I came to realize it is all based upon unity and the corporate grace and blessing. Much of the spiritual work and correction and growth is done in these times of light and anointing.

There is also the corporate power and authority that far surpasses the individual power and authority. LEV 26:7 'But you will chase your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword; LEV 26:8 **five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand,** and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. If five can chase a hundred, each one can chase twenty. However, if a hundred can chase ten thousand the power and authority has increased because a hundred could only chase two thousand. There is a five fold increase in power and authority. It is difficult to get five to agree and be in harmony and very difficult to get a hundred to agree and be in harmony. In the body of Christ all members will agree and be in harmony. What great power and authority can be released.

There is also the personal presence of God and the corporate presence of God. The corporate presence of God is much greater as most of us can testify. The sad fact is that some in the assembly recognize neither the personal presence or the corporate presence. God can manifest Himself in a mighty way and yet some have no idea that God visited His people. MAT 18:19 "Again I say to you, that if **two of you agree** on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. MAT 18:20 "For where **two or three have gathered together in My name,** there I am in their midst." MAT 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, MAT 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always,** even to the end of the age. " The corporate presence only requires agreement with harmony between two or three. The Greek says

"symphonize", or we could say that harmonize together like a symphony orchestra. No instruments out of tune. Too much of the time we come together to meet with the brethern or to hear a sermon but we fail to meet with the Lord. Why? Because we see little importance in unity.