

Week Three

The Factor of the Church Being in the Triune God, the Local Churches Being Expressions of the Body of Christ, and the Believers Practicing the Church Life in the Consciousness of the Body

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1; Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-27

Outline

Day 1

- I. **The church is in the Triune God—“the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”—1 Thes. 1:1:**
 - A. **In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 we have the revelation of the tremendous fact that the church is in the unique God and that this God is our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:**
 1. The church is not only of God and of Christ; the church is also in God and in Christ.
 2. It is important for us to see that the church in our locality is of God and in God, of Christ and in Christ.
 - B. **The church is composed of human beings, but they, the believers, are in the Triune God—v. 1; 2 Thes. 1:1.**
 - C. **The church is a group of human beings who have been born of God the Father with His life and nature and who have been brought into the organic union with Christ:**
 1. For the church to be in God, God must become our Father, and we must have a life relationship with Him—1 John 3:1a:

- a. In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 the word Father indicates a relationship in life; in God the Father, we have been born again, regenerated, and now, as His children, we have a life relationship with Him—John 1:12-13.
- b. The church being in God the Father implies that the church is in God's purpose, plan, selection, and predestination—Eph. 1:4-5.
- c. The church in God the Father is the church in the One who is the unique Initiator and Originator—Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Matt. 15:13.

Day 2

- 2. To be in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be united with Christ organically in all that He is and has done—1 Thes. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:30:
 - a. In the Lord Jesus Christ we have the termination of everything of the old creation, for to be in Christ is to be in His death, the death that terminates all negative things—Rom. 6:4.
 - b. The title Christ in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 denotes all the riches of resurrection; thus, to be in Christ is to be in resurrection—Rom. 8:10-11.
- D. The church is in the processed Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the One who has become the life-giving Spirit with the Father and the Son—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 14:17, 23.**

Day 3

- II. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32b, 17; 12:12-13, 20, 27:**
 - A. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many local churches in the divine oneness as it is with the Triune God and in the divine nature, element, essence, expression, function, and testimony; there are many churches, yet they have one divine nature, one divine element, one divine essence, one divine expression, one divine function, and one divine testimony because they are one Body—Rev. 1:11; John 17:11, 21, 23.**
 - B. The church revealed in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the unique Body of Christ, whereas the church revealed in**

18:17 is the local church, the expression of the unique Body of Christ in a certain locality.

- C. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many local churches—local expressions of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16.**
- D. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many localities as the local churches—Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11:**
 - 1. The Body of Christ is the source of the local churches—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22.
 - 2. The universal Body is like the father to all the churches, and all the churches are like the children to the father—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:4.

Day 4

- E. Every local church is a part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression of this Body—Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27:**
 - 1. Universally, all the local churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of the universal Body; therefore, a local church is not the Body but only a part of the Body, an expression of the Body.
 - 2. The universal Christ has a part of Himself in every local church; every local church is a part of Christ, and all these parts constitute the Body—Eph. 1:23; 2:22.
- F. The local ground of the church is basically the unique oneness of the Body of Christ practiced in the local churches—4:4; 1 Thes. 1:1:**
 - 1. Both the universal Body of Christ and the local churches are uniquely one.
 - 2. There is one unique Body in the whole universe, and there is one unique local church in each locality respectively.
 - 3. This unique oneness is the basic element in the church life—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-2.
- G. The churches in different localities are for the universal expression of Christ—Eph. 1:23; Rev. 1:4, 11; 22:16a:**

1. A local church that makes everything local and that expresses only its locality has become a local sect, a local division.
 2. All the basic things for the Body are not local—the Spirit, Christ, God, the Bible, the apostles' teaching, and the apostles' fellowship.
- H. In our consideration the Body should be first and the local churches should be second—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 4:4, 16; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1:2:**
1. Local churches are the procedure God takes to reach the goal of His economy—the Body of Christ—Rom. 16:1, 4, 16; 12:4-5.
 2. We should consider our local church as a part of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:16-17; 12:12-13, 20, 27.

Day 5

III. In practicing the church life, we need to have the consciousness of the Body—vv. 12-27:

- A. In order to have the Body life, we must be full of feeling for the Body, taking the feeling of the Head as our own feeling—Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26-27; Acts 9:4-5:**
1. If we as members have the feeling of the Head in everything and care for the Body, we will take the Body as the rule in our mind, thoughts, words, and actions—Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 2:19.
 2. We should deny ourselves and identify ourselves with the Body (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 12:4-5, 15; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-27); if we do this, the life we live will be the Body life, and the Lord will gain the expression of the Body—Eph. 4:15-16; 1:22-23.
 3. Our enjoyment of Christ causes us to become conscious of the Body of Christ—Col. 2:16-17, 19.
- B. Whatever we do involves the Body; therefore, whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration of the Body—2 Cor. 8:21; Eph. 4:16:**
1. We should not do anything without taking care of the Body—1 Cor. 12:12-27.
 2. We need to consider how the Body would feel about what we are doing and

how the Body, the recovery, will react.

3. How we behave ourselves depends upon the degree of our seeing the Body.
4. If we are in one accord only in our local church and do not care for the other churches, this kind of one accord is a sect, a division—Acts 1:14; 15:25.
5. If we take care of the Body and are concerned for the Body, there will be no problems—Eph. 4:4, 16.

Day 6

C. Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16-17; 11:29:

1. All the churches on earth are one Body, and within this one Body there is the circulation of the divine life—the fellowship of the Body—1 John 1:3.
2. Fellowship is related to oneness; the circulation of the divine life in the Body brings all the members of the Body into oneness—Eph. 4:3-4; Rom. 16:1-23.
3. The local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ.
4. Although the administration of the church is local (Acts 14:23), the fellowship of the church is universal (2:42); there are churches in many cities, but there is one fellowship in the entire universe.

WEEK 3 — DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 1:1 ...To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...

Eph. 1:4-5 Even as He chose us in Him...to be holy..., predestinating us unto sonship..., according to the good pleasure of His will.

Rom. 11:36 ..Out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

[The two Epistles to the Thessalonians] were both addressed to the local church in Thessalonica, composed of all the believers in Christ in that city. Such a local church is of the believers and is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This indicates that such a local church is born of God the Father with His life and nature and is united with the Lord Jesus Christ organically in all He is and has done. Hence, it is of men (such as the Thessalonians), yet in God and in the Lord organically. Such an organic union in the divine life and nature is the vital base for the believers to live a holy life for the church life, which is the theme of the two Epistles.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul speaks of the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The preposition in here is very important; it indicates that the church is in the Triune God. The church is composed of human beings, but they, the believers, are in the Triune God. On the one hand, the church in Thessalonica was of the Thessalonians; on the other hand, this church was in God the Father. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 2-3)

Today's Reading

The church is not merely in God, but is in the Father... Father here indicates a relationship of life. God is no longer only our Creator; He is our Father. God is the Father of the church people, for we have all been born of Him. It is a wonderful fact that we have been born of God and that He is

now our Father!

Suppose your father were the President of the United States. If such were the case, you could refer to him as “my father, the President.”...To refer to our President may indicate that you are a citizen. But if you could say, “my father, the President,” that would indicate that the President is your father and that you have a life relationship with him. In the same principle, we can speak of God as being our Father. No longer is God only our Creator. He has become our Father, for we have been born of Him. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is our Lord. Hallelujah, we have a Father and a Lord!

God the Father has a definite purpose in producing many sons. He is not a foolish father, one without a purpose. Rather, He has a purpose and a plan. God’s selection and predestination are according to His purpose. First He selected us and then predestinated us. This indicates that God is the unique initiator and originator. Thus, for the church to be in God the Father implies that the church is in God’s purpose, plan, selection, and predestination. No doubt, the church is also in God’s calling. The church in God the Father is the church in the One who is the initiator and originator.

This understanding of the church in the Father is not merely a matter of doctrine; rather, it has much to do with us in our practical experience. A problem among Christians today is that they have many different purposes and plans. There are different initiators and originators. This is not right. We Christians all should have the unique purpose, the purpose of our Father. We should also have the unique plan of the Father. This means that only one—the Father—should be the initiator and originator. We should not originate anything or initiate anything. Imagine what would happen if all Christians gave up their own purposes and plans and had only one initiator and originator. What oneness there would be among us all! There would be no division whatever. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 45, 63-64)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msgs. 1, 3, 5, 7-9; CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 2, “The Intrinsic View of the Body of Christ,” chs. 2, 4

WEEK 3 — DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead..., so also we might walk in newness of life.

8:11 ...If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Now let us go on to consider what it means for the church to be in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a great matter to be in Christ. To be in Christ means that there is no sin, flesh, self, natural life, old creation, death, or Satan. If we are in Christ, everything negative has been terminated. Sin, death, the self, the flesh, Satan, and the old creation have all been terminated. For those who are in Christ everything other than God has been terminated. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, p. 64)

Today's Reading

We in the Lord's recovery claim to be practicing the church life. Whenever we make such a claim, however, we need to check to see whether we are still holding to our culture or disposition. Regarding this matter, sometimes we expect others to sympathize with us.... In the Lord Jesus Christ there are no weak vessels. Therefore, we should not expect anyone to sympathize with our natural disposition.... For the church to be in the Lord Jesus Christ in a practical way, we all need to be terminated and buried. We need to die and then be placed in the tomb. This is to be in the Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 6:3] clearly says that to be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into Christ's death. How, then, can we be in Christ without also being in His death? To be in Christ is to be buried, terminated.... Whether we like to hear it or not, it is the truth that to be in Christ is to be terminated.

During special times of conference or training, saints come together from different cities and regions. Outwardly, no one says anything in favor of his locality. But deep within we may be proud of coming from a certain place. In our heart we may say, "...Our place is the best." To think in this way is to exalt ourselves. When we claim to be of a certain place, we are excluding ourselves from the Lord Jesus Christ. The church must be only in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The title Christ in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 denotes all the riches of resurrection. If the Lord were only Jesus and not Christ, we could not be in Him. But because He is the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be in Him and we are in Him right now. Where are we? We are in the Lord Jesus Christ. The name Jesus implies that everything we are in the old creation and in the fall has been terminated, and the title Christ implies that we are no longer in ourselves, in the old creation, in sin and death, in the world, and in Satan. Instead, we are in resurrection, in the Spirit, and in righteousness, holiness, power, strength, and might. Because we are in Christ, we are even on the throne with Him. Oh, how marvelous it is to be in Christ.

To be in the Lord Jesus Christ means on the one hand that we are terminated and are no longer in the old creation. On the other hand, it means that by being in Christ, we are in resurrection. To be in Christ is to be in resurrection, in the Spirit, in power, in strength, and in authority.

Do you realize that because you are in Christ, you are on the throne? Not only are you in power, might, strength, and authority, but you are also on the throne. After His resurrection Christ went to the heavens to be enthroned, and in Him we also are on the throne. Sometimes we need to say to Satan, "Satan, don't you see where I am? I am in Christ on the throne!" (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 65-66, 76-77)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Corinthians, msgs. 1-3; CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 2, "Five Emphases in the Lord's Recovery," chs. 1, 4; CWWL, 1990, vol. 2, "A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery," pp. 389-431

WEEK 3 — DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:18 ...Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Rom. 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

16:16 ...All the churches of Christ greet you.

We need to see the profit of the Body to the local churches and the profit of the local churches to the Body. We can use a family as an illustration of this.... If we do not have a father, we are orphans. An orphan does not receive the profit, the benefit, from a father, so he suffers a lot. But a man who does not have any children also suffers. This is a good illustration of how the Body of Christ is the source of the local churches. Such a universal Body is like the father to all the churches, and all the churches are like the children to the father.

Many of the members in a local church may not actually be saved directly by that church. Instead, they are saved elsewhere and come from other localities. This is the benefit from the Body to that local church. This is the profit from the “father” to his “child.” Some among us enjoyed the inheritance from the Body, but then they gave up the Body and would not care for the Body. They have caused divisions, and divisions are a part of degraded Christianity. (CWWL, 1993, vol. 2, “The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life,” p. 105)

Today's Reading

The church that Christ is building is the universal church, not the church in a nation or the church in a city. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said to Peter, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church.”...Christ Himself is the very rock upon which the church is built. The church in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the one church in the

entire universe.

The universal church is the unique Body of Christ. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, Christ is the Head, and the church is His Body. Christ the Head has only one Body (4:4). It is abnormal for a head to have more than one body... In Christianity today, the unique Body of Christ has been divided into countless "bodies."...All the different [so-called churches] claim that their Head is Christ. This means that the one Head, Christ, has many bodies. This is not only wrong, but this is grotesque. In the midst of today's abnormal situation, we strongly affirm that the Body of Christ is uniquely one. There is one Head and one Body. Surely, this one Body cannot be a particular local church. This one Body must be the universal church, the church as a whole. Christ as the Head is unique, and the universal church as the Body is also unique.

This one universal church, one Body, comprises all the local churches. There may be thousands of local churches, but together they constitute one universal church. Each local church is only a part of the universal church. The universal church is the unique Body of Christ, and all the local churches are simply the local expressions of that one Body.

The local churches compose the one universal church. Acts 15:41 speaks of the churches in Syria and Cilicia, and Romans 16:4 mentions the churches in the Gentile world. Second Corinthians 8:1 speaks of the churches in the province of Macedonia; Galatians 1:2, of the churches in the province of Galatia; and Revelation 1:4, of the churches in the province of Asia.... In the New Testament we can see many local churches, and together these local churches are considered as one universal church.

The local churches are the local expressions of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 2:22)... Universally, all the churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of that universal Body. A local church is not the Body; it is only a part of the Body. It is a local expression of the Body. (CWWL, 1984, vol. 4, "Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life," pp. 488-490)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 1, "Further Consideration of the Eldership, the Region of Work, and the Care for the Body of Christ," chs. 1-2

WEEK 3 — DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

Eph. 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling.

1 Cor. 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

All the local churches constitute the one Body of Christ (Eph. 4:4). In Matthew 16:18...the church is...singular..., indicating... the universal church. But in the Acts and the Epistles, a number of times the Bible says “the churches.”...The Bible [can] refer first to one church and then to many churches... because the one church, the universal church, is the totality of all the churches, and all the churches are local constituents of the one universal church. (CWWL, 1984, vol. 4, “Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life,” p. 490)

Today's Reading

We need to consider what the genuine ground of the church is. The ground denotes the site on which a building is built.... The church has spread to many nations in Europe, North and South America, Africa, and Asia. In all the different nations the church is built upon the proper ground. The proper ground for the building of the church is the ground of locality.... The church is now being built in Seoul, [Korea]. Thus, the city of Seoul has become its ground. We may say that there are many churches, yet the many churches are still just one church.... Locally speaking, we are in many churches, but universally speaking, we are all in one church. Are you in the local churches, or are you in the universal church? It is wise to answer, “I am in the universal church by being in a local church.” We are not in the Roman Church, the British Church, the American Church, or the Korean Church; we are in the universal church by being in the local churches. Since we are now in the city of Seoul, we should say that we are in the universal church by being in the church in Seoul. Although my wife and I reside in

Anaheim, we should remember that during our stay with the saints in Seoul, we are not in the church in Anaheim but in the church in Seoul.

You are a member of the universal church, which Jesus Christ is building, by being a member of a proper local church. While we are in Seoul, we are members of the universal church by being members of the church in Seoul. This is the proper practice of the church.... As long as we are members of a proper local church, we are members of the churches universally.

The ground of the church should not be merely local; it should also be universal. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality; universally, the ground of the church is the genuine oneness. Christ has only one Body. The oneness of Christ's Body is the universal ground of the church.

Suppose all the local churches in Korea are one with each other but are not one with the churches in other continents. If this were the case, the churches in Korea may have the local ground, the ground of locality, but they would not have the universal ground, the ground of the oneness of the Body. In the entire universe Christ has only one Body. All the local churches in the six continents—in North America, in South America, in Europe, in Africa, in Australia, and in Asia—are one Body. This is the universal ground of the genuine oneness.

The churches in England may say to the churches in Germany, "We are the churches in England, and you are the churches in Germany; therefore, don't bother us." Locally, they may be right, but universally, they are wrong. They may keep the local oneness, but they destroy the universal oneness. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality, and universally, the ground of the church is the oneness of the universal Body of Christ. Hence, there is the local aspect of oneness, and there is also the universal aspect of oneness. (CWWL, 1984, vol. 4, "Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life," pp. 490-493)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1990, vol. 2, "A Genuine Church," pp. 373-382; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 1, "The Practical Points concerning Blending," chs. 1-4

WEEK 3 — DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

1 Cor. 12:25-26 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.

Since we are the members of the Body of Christ, we should have a feeling for the Body. First, we must take the feeling of the Head as our own feeling. In Philippians 1:8 Paul says, “I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.” This means that Paul took the inward parts of Christ Jesus as his own inward parts in caring for the church. This also means that he took care of the Body of Christ by taking Christ’s feeling as his own feeling. Christ’s feeling became his feeling for the Body. We all should be like Paul, taking the feeling of the Head as our own feeling. This is most necessary for our living the Body life. Furthermore, we should not only take the feeling of the Head as our feeling but also do so in the principle of caring for the Body. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:25b-26 that “the members would have the same care for one another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.” In order for us to have the Body life, we must care for our fellow members and must be full of feeling for the Body. (CWWL, 1990, vol. 2, “The Oneness and the One Accord according to the Lord’s Aspiration and the Body Life and Service according to His Pleasure,” p. 94)

Today’s Reading

Turmoil after turmoil has transpired because of our not knowing the Body. The only remedy that can cure us of this kind of illness is the seeing of the Body. When Brother Nee taught about the Body, he said that with whatever we do, we have to consider how the churches would feel about it. When we do something, we must not forget that we are members of the Body, and the Body is not only a local church. The local church is not a

“local body”; if it is, it becomes a local sect. The Body is the Body of Christ, constituted by the Triune God with all the believers on this earth, with all the local churches.

How we behave ourselves depends upon the degree of our seeing of the Body. I want to say again that whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration for the Body. We need to consider how the Body would feel about what we are doing. The biggest problem, the unique problem, is not knowing the Body and not caring for the Body. If we take care of the Body and are concerned for the Body, there will be no problems.

We are here for the Body. Without the backing of the Body, without the backing of the recovery, we have no way to practice the local churches. If we practice the local church life and neglect the view of the Body, our local church becomes a local sect.

The recovery is for the Body, not for any individual or merely for any individual local church. If we are going to do something, we have to consider how the Body, the recovery, will react.... We all need to come back to the truth, and to practice the truth is to take care of the Body. Sometimes the Body is strong, and sometimes the Body is weak, but it is still the Body. If we come back to the truth and take care of the proper order in the Body, the Body will immediately become stronger. All the problems are due to one thing: not seeing, not knowing, and not caring for the Body. We have to honor the Body.

We must resolve to deny ourselves and be the overcomers for the Lord, for the recovery, and for the Body.... We should pray, “Lord, I know You need the overcomers. Without the overcomers, You have no way to go on. Lord, I want to be one of these overcomers.” The overcomers see the Body, know the Body, and care for the Body. (CWWL, 1993, vol. 2, “The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life,” pp. 99-100, 107-108)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1990, vol. 2, “The Oneness and the One Accord according to the Lord’s Aspiration and the Body Life and Service according to His Pleasure,” chs. 1-3

WEEK 3 — DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Cor. 10:16-17 ...The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ.... Just as the human body does not have organization but does have circulation, so we should not have organization, but we should have fellowship. If all the churches stay in this circulation, in the fellowship of the Body, they will be healthy. However, the natural human thought is either to have organization or to have nothing to do with others. On the one hand, we should not have any organization among the churches; on the other hand, we should be open to have fellowship with all the churches. However, the church in a certain locality or the churches in a particular region may not be willing to have fellowship with other churches. This attitude is absolutely wrong. All the churches should remain in the fellowship of the Body. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 2186)

Today's Reading

In the proper church life the administration of the church is local, but the fellowship of the church is universal. Although the administration of the church is separate and equal locally, the fellowship of the church is one universally. In fellowship there is no separation.... The fellowship of the church is one not merely in a particular nation but in the entire universe. There is not one fellowship in England, another fellowship in the United States, another fellowship in Germany, another fellowship in China, and another fellowship in Japan. In these nations there are separate churches in

many cities, but there is only one fellowship in the entire universe.

This fellowship is called the fellowship of the apostles. Acts 2:42 says that the three thousand who believed in the Lord Jesus and became the members of the church on the day of Pentecost continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles. In the church both the fellowship and the teaching should be one universally. In all the churches we should teach only one thing—Jesus Christ as the Spirit to be our life for the producing of the church. This is the teaching of the apostles. If a different teaching comes in, we must reject it (1 Tim. 1:3-4). We accept only one kind of teaching, the teaching of the apostles, and have only one fellowship, the apostles' fellowship.

First John 1:3 says, "That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The apostles' fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. This means that it is with the Triune God. Around the globe there is only one Christian fellowship—the fellowship of the apostles with the Triune God.

This fellowship is expressed at the Lord's table. When we eat the bread, we participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ, and when we drink the cup, we participate in the fellowship of the Lord's blood (1 Cor. 10:16). The Lord's body and blood are unique, and the fellowship of Christ's body and blood is also unique. By partaking of the one bread, we have become the mystical Body of Christ (v. 17). Therefore, this universal fellowship is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It is the fellowship passed on to us by the apostles. Hence, it is the apostles' fellowship, and this fellowship is with the Triune God. Such a fellowship must be universal. In administration the churches are separate locally, but in fellowship they are united to be one universally. (CWWL, 1984, vol. 4, "Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life," pp. 493, 495-496)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 192, 200, 203-204; CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 4, "One Body and One Spirit," ch. 1

<< **WEEK 3 — HYMN** >>

Hymns, #824 The Church is Christ's own Body

The Church — Her General Definition

- 1 The Church is Christ's own Body,
The Father's dwelling-place,
The gathering of the called ones,
God blended with man's race;
Elect before creation,
Redeemed by Calv'ry's death,
Her character and standing
Of heaven, not of earth.
- 2 New man of new creation,
Born through her risen Lord,
Baptized in God the Spirit,
Made holy by His Word;
Christ is her life and content,
Himself her glorious Head;
She has ascended with Him
O'er all her foes to tread.
- 3 Christ is her one foundation,
None other man may lay;
All that she has, as Christ, is
Divine in every way;
Her members through the Spirit
Their death on Calv'ry own;
They're built in resurrection-
Gold, silver, precious stone.
- 4 One God, one Lord, one Spirit-
Her elements all one-
One faith, one hope, one baptism,
One Body in the Son;
The triune God is in her,

- One Body members own,
By faith they are united,
In hope of glory shown.
- 5 From every tribe and nation
Do all the members come,
Regardless of their classes
United to be one.
No high there is, nor lowly,
No Jew, nor Gentile clan,
No free, nor slave, nor master,
But Christ, the "one new man."
- 6 One Body universal,
One in each place expressed;
Locality of dwelling
Her only ground possessed;
Administration local,
Each answ'ring to the Lord;
Communion universal,
Upheld in one accord.
- 7 Her local gatherings model
The New Jerusalem;
Its aspects and its details
Must show in all of them.
Christ is the Lamp that shineth,
With God within, the Light;
They are the lampstands bearing
His glorious Image bright.

