

PROPAGATING THE RESURRECTED CHRIST TO PRODUCE THE CORPORATE CHRIST

BY RON KANGAS

“How great are Your works, O Jehovah! / So very deep are Your thoughts!” (Psa. 92:5). God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). What the prophet Micah spoke of the people of Israel applies to both believers and unbelievers today: “They do not know / The thoughts of Jehovah, / And they do not understand His counsel” (4:12). We can know God’s thoughts and understand His counsel only by prayerfully reading and studying the Word of God under the shining of God as light.

Certain deep divine thoughts are related to God’s intention to produce the church as the corporate Christ (1 Cor. 12:12) composed of the many sons of God, who are, simultaneously, the many brothers of Christ (Heb. 2:10-12). In order to bring this corporate Christ into being, God in His economy has a plan and an arrangement for the only begotten Son to become the Son of Man through incarnation (John 1:14, 18; Rom. 8:3) and for the Son of Man to become the firstborn Son of God through resurrection (1:3-4). Those whom God foreknew, “He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29; cf. Eph. 1:4-5). The divine thought is profound; the natural human mind cannot comprehend it, and the religious mind cannot fathom it. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and untraceable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord?” (Rom. 11:33-34).

We should echo Paul’s sense of awe and recognize that we can know God’s thoughts only through the divine revelation recorded in the written word and communicated by the Spirit of God. “To us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). The things of God “no one has known except the Spirit of God” (v. 11), and in God’s sovereign mercy we, the believers in Christ and the children of God, have received “the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God” (v. 12). Through a careful study of the Word of God under the enlightenment of the Spirit, we can learn how the only begotten Son can have brothers, as unveiled in the Gospel of John, and how the firstborn Son can be propagated by the resurrection life of Christ to produce the corporate Christ, as recorded in the book of Acts.

The Only Begotten Son and His Brothers

John 1:14, referring to the incarnated Word, who is God Himself, says, “We beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father.” Although the Gospel of John, in contrast to the synoptic Gospels, does not present a narrative of the Lord’s transfiguration, this verse is clearly an allusion to it. A second reference to the only begotten

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Son is in verse 18: "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." The Son is the embodiment and expression of the Father, and thus He declares the Father. The only begotten Son was, is, and always will be in the bosom of the Father. As every believer knows, John 3:16 testifies that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," a giving that, according to the immediate context, included the Son of Man being lifted up on the cross as the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:4-9.

Believing into the name of the only begotten Son is mandatory and nonnegotiable: "He who believes into Him [the Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). In 1 John 4:9 we see that the manifestation of the love of God is intrinsically related to His sending of His Son: "In this the love of God was manifested among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might have life and live through Him." God has given to us eternal life, and "this life is in His Son; he who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (5:11-12).

The Son's being the only begotten Son refers to His deity, to His identity in the Divine Trinity, and to His eternal existence in the immutable Godhead. In the Godhead He alone—the only begotten Son—expresses God. This unique standing in His deity is unchanging; there never was a time when He was not the only begotten Son, and there never will be a time when He will cease to be the only begotten Son. For there to be a change in His status as the only begotten Son would entail a change in the eternal Godhead, but since God is immutable by nature, change in nature of any sort is impossible, and any teaching to the contrary is heretical. Furthermore, this Son is the *only* begotten Son, and as such, He cannot have brothers, and God the Father cannot have other sons.

According to John 20:17, the resurrected Jesus, the Son of God, said to Mary, "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." The same Gospel that emphatically emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, is the only begotten Son of God shows this Son referring to the disciples as His brothers and testifying that His Father had become their Father. The only begotten Son—the unique Son who cannot have brothers—revealed here that He has brothers and that He and they have the same Father. The only begotten Son and His brothers—what are we to make of this? How are we to understand this?

The Gospel of John gives us at least three clues. The first clue is seen in 1:12-13: "As many as received Him [the Son of God as the true light], to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten...of God." These children of God, who have been begotten of God, are surely the brothers of the Son. The second clue is in 12:24, where the Son of God said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Clearly, the grain of wheat refers to the Son of God who, through incarnation, put on humanity as the shell encasing His divinity. Instead of loving His human life and preserving it, He died a life-releasing death (19:34), in which the shell of His humanity was broken for the release of the divine life from within Him for the producing of many grains.

The thought here is of the multiplication of one grain into many grains for the Lord's increase mentioned in 3:30. The many grains in 12:24 correspond to the brothers in 20:17. The remaining clue, like the first, involves birth: "A woman, when she gives birth, has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she brings forth the little child, she no longer remembers the affliction because of the joy that a man has been born into the world" (16:21). This birth of a man was the bringing forth in Christ's

resurrection of the one new man created in Him on the cross (Eph. 2:15). This corporate man (4:24) is composed of the resurrected Christ as the firstborn Son of God and the regenerated believers as His brothers, who are simultaneously the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10).

The Firstborn Son

In His resurrection Christ became the Son of God in a second sense—the firstborn Son (Acts 13:33). For Christ to become the firstborn Son of God in addition to His being the only begotten Son in the eternal, unchanging Godhead, it was necessary for the incarnated Christ, the Son of Man, to be begotten as the Son of God in resurrection with His humanity. As to His divinity, there was no need for Him to be begotten as the Son of God in this way, but as to His humanity, there was the need for this. On the day of His resurrection the Lord Jesus was designated as the Son of God with respect to His humanity (Rom. 1:3-4). Through incarnation God's only begotten Son put on humanity and became the God-man. In resurrection this God-man, with His humanity, was born of God to be the firstborn Son of God. Prior to His incarnation God's only begotten Son did not have the human nature but only the divine nature. However, in incarnation the only Begotten of the Father put on human nature, and in resurrection this human nature was designated the Son of God as the firstborn Son.

Whereas the only begotten Son in the Godhead cannot have brothers, the firstborn Son in God's economy does have brothers—the brothers mentioned by the Lord in John 20:17. In fact, the word *Firstborn* in Romans 8:29 indicates that in addition to the firstborn Son of God, there will be other sons, the many brothers of the firstborn Son. Hebrews 2:10 speaks of many sons, and Romans 8:29, of many brothers. As believers in Christ, we all are sons of God and brothers of the firstborn Son. In resurrection, when the Firstborn was born, His brothers were born, regenerated, as unveiled in 1 Peter 1:3. We were all born at the same time—He as the firstborn Son and we as the many sons of God and the many brothers of the Firstborn.

Christ is the Son of God in two ways, or senses. On the one hand, in the Godhead He is the unique, unchanging, eternal, only begotten Son of God, and as such, He does not have brothers. On the other hand, in the outworking of the economy of God to have many sons for the corporate expression of God, Christ is the firstborn Son, and as such, He has many brothers, and God has many sons. Now Christ's Father is our Father, and His God is our God.

In order to gain a proper understanding of the twofold sonship of Christ, we need to consider a deep divine thought that is woven into the text of the book of Acts—the propagating of the resurrected Christ as the firstborn Son of God to produce the corporate Christ, the Body-Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). After focusing on the meaning of propagation, we need to see the significance of resurrection in Acts and then turn to Acts 13, where Paul announced the gospel concerning the resurrected Christ as the Son of God with both humanity and divinity. This will enable us to determine the identity of the “Me” in Acts 9:4 and realize that this “Me” is the corporate Christ composed of the resurrected Christ as the Head and the regenerated believers as the members of His organic, mystical Body.

Propagation—the Reproduction of Christ

As used here, the word *propagation* means “reproduction.” To propagate Christ is not merely to disseminate the truth concerning Christ; it is to reproduce Christ by enabling others to believe into Him and become one with Him. As a husband and wife propagate human beings by bringing forth children who are the same as they are in life

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and nature, the believers should propagate the resurrected Christ according to God's economy in the way of reproducing through testifying concerning Him so that others may receive Him into their spirit and be born of God to become children of God and brothers of Christ (John 1:12-13). When faith is infused into someone by the sanctifying Spirit and that person believes that God raised Christ from the dead and confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, Christ as the life-giving Spirit enters into that one's human spirit to impart the life and nature of God and through regeneration to make that person a child of God and a brother of Christ. This is propagation.

Those who have believed into the only begotten Son of God and received eternal life and have been born of the Spirit in their spirit are the reproduction of Christ, the increase of Christ (3:3, 5-6, 15-16, 30). The word *increase* in John 3:30 refers to the bride in verse 29, who is a corporate person composed of all the regenerated persons. As the only begotten Son in the immutable Godhead, Christ does not increase and cannot increase, but as the firstborn Son in resurrection with humanity as well as divinity, Christ can increase in the way revealed in John 3. This is confirmed by the Lord's word in 12:24 regarding the one grain—Christ—becoming many grains—the children of God—through His life-releasing death and life-imparting resurrection. The multiplication of Christ as the one grain into the believers as the many grains is the increase of Christ, the reproduction of Christ.

By His death, resurrection, and ascension, He [Christ] made a mass reproduction of Himself. Originally, He was one Jesus, one Christ, but now He was reproduced in thousands of Christians. Originally, He was one grain, but now He became many grains, a mass duplication, a mass reproduction (John 12:24). Every one of us is also a part of this mass reproduction. (Lee, *General Sketch* 58)

The subject of the Acts of the Apostles is the propagation of the resurrected Christ. This propagation issued in genuine local churches, which are the expression of the universal, mystical Body of Christ in various cities (Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27; Rev. 1:11; 2:1). According to the record in Acts related to the propagation of Christ, Christ was increasing continually. Two verses express an amazing thought concerning this increase: "Believers were all the more being added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (5:14) and "A considerable number was added to the Lord" (11:24). *Added to the Lord* reveals that huge numbers were being added to a wonderful person—the resurrected, ascended, and glorified Christ. Undoubtedly, this was the increase of Christ. Outwardly, new believers were added to the church; intrinsically, they were added to the Lord as a living person, thereby becoming His enlargement, His expansion. This is the reality and the practicality of the propagation of the resurrected Christ.

Christ's Person and Work in Resurrection—the Focus of the Apostles' Testimony

If we would appreciate the propagation of the resurrected Christ as revealed in Acts, we need to know certain aspects of Christ's person and work in resurrection and realize that this was the focus of the apostles' gospel preaching in Acts.

Christ's Person in Resurrection

Paul, a called apostle, was "separated unto the gospel of God...concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:1, 3-4). In His person the resurrected Christ became the designated Son of God in power. This was not a demonstration of the fact that He was the only begotten Son in the Godhead; rather, it was a revelation that, in resurrection, Christ became the designated Son of God with His humanity in power. When

He was incarnated (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3), becoming a man in the flesh, He had not only divinity but also humanity. He became the Son of Man. Although Christ was already (and is eternally) the Son of God with divinity before the incarnation, He needed to be designated the Son of God in power out of resurrection because by incarnation He had put on the human nature.

His human nature, although sinless, was not yet an aspect of His divine sonship. In His resurrection, therefore, the human nature of Jesus was uplifted to become part of the divine sonship, and in resurrection He was designated with His human nature, becoming the Son of God with both divinity and humanity. As the designated Son of God in power, He continues to have two natures—divinity and humanity—with His humanity having been uplifted in resurrection and brought into divinity. Thus, in and with His humanity He was designated the Son of God with both divinity and humanity (Lee, *Conclusion* 324-325). This designated Son of God was the resurrected Christ propagated in the book of Acts.

Christ's Work in Resurrection

Of the various aspects of Christ's work in His resurrection, four are directly related to His reproduction through propagation. First Peter 1:3 unveils an astounding truth: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Although God the Father regenerated us through Christ's resurrection, in His work in His resurrection Christ caused the believers to be regenerated by God. In the sight of God all believers in Christ were regenerated at the same time through Christ's resurrection. The Lord's word in John 20:17 is based on this amazing fact: "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." God became our Father, regenerating us through the resurrection of His Son and making us His children (1:12-13; 1 John 3:1) and Christ's brothers.

To be regenerated is to receive another life, the divine life, in addition to our natural, created human life. We received the human life through natural generation, but we received the divine life through divine regeneration (John 3:3, 5-6, 15-16, 36; 1 John 5:11-12). Contrary to the natural concept and the religious notion, human beings need regeneration not only because they are sinful but primarily because they need to receive the divine life in order to fulfill God's eternal purpose. Even if humans had not sinned, they still would have needed regeneration simply because they had only a natural human life and, according to God's divine thought, still needed to receive the life of God by being born of God. This is the significance of being born anew, born of the Spirit in our spirit (John 3:3, 6). The work of Christ in His resurrection caused us to be regenerated by God.

The resurrected Christ produced a reproduction of Himself, and in this reproduction He was a grain of wheat: "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (12:24). In His resurrection Christ carried out a work of multiplying Himself from one grain to many grains. When Christ was incarnated, He entered into humanity and put on humanity as a shell, making Him a grain of wheat with a shell that enclosed His divine life. It is fully accurate to say that His divine life and nature were confined and concealed within the shell of His humanity. The fact that He longed for the confined and concealed divine life to be released through death is revealed by His speaking recorded in Luke 12:49-50: "I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" The Greek word translated "pressed" can also be rendered "constrained." Witness Lee says,

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The Lord was constrained in His flesh, which He put upon Himself in His incarnation. He needed to undergo physical death, to be baptized, that His unlimited and infinite divine being with His divine life might be released from His flesh. His divine life, after being released through His physical death, became the impulse [fire] of His believers' spiritual life in resurrection. (Recovery Version, v. 50, note 2)

As God incarnate, the Lord Jesus did not choose to abide alone as a unique grain of wheat; instead, He chose to fall into the ground and die in order to release the divine life that was within Him so that in His resurrection this life could be dispensed into God's chosen and redeemed people and make them the same as He is in life and nature to be His reproduction. The God-man Jesus was a grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Through His work in resurrection He produced many grains, which are His multiplication, His reproduction. This reproduction was His propagation. Through His death and in His resurrection, Christ has been propagated in order to bring forth the church. Through His life-releasing death and life-imparting and life-propagating resurrection, He produced the church as His reproduction.

The Gospel of John reveals that Christ became flesh to be the Lamb of God and that in resurrection He became another Comforter, the life-giving Spirit, the holy breath (1:29; 15:16-17; 20:22). Thus, in His resurrection He could breathe Himself as the consummated Spirit into the disciples: "He breathed into them [His disciples] and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 22). This breathing of Himself as the Spirit into the disciples was another aspect of Christ's work in resurrection. When the Lord breathed into the disciples, He actually breathed Himself into them as the Spirit, who, prior to His glorification through His resurrection, was "not yet" (7:39).

Referring to the Lord's word concerning rivers of living water flowing out from the innermost being of the believers (v. 38), the apostle John explains, "This He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (v. 39). The Spirit of God was there from the beginning (Gen. 1:2), but the Spirit as "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7), "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9), and "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19) was "not yet" at the time of John 7:39, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. The Lord Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected (Luke 24:26), and through His glorification the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19).

Since the glorification of Jesus through His resurrection, the Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus Christ—has both divine and human elements, including the incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9). In John 20:22 Christ breathed Himself as the Holy Spirit, the holy breath, into the disciples, and this Spirit is the Spirit promised in 7:39. This Spirit, the consummated Spirit, is the breath of the resurrected Christ. For Christ to breathe Himself into the disciples was a marvelous work. Because of this holy breath, the believers who gathered together in the upper room could be in one accord (Acts 1:14). The resurrected Christ was living in them, fulfilling the Lord's promise regarding the believers' experience of the resurrected Christ: "Because I live, you also shall live" (John 14:19). The resurrected Christ was not merely among them and with them—He was in them. Through His work in resurrection, He had made them His reproduction, and now He, the resurrected Christ as the Spirit, was in them, supplying them and preparing them to engage in the wonderful work of propagating Him as the resurrected, ascended, and all-inclusive Christ.

In His work in His resurrection Christ prepared and charged His disciples to preach the gospel and disciple the nations for His propagation so that the church would be established (Luke 24:44-45; John 15:5; Mark 16:15-16). In Matthew 28:18-20 the resurrected Christ spoke to His disciples, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and

on earth. Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” In His divinity, as the only begotten Son of God, the Lord already had authority over all, but in His humanity, as the Son of Man, all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him after His resurrection. Because this authority was given to Him as the resurrected Son of Man, He commissioned His disciples (v. 16) to go with His authority to disciple all the nations, causing them to become kingdom people for the kingdom of God.

The disciples were commanded to disciple all the nations by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (v. 19). The function of baptism is to transfer repentant and believing people out of their previous state of being under the authority of darkness (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13) and into a new state of being in the kingdom of God by terminating their old life and germinating them with the new life of the resurrected Christ so that they can become kingdom people who are living under the rule of Christ, the Lord of all (Acts 10:36).

In addition to charging the disciples to baptize the nations into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the Lord told the disciples to teach the nations to observe all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20). Such an all-inclusive teaching certainly included all the details of the living of the kingdom people as revealed in the Gospel of Matthew. The disciples went forth under the Lord’s authority, and the disciplined nations were immersed into the Triune God and brought under the Lord’s authority. From that point onward, they would be disciplined to observe every aspect of the living in the kingdom that the Lord had commanded. From this we see that both baptizing people into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that the Lord had commanded are for the discipling of all the nations (Lee, *Conclusion* 804-808). Through the work of Christ in His resurrection, the disciples were prepared to carry out the Lord’s word in Acts 1:8: “You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” They were ready and equipped to proclaim the resurrected Christ for His propagation.

The Resurrected Christ—the Focus of the Apostles’ Testimony

In the book of Acts the Lord’s resurrection was the focus and central message of the



A Hymn of Propagation

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|---|--|
| 1 In the bosom of the Father,
Ere the ages had begun,
Thou wast in the Father’s glory,
God’s unique begotten Son.
When to us the Father gave Thee,
Thou in person wast the same,
All the fullness of the Father
In the Spirit to proclaim. | 3 Once Thou wast the only grain, Lord,
Falling to the earth to die,
That through death and resurrection
Thou in life may multiply.
We were brought forth in Thy nature
And the many grains became;
As one loaf we all are blended,
All Thy fullness to proclaim. |
| 2 By Thy death and resurrection,
Thou wast made God’s firstborn Son;
By Thy life to us imparting
Was Thy duplication done.
We, in Thee regenerated,
Many sons to God became;
Truly as Thy many brethren,
We are as Thyself the same. | 4 We’re Thy total reproduction,
Thy dear Body and Thy bride,
Thine expression and Thy fullness,
For Thee ever to abide.
We are Thy continuation,
Thy life-increase and Thy spread,
Thy full growth and Thy rich surplus,
One with Thee, our glorious Head. (<i>Hymns</i> , #203) |

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apostles' testimony. The apostles and disciples were witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. "To the apostles whom He chose," the resurrected Christ "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days" (1:2-3). Concerning the necessity of finding a replacement for Judas (v. 20), Peter set forth the qualifications: "It is necessary therefore that of the men who accompanied us all the time in which the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which He was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness of His resurrection with us" (vv. 21-22). *A witness of His resurrection*—these words are of great significance. The heart of the apostles' proclamation of the gospel was a living and vital testimony of witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. His resurrection

points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living on the earth, and God-ordained death (2:23), and points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back. Thus, the apostles' testimony of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, was all-inclusive, as depicted in the whole book of Acts. They preached and ministered the all-inclusive Christ as He is revealed in the entire Scripture. (Lee, Recovery Version, 1:22, note 1)

The apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Christ not only in word but also by their life and action. This testimony can be traced throughout Acts. On the day of Pentecost Peter declared, "This man [Jesus], delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, through the hand of lawless men, nailed to a cross and killed; whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it" (2:23-24). Regarding Christ as God, the New Testament says that He Himself rose from the dead (Rom. 14:9), but regarding the Lord as a man, the New Testament says that God raised Him from the dead (8:11). The Lord Jesus is both God and resurrection (John 1:1; 11:25) and therefore possesses an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). Death could not detain Him, and it was not possible for the pangs of death to hold Him. He, the living One, became dead, yet He is living forever and ever (Rev. 1:18). He entered into death, He defeated death, and now He has the keys of death and of Hades (v. 18). Peter concluded his words, saying, "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). In carrying out God's economy to propagate the resurrected Christ, the apostles were witnesses of the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead.

After healing a lame man, Peter said that the people should not marvel, because "the God of our fathers...has glorified His Servant Jesus" (3:13). God glorified Jesus through His resurrection (Luke 24:26), for the Lord's resurrection was His glorification, as can be inferred from what the Lord Himself said in John 12:23: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Witness Lee says, "For Jesus as the Son of Man to be glorified was for Him to be resurrected, that is, to have His divine element, His divine life, released from within the shell of His humanity to produce many believers in resurrection" (Recovery Version, v. 23, note 1). Peter further spoke of Christ as the Author of life, "whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). Christ is the Author of life, in whom is life (1 John 5:11-12). The expression *Author of life* refers to Christ as the origin of life. His being the Author of life is for Him to dispense the divine life, the indestructible eternal life, into others for His propagation.

In his speaking before Annas the high priest, Peter testified, saying, "Let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified and whom God has raised from the dead, in this name this man stands before you in good health" (Acts 4:10). Peter's emphasis on the name of Jesus Christ indicates that he was speaking and acting not in himself but in oneness with the resurrected Christ who was living within him. Moreover, as verse 11 makes clear, the resurrected Christ, "the stone which was considered as nothing" by the religious

leaders, became “the head of the corner” in His resurrection. The resurrected Christ is the cornerstone in and for God’s building, and He is also the One in whose name “we must be saved” (v. 12). Thus, the One whom God raised from the dead is now the Stone-Savior, who with the power of His resurrection life saves those who believe in Him and call on His name, making them living stones for the building of God’s spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:4-7).

In speaking before the Sanhedrin, Peter further declared that the One who was considered as nothing had been exalted: “The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree. This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:30-32). In declaring this, Peter was speaking “the words of this life” (v. 20), words that minister the divine life for the propagation of the resurrected Christ.

God exalted the man Jesus...as the highest Leader, the Prince, the Ruler of the kings to rule over the world (Rev. 1:5; 19:16), and the Savior to save God’s chosen people. *Leader* is related to His authority, and *Savior* to His salvation. He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority that the environment might be fit for God’s chosen people to receive His salvation (cf. Acts 17:26-27; John 17:2). (Lee, Recovery Version, Acts 5:31, note 2)

In his speaking to the house of Cornelius, Peter emphasized the resurrected Christ, saying, “This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses appointed beforehand by God, to us, ones who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead” (10:40-41). Immediately prior to proclaiming this, Peter said that he and the other apostles were “witnesses of all the things which He [Jesus] did” during His ministry on earth (v. 39). Now, as those who had eaten and had drunk with the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:43; John 21:12) who appeared to them frequently before His ascension, the apostles were faithful witnesses of the One who had been raised on the third day (Luke 9:22; 1 Cor. 15:4).

In speaking to the Jews in a synagogue in Thessalonica, “Paul...reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and setting before them that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, This is the Christ, the Jesus whom I announce to you” (Acts 17:2-3). Paul’s ministry among these Thessalonians was a continuation of the preaching that he did shortly after he met the glorified Jesus and was saved: “Immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God” (9:20). In addition, Paul “was all the more empowered, and he confounded the Jews dwelling in Damascus by proving that this One is the Christ” (v. 22). Like Peter and the others chosen by the Lord to be His apostles, Paul was a witness testifying to the resurrected Christ, the One who had become real and precious to him.

In speaking to the Gentiles in Athens, Paul spoke the same thing, declaring that God “has set a day in which He is to judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has designated, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead” (17:31). In declaring this, Paul was a faithful witness of the resurrected Christ, who had appeared to him and commissioned him; he was the kind of witness whom the Lord spoke about in 1:8. The resurrected Christ had propagated Himself by coming into Paul and making him a living witness (22:15). Paul not only preached the resurrected Christ for the propagation of Christ; he lived the resurrected Christ (9:21-22; 13:32-34; Phil. 1:20-21). Paul truly was one who lived Christ and who was a living testimony of Christ in His resurrection life, power, and authority.

In speaking before King Agrippa, Paul witnessed, saying, “Having therefore obtained

THE RESURRECTED CHRIST PROPAGATED HIMSELF BY COMING INTO PAUL AND MAKING HIM A LIVING WITNESS. PAUL NOT ONLY PREACHED THE RESURRECTED CHRIST; HE LIVED THE RESURRECTED CHRIST. PAUL LIVED CHRIST AND WAS A LIVING TESTIMONY OF CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION LIFE, POWER, AND AUTHORITY.

**IN HIS
RESURRECTION
CHRIST BROKE
THROUGH THE
BARRIER OF DEATH
AND PASSED THROUGH
DEATH BECAUSE IT
WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR
HIM TO BE HELD BY
DEATH. TODAY,
IN HIS HEAVENLY
MINISTRY HE
INTENDS THAT HIS
BELIEVERS EXPERIENCE
THE POWER OF HIS
RESURRECTION.**

the help which is from God, I have stood unto this day, testifying both to small and great...that the Christ would suffer and that He, being the first to rise from the dead, would announce light both to the people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23). The Lord made Paul a witness of the things in which he had seen Him and of the things in which the Lord would appear to him (v. 16). The resurrected and ascended Christ then told Paul that He, the Lord, would send him, the witness, to the Gentiles, with the charge to “open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God” (v. 18). Paul could proclaim the resurrected Christ and announce light to both Jews and Gentiles because he himself had become light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8-9). We need to consider this in the light of Acts 13:47, where Paul applied a verse from Isaiah in a remarkable way: “The Lord has commanded us, ‘I have set you as a light of the Gentiles, that you would be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.’”

This word is a quotation from Isa. 49:6, which refers to Christ as God’s Servant, whom God made a light to the Gentiles that His salvation might reach to the end of the earth. Because he was one with Christ in carrying out God’s salvation in Christ, the apostle Paul applied this prophetic word to himself in his ministry of gospel preaching. (Lee, Recovery Version, Acts 13:47, note 1)

As a person who was one with the resurrected Christ and who lived Christ as resurrection life, Paul had been constituted “a light of the Gentiles” and therefore could announce light. He testified, expressed, and manifested the light that he had become in Christ so that, through his participation in the propagation of the resurrected Christ, others would be turned from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, with His kingdom of light, life, and love. In their lives and actions the apostles “gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” with great power (4:33). Acts 4:33 is of particular importance because it refers to the power of Christ, which the apostle Paul longed to know and experience (Phil. 3:10). This power was not only to the apostles but also to the church as the Body of Christ.

In “Resurrection, the Holy Spirit, and the Church” Watchman Nee points out some crucial matters related to resurrection in the experience of the church. He states that the man Jesus is no longer bound by anything, because His resurrection broke through all the barriers in the natural realm. All barriers were destroyed through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Two great human limitations are space and time, but these cannot limit the resurrected Christ. When He was resurrected, He transcended space and time, for after His resurrection the Lord Jesus became omnipresent. Now everyone on earth can contact Him at the same time. In resurrection Christ also broke through the greatest barrier of all—death. Death is the ultimate limitation of fallen human beings, but resurrection has conquered death. In His resurrection Christ broke through the barrier of death and passed through death because it was impossible for Him to be held by death. Today, in His heavenly ministry He intends that His believers experience the power of His resurrection

God is causing the power of Christ’s resurrection to operate in the church as the Body of Christ. Having a clear vision of this divine reality, the apostle Paul prays that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give to us “a spirit of wisdom and revelation” so that we may know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength, which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies” (Eph. 1:17-20). Paul goes on to say that God subjected all things under the feet of the resurrected and ascended Christ and “gave Him to be Head over all things to the church” (v. 22).

To the church implies a kind of transmission...In this transmission the church shares with

Christ in all His attainments: the resurrection from the dead, His being seated in His transcendency, the subjection of all things under His feet, and the headship over all things.

Toward us who believe (v. 19) and *to the church* indicate that the divine power...has been installed into us once for all and is being transmitted into us continually” (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 22, note 3).

Watchman Nee had such a realization and thus had the faith to say that the church, the Body of Christ, is the same as the resurrected Christ not only in nature but also in power. This entails the fact that the church is the depository and storehouse of the power of resurrection. The power of the church is the resurrection power of Christ.

It was with this great power—the resurrection power of Christ—that the apostles in Acts 4 “gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (v. 33). In his ministry of propagation the apostle Paul was “all the more empowered” (9:22) to give the marvelous message in Pisidian Antioch recorded in Acts 13.

Propagating the Resurrected Christ as the Firstborn Son according to the Promise Made to the Fathers

Paul’s message in Pisidian Antioch connects “the gospel of the promise made to the fathers” (v. 32) with Christ as the firstborn Son brought forth in His resurrection. Acts 13:23 refers to this promise: “From this man’s seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus.” This refers to 2 Samuel 7, a chapter that describes David’s desire and intention to build a house for God and God’s word to David, through Nathan the prophet, regarding this: “When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he will be My son” (vv. 12-14). *Your seed* in verse 12 and *My son* in verse 14 indicate that the seed of David would become the Son of God, that a human seed would become a divine Son. The seed of David mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:12 is actually Christ as God’s firstborn Son (v. 14; Heb. 1:5-6), who has both divinity and humanity. This corresponds to Paul’s word in Romans 1:3-4 concerning Christ as the seed of David being designated the Son of God in His humanity in resurrection. In these verses Paul says, “Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 8:3, a verse that is parallel to John 1:14, says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, revealing that God sent His eternal, only begotten Son into humanity. This was God in Christ becoming a man through incarnation. Romans 1:3-4 speaks of a human seed being designated the Son of God. This was a man becoming God in resurrection. Considered together, Acts 13:23, 2 Samuel 7:12-14, and Romans 1:3-4 clearly reveal that a seed of man, that is, a son of man, can become the Son of God. God Himself, the divine One, in Christ became a human seed, the seed of a man, David. This seed was Jesus, the God-man—the complete God with the divine attributes and a perfect man with the human virtues. As the Son sent by God, Jesus was the Son of God in His divinity, and through His resurrection He, as the seed of David, became the Son of God in His humanity as well.

In his message given at Pisidian Antioch, Paul went on to say, “God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You’” (Acts 13:33). In verses 32 and 33 we see that Christ as the firstborn Son of God was promised to the fathers and that God fulfilled this promise by raising up Jesus. This brings us to the amazing truth

THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST, IS THE SAME AS THE RESURRECTED CHRIST NOT ONLY IN NATURE BUT ALSO IN POWER. THE CHURCH IS THE DEPOSITORY AND STOREHOUSE OF THE POWER OF RESURRECTION. THE POWER OF THE CHURCH IS THE RESURRECTION POWER OF CHRIST.

ALTHOUGH WE
ARE HUMAN BEINGS,
WE HAVE THE DIVINE
NATURE THROUGH
THE DIVINE BIRTH.
ALTHOUGH THE
LORD JESUS IS DIVINE,
HE CONTINUES TO
HAVE THE HUMAN
NATURE. BOTH THE
LORD JESUS AND
WE ARE THE SAME
IN THAT WE BOTH
HAVE THE HUMAN
NATURE AND THE
DIVINE NATURE.

that resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus. His resurrection was His birth as God's Firstborn. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). He was the only begotten Son from eternity (John 1:18; 3:16), and for eternity He will be the only begotten Son in the Godhead. Nevertheless, the only begotten Son through incarnation became the Son of Man, and the Son of Man became the Son of God, with His humanity in resurrection. Through His resurrection He was begotten by God to be His firstborn Son in His humanity (Heb. 1:6).

As one who had been appointed by God "to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth" and to "be a witness unto all men of the things which he had seen and heard (Acts 22:14-15), Paul was able to see the Lord's resurrection in Psalm 2:7: "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." Paul applied the word *today* to the day of Christ's resurrection. This means that Christ's resurrection was His birth as the firstborn Son of God. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born to be the Son of God through His resurrection; therefore, God's raising up Jesus from the dead was God's begetting of Him to be His firstborn Son (Acts 13:33).

We need to understand accurately and see clearly that through incarnation God's only begotten Son put on humanity and became the God-man (John 1:14, 18; Luke 1:35) and that in resurrection this God-man was born of God to be His Firstborn (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:6; Rom. 8:29). Before His incarnation God's only begotten Son had only the divine nature; He did not have the human nature. Now in and through His resurrection the human nature of the incarnated Christ has been designated as divine through His status as God's firstborn Son. He truly is God who became man through incarnation and man who became God through resurrection.

Through His resurrection Christ was born to be the firstborn Son, and at the same time all His believers were born to be the many sons of God (1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 2:10). The word *Firstborn* in Romans 8:29 indicates that in addition to the firstborn Son of God, there will be other sons. Hebrews 2:10 speaks of many sons, and Romans 8:29, of many brothers. As believers in Christ, we all are sons of God and brothers of the firstborn Son. Among the many sons, only the Firstborn is God's only begotten Son (John 1:18; 1 John 4:9). The Firstborn has both divinity and humanity, and we—His believers and God's many sons—also possess both the human nature and the divine nature. Through regeneration we have the divine life and the divine nature (John 3:3, 5-6, 15; 2 Pet. 1:4). Although we are human beings, we have the divine nature through the divine birth to be children of God (John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1-2). Although the Lord Jesus is divine, He continues to have the human nature. Both the Lord Jesus and we are the same in that we both have the human nature and the divine nature: "Both He who sanctifies [the firstborn Son] and those who are being sanctified [the many sons] are all of One [God the Father], for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Heb. 2:11).

In Acts 13 Paul was not preaching Christ as the only begotten Son, as the Gospel of John does (1:18; 3:16); rather, in Acts 13 Paul was preaching Christ as the firstborn Son for propagation. As the only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus is the embodiment of the divine life (1 John 5:11-12). The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that, as the Son of God, He is the embodiment of the divine life (1:4). Through His resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God for the propagation of life (Rom. 8:29). As the Firstborn, He not only has life and is life (John 11:25; 14:6) but also dispenses life. Christ is the only begotten Son as the embodiment of life; in resurrection He is also the firstborn Son for the propagation of life. Through His becoming the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, the divine life has been dispensed into all His believers to bring forth the propagation of the life that is embodied in Him as the only begotten Son of God. Paul labored in his ministry of the gospel

to propagate the resurrected Christ, and he engaged in this blessed work of propagation for God's goal in His economy—to bring forth the corporate Christ, the church as the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16).

“Me”—the Corporate Christ

If we study Acts 9 in the context of Acts and the entire New Testament, we may come to realize that on the day when Paul, then Saul, met the glorified Jesus, he simultaneously encountered the corporate Christ. Saul, “breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord,” was on his way to Damascus to bring bound to Jerusalem “any who were of the Way, both men and women” (vv. 1-2). He had received authority from the chief priests to bind all who called upon the Lord's name (v. 14). As he drew near to Damascus, “suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute” (vv. 3-5). This “Me” was a corporate “Me,” a corporate person comprising Jesus the Lord and all His believers. Significantly, the Lord first referred to this corporate “Me,” and then, in response to Saul's question, He identified Himself by saying, “I am Jesus.” Saul not only encountered the glorified Jesus personally; he also encountered a corporate person unveiled to him as “Me.” Saul regarded the Way as a heresy, a sect, and was obsessed with persecuting unto death those who called on the name of the Lord. Saul thought that he was persecuting those who were followers of Jesus; he was oblivious to the fact that when he persecuted the believers, he was persecuting Jesus Himself, because they had believed into the Lord, had been baptized, were indwelt by Him, and were one with Him by being joined to Him through the faith that had been infused into them and was continually operating within them.

[Saul] considered that he was persecuting people on earth, never thinking that he touched anyone in heaven. To his great surprise a voice from heaven told him that He was the One whom he was persecuting and that His name was Jesus. To him this was a unique revelation in the universe! By this he began to see that the Lord Jesus and His believers are one great person—the wonderful “Me.” This must have impressed and affected him for his future ministry concerning Christ and the church as the great mystery of God (Eph. 5:32) and laid a solid foundation for his unique ministry. (Lee, Recovery Version, Acts 9:4, note 1)

In his encounter with the “Me,” Saul asked two questions: First he asked, “Who are You, Lord?” and the Lord said, “I am Jesus” (v. 5). Saul's second question was, “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10). Instead of revealing to him what he should do, the Lord said, “Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do” (v. 10). Instead of speaking to Saul directly, the Lord spoke to him through a member of the Body of Christ—Ananias (9:10-18; 22:12-16). The Lord commanded Ananias to go to Saul, revealing to Ananias that Saul, as a chosen vessel to Him, would bear His name before both the Jews and the Gentiles and would suffer many things on behalf of His name (9:15-16). Ananias obeyed and went to Saul and, “laying his hands on him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming—so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (v. 17). As noted earlier, the Lord revealed to Ananias that God had appointed Saul to know His will, to see the righteous One, to hear the voice from His mouth, and to be a witness of what he had seen and heard (22:14-15). Later, Saul would receive revelation directly from the Lord, but in order for him to realize that he had become part of the “Me,” the Lord spoke to him through a believer directed by Him to represent both the Head and the Body to Saul. Ananias directed Saul to take a specific action: “Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (v. 16). As a result, Saul entered into the life of the corporate “Me” whom he had encountered,

WHEN SAUL PERSECUTED THE BELIEVERS, HE WAS PERSECUTING JESUS, BECAUSE THEY HAD BELIEVED INTO THE LORD, HAD BEEN BAPTIZED, WERE INDWELT BY HIM, AND WERE ONE WITH HIM BY BEING JOINED TO HIM THROUGH THE FAITH THAT HAD BEEN INFUSED INTO THEM AND WAS OPERATING WITHIN THEM.

ALL THE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE ORGANICALLY UNITED WITH HIM, ONE SPIRIT WITH HIM, AND CONSTITUTED WITH HIS LIFE AND ELEMENT; THEREFORE, THEY HAVE BECOME HIS BODY, AN ORGANISM TO EXPRESS HIM. CHRIST IS NOT ONLY THE HEAD BUT ALSO THE BODY.

and “immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God” (9:20).

There is a direct connection between Saul’s vision of the “Me” in Acts 9 and his unique ministry as Paul the apostle—a ministry concerning the church as the Body of Christ. Paul is actually the only writer in the New Testament to use the term *the Body of Christ* (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4, 16; Col. 1:18; 2:19). Paul greatly emphasizes the church as the Body of Christ because at the time of his conversion, he heard a message from the resurrected and ascended Christ concerning the corporate “Me,” a message that he came to realize was a message concerning the Body of Christ. Immediately after Saul was saved through encountering this “Me,” the Lord began to educate him concerning the reality and practicality of the Body of Christ, of which he was now a member.

The Body of Christ is the corporate Christ, the Body-Christ. In the New Testament *Christ* often refers to the individual Christ; however, it also refers to the corporate Christ, to Christ and the church. First Corinthians 12:12 testifies concerning the corporate Christ: “Even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.” In this verse *the Christ* refers not to the individual Christ but to the corporate Christ. The corporate Christ is composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all His members. Christ is the Head of the Body, and the church is the Body of the Head, and together they are the corporate Christ. All the believers in Christ are organically united with Him (Rom. 12:4-5), one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17), and constituted with His life and element (Col. 3:4, 11); therefore, they have become His Body, an organism to express Him. Christ is not only the Head but also the Body.

The Bible considers Christ and the church as one mysterious Christ, the marvelous corporate “Me,” who is the issue of the propagation of the resurrected Christ as the firstborn Son of God. The firstborn Son is the Head of the Body, and the many sons are the members of the Body. Christ is the Head of this mysterious corporate Christ, and the church is the Body of this mysterious corporate Christ; the two have been joined organically in life and nature to become the one mysterious Christ. All the saved ones, all the regenerated children of God, in all times and all places added together become the mysterious corporate Christ.

The resurrected Christ continues to be propagated through the testimony of those who are governed by the vision of the “Me,” the corporate Christ, and who love Him, experience Him, enjoy Him, express Him, are one with Him, and live a divine-human life by dwelling in Him and with Him dwelling in them (John 15:4-5). Through the life and service of such believers, Christ continues to increase through propagation, with more men and women being added to Him, and the Body continues to grow unto the building up of itself in love (Eph. 4:16). This is the desire of God’s heart concerning His Son, the Firstborn among many brothers. **LFC**

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