

# The Crystallization

## The Church in Ephesians Fulfilling God's Economy

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains deep and detailed revelations concerning the church, including the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate expression of Christ; the church as the one new man, the corporate manifestation of Christ's person; the church as the kingdom of God, the corporate extension of His divine administration; the church as the household of God, the corporate enlargement of His family; the church as the dwelling place of God, the corporate place for His rest; the church as the bride of Christ, the corporate counterpart of Christ; and the church as the corporate fighter engaged in spiritual warfare with Christ.

These all-encompassing aspects of the church are the issue of the economy of God, which is God's eternal plan to produce the Body of Christ through the dispensing of His divine life into those who were chosen in eternity past and redeemed, regenerated, and built up in time. To this end, each chapter of Ephesians reveals the mingled spirit (our human spirit regenerated and indwelt by the compound, all-inclusive, consummated Spirit); each chapter is composed of the divine economy, the dispensing of the Triune God into the members of the Body of Christ; and each chapter unveils the mystery of the church as the Body of Christ, the new man, the organism of the Triune God.

The new man is Christ and the church. God's intention in creating humanity to be His expression as His image and likeness and to be His representative in having dominion over all the earth was not fulfilled in the first man, that is, in the old man. Instead, it is fulfilled in Christ as the second man and in the new man, comprising Christ as the Head and the church as His Body. The practice of the Body life of the church as the new man requires a living and function that is fitting in a corporate context. Such a corporate living requires a personal daily walk in which we learn Christ. This learning is tested in the context of our personal ethical relationships, such as in marriage (wife and husband), family (children and parents), and societal responsibilities (slaves and masters). These relationships in many ways typify our relationship with our real Husband, our heavenly Father, and our rightful Master and Lord. Thus, the corporate aspect has a personal aspect as its base. In turn, our true progress in the personal aspect is continually reinforced, tested, and expressed in a corporate setting.

The kingdom of God is the setting for the eternal exercise of God's authority; it is an administration involving God as

the governing Ruler and all that He governs from eternity to eternity, including creation and all humanity. In Ephesians 2:19 Paul identifies the kingdom in the age of grace as the church with his reference to *fellow citizens*. As the church today, the believers not only are in the kingdom of God but also are the kingdom of God. Our participation in the reality of the kingdom involves both rights and responsibilities. The rights of the kingdom relate to receiving the divine life through regeneration, which is our entrance into the kingdom. With this life, we have been given the authority, the right, to be children of God. By receiving the Son through faith, in whom there is life, we receive the Son with His divine life, and this life brings the authority, the right, to be children of God. The progressive growth of the divine life results in an experiential entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in this age and in the next age. The main responsibility of the church as the kingdom is to receive the believers, which is realized in an atmosphere of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. A proper receiving of the believers for the kingdom life depends on the transforming growth of the divine life. It is not possible to receive the members of the household of God in the church as the kingdom of God when righteousness, peace, and joy are not present experientially in reality. The ability to fulfill the responsibility of righteousness comes with Christ as wisdom to us from God. The ability to fulfill the responsibility of peace for the kingdom life can be met by believers because an abiding peace was created by Christ on the cross, breathed into the disciples on the day of the Lord's resurrection, and announced as the gospel.

As the church, the fellow citizens in the kingdom are also members of the household of God. God's household is a matter of life and enjoyment; all believers were born of God into His household to enjoy His riches. The church is not only the assembly of God but also the household of God. The church is not only something separated from the world but something born of God, regenerated by Him. God does not simply separate sinners from the world and put them together to be His household. In addition to separation, there is a change of life and nature through regeneration. For this reason, after God separated us from the world, He put Himself into us, germinating us, begetting us as His children.

When God put Himself into us, the church became the dwelling place of God in spirit. God's Spirit is the Dweller,

not the dwelling place. The dwelling place is the believers' spirit. God's Spirit dwells in our spirit. Therefore, the dwelling place of God is in our spirit. The word *you* in 2:22 refers to the local saints. Furthermore, the word *also* indicates that the building in this verse is local. According to the context, the dwelling place of God in 2:22 is local, whereas the holy temple in the preceding verse is universal. The saints in Ephesus were being built together in Christ into a dwelling place of God. The fact that we are the dwelling place of God, the temple of God, and the house of God means that God dwells in us and causes us to be mingled with Him as one so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

**T**he filling of God in His economy produces the church as the bride of Christ. In chapter 5 Paul speaks of the church as the bride of Christ based on the typology of the marriage of Adam and Eve, and he shows in beautiful detail that between Christ's loving act of giving Himself up for the church in death and His presenting the glorious church to Himself at His coming back, there is a process in which Christ as the Spirit of life gradually sanctifies and nourishes the church by continually imparting His divine life and nature into her in order to prepare her to be a mature, beautified, and even deified counterpart to Himself. To take the church through this process was the goal of His death, and its completion will bring in His long-awaited return. When He comes, He will marry His holy, blameless, and glorious bride, who is the same as He is in life, nature, and expression but not in the Godhead. As He is in resurrection, so is she, because she is built from the indestructible resurrection life released through His death; as He is intrinsically holy and without spot or blemish, so is she, having been washed, by the life-giving Spirit imparted through Christ's living words, from every blemish of the natural man and every spot of the old creation and having been utterly saturated with the holy nature of God; and as He is the Lord of glory, so is she in glory, having been glorified by beholding and reflecting His glory, being permeated with His glorious element, and thus transformed into His image from one stage of glory to another stage of glory.

**T**o reach the stage of glory, the church is revealed as a corporate warrior fighting against the enemy of God for God's kingdom and for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. The church as the new man is a corporate man in God's plan, and this corporate new man will fulfill the twofold purpose of expressing God and dealing with His enemy in the matter of spiritual warfare. In our fighting we should deal not with things that appear on the surface but with the powers of darkness behind these things. In this corporate warfare the church needs to put on the whole armor of God. This armor is not for believers as individuals; it is for the church corporately as the Body of Christ. The church fights against God's enemy not only by being empowered in the Lord but also by putting on certain attributes of Christ as the whole armor of God. The armor that we take up for our protection is actually Christ Himself for our protection. We have various attributes of Christ as the whole armor—Christ as the truth to gird our loins, as righteousness to cover our conscience, as peace to shod our feet, and as faith to protect our tripartite being whenever the enemy attacks. In order to stand firmly in the battle, we need to be equipped with these attributes of Christ as God's armor. We also have the helmet of salvation for covering our mind against thoughts injected into us by the evil powers. This helmet is God's salvation. Among the aspects of the whole armor of God, only the sword of the Spirit is an offensive weapon used for attacking the enemy. The Spirit is the sword, and the word of God is also the sword; therefore, the sword, the Spirit, and the word are one. In our Christian life and in our experience of the indwelling Christ, the word and the spirit should be one. Christ has already defeated the enemy, destroying him on the cross; the corporate warrior is not fighting to gain victory but fighting in the victory of the victorious and conquering Christ. The sovereign God needs the new man, the warrior, to stand in Christ the Victor, to proclaim His victory to Satan and the evil powers in the heavenlies, and to fight to accomplish the purpose of spiritual warfare—bringing the kingdom of God to the earth. This will be the completion of the economy of God through the church. **AFC**

### The Father of Glory

**I**n this one title, *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory* [Eph. 1:17], five important things are implied: creation, incarnation, redemption, regeneration, and expression... Before creation there was nothing in existence except God. God had neither generation nor expression. Then God created the universe and everything in it. By His work of creation He became the Creator. After creation He took the step of incarnation, thereby coming into His creature, man. By incarnation the Creator and the creature became one. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was the uniting of God and man. Through crucifixion the Lord accomplished redemption. As a result, we, the fallen creatures, were redeemed. Then we were regenerated to become sons of God the Father so that we may express Him. On the day we are glorified, God will be fully expressed from within us. In this way we shall become His expression. All these important steps—creation, incarnation, redemption, regeneration, and expression—are implied by the title *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*.

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