

Message Two

The Increase of Christ as Portrayed in the Gospel of John

Scripture Reading: Acts 5:14; John 3:29a, 30a, 31-36; 12:24; 20:17; 17:21-23

I. The increase and spread of the church is the increase and spread of Christ—John 12:24; Acts 5:14; 9:35; 11:21, 24:

- A. After passing through death, the Lord Jesus entered into resurrection to impart His divine life into those who believe into Him so that they could become His reproduction—1 Pet. 1:3; John 3:15; 20:17.
- B. Through His death and resurrection, Christ has been propagated, increased, and spread—Acts 5:14; 11:24.
- C. The church is the Body of Christ, even Christ Himself; hence, the church is Christ's increase and spread on earth—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4, 16; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27.
- D. The church does not merely announce Christ; the church increases and spreads Christ—Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8.

II. "He who has the bride is the bridegroom...He must increase"—John 3:29a, 30a:

- A. The increase in verse 30 is the bride in verse 29, and the bride is a living composition of all the regenerated people—vv. 3-6:
 - 1. Regeneration not only brings the divine life into the believers, but it also makes them the corporate bride for Christ's increase—vv. 6, 15, 29a, 30a:
 - a. The bride as the increase of Christ is related to the spiritual part of our being—v. 6b.
 - b. Our regenerated human spirit is part of the increase of Christ, and this increase is Christ's multiplication and reproduction; through regeneration we have become part of Christ's increase.
 - 2. Christ increases by regenerating redeemed sinners, making them His bride, His wife.
 - 3. For Christ to increase continually, we need to contact people and help them to be regenerated, thereby producing new spiritual children—1 Cor. 4:14-15; Philem. 10.
- B. The Christ who is increasing is the immeasurable and unlimited Son of God—John 3:31-36:
 - 1. He is such an immeasurable and unlimited One, who comes from above, who is above all, to whom the Father has given all, and who dispenses the Spirit without measure—v. 31.
 - 2. Such a One needs a universal increase to be His bride to match Him—vv. 29a, 30a.
 - 3. Christ the Son gives the Spirit without measure to God's people—v. 34:
 - a. The unique way for us to become the increase of the unlimited Christ is to receive the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit; the more we have the Spirit, the more we will be Christ's increase—v. 34.
 - b. This increase begins with our regeneration, and it consummates with our being filled with the immeasurable Spirit—vv. 3-6, 34.

III. “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”—12:24:

- A. The Gospel of John reveals that the Lord Jesus came to impart the divine life to us so that He might have an increase for Himself—10:10b; 3:15, 29a, 30a.
- B. The Lord Jesus fell into the ground and died to release His divine element, His divine life, from within the shell of His humanity to produce many believers in resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3), just as a grain of wheat has its life element released by falling into the ground and growing up out of the ground to bear much fruit, that is, to bring forth many grains.
- C. These many grains are His many members that constitute His mystical Body—His eternal, boundless increase—1 Cor. 12:12, 27; John 3:30.
- D. We should not remain as whole grains; rather, we need to be broken and ground into fine flour so that we may be blended with others for making a loaf; this loaf is the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem—1 Cor. 10:17; Rev. 21:2.
- E. The church life portrayed by the house of feasting in Bethany was marvelous—John 12:1-11:
 - 1. It was excellent in quality, but it was much too small in quantity.
 - 2. It was necessary, therefore, for the Lord Jesus to die a life-releasing death so that this kind of church life could be multiplied in resurrection—v. 24.

IV. “Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God”—20:17:

- A. Through Christ’s resurrection His disciples were regenerated (1 Pet. 1:3) with the divine life, which had been released by His dying as a grain of wheat.
- B. He was the Father’s only Son, the Father’s individual expression; through His death and resurrection the Father’s only Begotten became the Firstborn among many brothers—John 1:18; 3:16; Rom. 8:29:
 - 1. His many brothers are the many sons of God and the church, a corporate expression of God the Father in the Son; this is God’s ultimate intention—Heb. 2:10-12.
 - 2. The many brothers are the propagation of the Father’s life and the multiplication of the Son in the divine life; hence, in the Lord’s resurrection God’s eternal purpose to have many sons for His eternal, corporate expression is fulfilled—Eph. 1:4-5; 3:9-11.

V. “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us...And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one”—John 17:21-23a:

- A. We need to see the oneness of the increase of Christ, a oneness in which all the regenerated ones, the grains, and the brothers are one—3:6; 12:24; 20:17.
- B. The Triune God is three, but the three are in a unique oneness—a oneness of coinherence, which is a model of the oneness of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:4.
- C. The oneness of the Body of Christ, the oneness of the increase of Christ, is the enlarged oneness of the Divine Trinity—John 17:21-23; 14:20; 1 Cor. 12:12.