

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

BODY: A WORD STUDY

The word *body* is a most useful word. It can be used to say many things and to express numerous ideas. It's figurative uses are many and varied. However when most people come upon it the one idea that usually comes to mind is the human body. But, if reminded of it they will concede that it could refer to an animal body.

As these words are being written there are many things within the range of my sight that can be described as bodies. First, there is me, all 185 pounds of me, and I am a body. I look up and there is Mauna Kea Mountain and this is also a body, a great body of earth. To my right is the Pacific Ocean, an enormous body of water; and in the distance I can see the Island of Maui which is also a body. In view straight ahead is a large well-formed mound of earth which is probably the remains of an ancient mud volcano, and this is also a body. The sun is in the sky and this orb is a body, and the little bird singing in a nearby tree is just as much a body as is the sun. This morning I watched in the distance as a whale made his playful maneuvers, and he is about the biggest body to be found in that other big body, the Pacific Ocean.

So, the thought naturally arises as to how all these diverse things can be called bodies. What is the quality that they all have in common that makes the word *body* applicable to all of them, and what is the basic, intrinsic meaning of this word that makes it useful in representing them? In fact I am intrigued with the idea of Jonah, a body, inside of the whale, a body, and the whale in the ocean, another body. Three entirely different things, one in the other yet all of them bodies. We speak of a body as a quality residing in paint, cloth and perfumes. Indeed body is a most useful word. And as those who read the Word of God our investigative instincts should certainly be quickened when we find Paul saying to the Corinthians: "**Now ye are the body of Christ**" (1 Cor. 12:27); and in Ephesians: "**For we are members of His body**" (Eph. 5:30).

The basic meaning of the word body is "organized substance," with the idea of "substance" being the most important element in this definition. Nevertheless the

substance must be organized in some manner or it cannot properly be called body. And so as not to limit ourselves too much, we must also note here that the word *substance* is very closely related to *essence*, so much so that "substance" is the essence or most important part of anything. Without "substance" there is no such thing as body, and substance must be 'brought together or organized in some manner before it can be described as "body".

In the creation of man God took material, the soil of the ground, and organized it in such manner that it became a man; therefore, this man was a body. God could say to him, "You are soil", and not different from the soil on which he walked. The mountain is a body of earth, organized by nature in such a way that it becomes a distinct mountain, therefore, a body. The ocean is a mass of water brought together by geography into an identifiable character; therefore, it can be properly called a body.

As already suggested, in any study or interpretation of the epistles of Paul, a clear understanding of the Scriptural use of the word "body" is of the utmost importance. In 1 Cor. 12: 13 he declares: **"For in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or nations, whether we be slave or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."** What and where is this body? Hundreds of groups large and small are shouting, "We are it!"

In 1 Cor. 12:27 Paul affirms to those to whom he is writing: **"Now ye are the body of Christ,"** which since there is no definite article before "body" should read: **"Ye are Christ's body."** this prompts the question, "What is Christ's body?" If the answer given is "The body of Christ is the church," then the one who so replies is traveling in a circle, an exercise in futility akin to a dog chasing his tail.

The language of Christendom abounds in undefined words and phrases. These are often used to make the hearers think that something has been said, when in reality no information has been imparted. When the words are carefully examined it will often be found that the speaker has in reality said nothing. The so-called Christian religion is filled with ritualistic words and phrases, many of which have been extracted from the Bible and most of them badly mangled in the process.

I have always sought to refrain from using a word unless I had a clear understanding of the idea it was supposed to convey. Very early in my consideration of "present truth," I desired to know what idea or concept the Spirit of God intended to convey to us by the word "body," especially in such phrases as "one body" (Eph. 4:4), "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27) and "the church which is His body" (Eph 1:22,23). Of course, such occurrences as 1 Cor. 13:3 gave me no problem, but 1 Cor. 6:16 is still a major difficulty.

Early in my investigations I began to weigh all possible definitions. I came upon one idea that was widely held but which I repudiated as a monumental error. By the simple method of asking questions of several hundred professing Christians, I found that most of them had some vague and muddled idea that "the body of Christ" was an enormous giant, all parts below the neck composed of believing men and women, while the Lord Jesus alone made up the part above the neck, the head. And, let it be emphasized, this was not an idea held by a few ignorant people, for a well-educated teacher had actually presented this idea to one who had asked for light as to the nature of the body of Christ. To her he said in part: "We make up the body of Christ. For all you know you may be only a little strip of flesh in His side. "

This popular idea is so erroneous that it needs only to be put into words to demonstrate its fallacy. A good-natured British friend of mine once told me that an Englishman's concept of God is that He is another Englishman twelve feet tall. I cannot vouch for the truth of this, but I do know that the concept of "the body of Christ" held today by the average professing Christian is that of a great giant many miles tall whose torso is composed of Christian men and women while Christ Himself stands on the shoulders as the head. This cannot be the idea the Spirit of God intends to convey when He speaks of "the body of Christ."

This obvious error is often shielded from being examined by hiding it behind the fanciful phrase, "the mystical body of Christ." This teaching is one of the cornerstones of Roman Catholic doctrine. It rests upon a phrase that is never found in Scripture. I have never used it, and it is one with which I will have nothing to do. It belongs to "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

In my studies, one idea which I accepted and later was forced to repudiate was that the word *body* was used to designate collectively a company of individuals. This is true - the nine members of the Supreme Court are a body, but this is not the basic meaning of the word.

The Greek word for body is *soma*, and this is the word with which we must come to grips. In my earliest investigations into this word, I noticed that in Colossians it is used in contrast with "shadow." Paul declares: "**Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ**" (Col. 2:17). In checking out this passage I found that A.T. Robertson said: "A shadow (*skia*). Old word, opposed to substance (*Soma*, body);" and that Weymouth, Moffatt, Montgomery, Fenton, Revised Standard, and many other versions translate *soma* by "substance" in this passage. Goodspeed translated it "reality." Bullinger notes this meaning as being correct in his book *The Church Epistles*.

The substance, or essence, of Christ is that which constitutes Him what He is. If we consider all His attributes, every declaration the Word has made concerning Him, all His glories, His offices - yes, even those qualities which we cannot comprehend or understand, consider them all as being intrinsic in one being, we will have some faint idea of what the Bible means when it speaks of the body of Christ. These brought together are His substance, His essence. In Him dwells the entire complement of the Deity in Essence (Co!. 2:9). It is my conviction that in 1 Cor. 12:13, Paul declares to the Corinthians: "**For in one Spirit also are we all merged into one body** (organized substance), **and all are made to drink into one Spirit.**" See 1 Cor. 6: 17. Then in 12:27 he tells them: "**Ye are Christ's substance, and partakers of a part.**" All this harmonizes with Rom. 8:9; "**Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.**"

In Eph. 1 :22,23 we read: "God subjects all under His feet, and constitutes Him as the out flowing source of supply to the ekklesia which is His substance. Did He not say He would build it of Himself?"

In Eph. 2:13 we read of those who were "far off" and those who were "near." Dan. 9:7 and Acts 2:39 should be read here. There were two companies of the seed of Abraham that had become so incongruous that those "near" actually despised those who were "far off," that is, the ones in exile. See Ezekiel 11:15,16. But the blood of Christ has made both of these companies congruous in one substance (body), making possible a complete fulfillment of the prophecy in Ezekiel 37:15-21.

In Eph. 4: 8 -11 we learn that Jesus Christ, after He ascended "**gave gifts unto men.**" Then, after a parenthetical statement, an explanatory statement is added, introduced by the epexegetical *kai*, we are told that He constituted some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds, that is to say, teachers. All of which was done for the equipping of the saints, for the work of dispensing, for the building up of the substance of Christ.

The statements made in this study are clues. The search for the full truth is up to the reader.

End Issue No. SB119