

Christ And The Church

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CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

The world hears so much from the denominational perspective today, so many conflicting theories, so much false doctrine that it must be wondering if there is such a thing as the right church. There are so many religious institutions called churches that it surely must be confusing to many as to what is right. Does Christ have a church? If he has one today, where is it and how may we know it? We hope these questions may be more easily addressed by a brief study of Christ and the Church.

In Ephesians 5:31-32 Paul wrote, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

There is no closer union in this life than the one between a Christian husband and wife. They share with each other their deepest secrets and needs. Each cares for the other with a tenderness unmatched in any other relationship. Paul declares the man is to love his wife as he does his very own body (Ephesians 5:28) He further shows that we are members of his (Christ's) body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (VS. 30) By using this form of illustration, he shows the intimate relationship existing between Christ and his bride, the church. We know the church is the primary point under consideration because Paul says it is in verse 32: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The word "mystery" here means a secret or puzzle. It had previously been the subject of much study by prophets and even the angels according to Peter in I Peter 1:10-12. However, the secret is explained now. For ages the subject of how all men could be united and saved together was studied. Not even the prophets and angels knew the answer. Now, the answer is known. It is to be accomplished through the church of Christ!

In the 3rd chapter of Ephesians Paul says more about the "mystery." In verses 3-6, he tells how that he had received a "revelation." A revelation is a message from God revealed to another. Paul says the revelation contained the mystery, or secret and that he had written it down. When we read what he had written, we can then "understand" his knowledge in the mystery, or secret, of Christ. What was the secret? Let us read Ephesians 3:6 for the answer. "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:" In plain language Paul says he had been given a revelation

from God in which was revealed the secret of how men (all men) could be saved. It would be done by all men being a part of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by, or through means of, the gospel.

Now we can see why the church of Christ is so important. It is the divinely appointed plan that both Jew and Gentile (all men) be brought together within the church and, therefore, be acceptable as the children of God. To speak of Christ and the church is to speak of only one church! He has but one, died for only one and has promised to save only his.

Notice some things about Christ and the church.

1. He is the purchaser: Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
2. He is the builder: Matt. 16:18, "...and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
3. He is the head: Ephesians 5:23, "...even as Christ is the head of the church ..."
4. He is the lawgiver: Ephesians 5:24, "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."
5. He is the saviour of the church: Ephesians 5:23, "...and he is the saviour of the body."

The words body and church are often used interchangeably. One example is the verse just noted. Ephesians 5:23, "...Christ is the head of the church, and He is the saviour of the body."

When Paul used the word church he meant the same thing as when he used the term body. Notice: In Ephesians 1:3 Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Whatever it means to be "in Christ," we need to be there because that is where "all spiritual blessings" are found. Remember that. If all blessings are "in Christ," then there are certainly none out of Christ. Let us see if we can know what it means to be in Christ. In Ephesians 1:22,23, Paul said: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Again, in Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: ..." Then in verse 24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church So we have the answer from Paul himself. To be "in Christ" is to be in the "body," and to be in the body is to be in the "church" where all spiritual blessings are to be found! No wonder the church is so important to Christ! Every spiritual blessing available to us is found only within the church of Christ. How many does he have? Let us go back to the book of Ephesians again. In chapter 4:4 Paul wrote, "There is one body,..." He then went on to mention six other things of which there is only one each. Remember that Paul has already taught us that the body of Christ is the same thing as the church of Christ. Then, in a later chapter of the same letter in which he had taught that, he emphatically said there is "one" body." If the body and the church are the same and there is only one body, then there is only one church according to the Word of God. We can't be saved out of Christ and the church.