

The Body of Christ

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INTRODUCTION

There are a number of statements in the N.T. which refer to the church as the body of Christ.

Colossians 1:18; "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

Ephesians 1:22; "And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all."

1 Corinthians 12:27; "Now you are the body of Christ, and members in individually."

From these and other statements we learn that the body of Christ is the church. The body is composed of all Christians. However, it is not a physical body but a spiritual body.

It is no doubt called the body of Christ because it is a part of Him. It is connected to Christ in a very intimate way. The relationship between Christ and His church is as close as the relationship between our physical and our physical head.

In order for this relationship to exist Christ had to pay a tremendous price.

Acts 20:28; "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

In this charge to the elders at Ephesus we see how important the church is to the Lord. It is his body and he is deeply concerned about it. Paul also knows this and he wants these elders to see to it that it be protected.

Ephesians 4:4 tells us that there is "one body." This is equivalent to saying there is one church. The religious world of today does not like to hear a statement like this yet this is exactly what Paul is telling us.

Probably the core concept of the expression "body of Christ" is the close, intimate connection between Christ and His church. The concepts of harmony, unity, agreement, cooperation are all involved in this expression.

FIRST, LET US NOTICE THE RELATION OF THE HEAD TO THE BODY.

A Christ is related to the church in the same way as a physical head is related to the physical body. Under normal conditions there is one head and one body. This true also of the relationship between Christ and his church.

B A body with two heads would be a monstrosity. Yet, this is essentially what we have in the religious world today. We have one religion with a head on earth and then a head in heaven.

The one on earth claims to be the had of Christ's church. He has many titles that convey the idea of headship. Among his many titles he is referred to as "that other Jesus Christ

C Another monstrosity would be to have two bodies with one head. Yet, again in the religious world of our day this claim is made. Denominationalism makes Christ the head of hundreds of different bodies with conflicting doctrines.

A reading of **Ephesians 4:3-6** demonstrates a real conflict with present day denominationalism and God plan for His church.

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

D It should be clear that both of these positions are abnormal. There is one head (Christ) and but one body (the church).

SECOND, THE BODY IS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE HEAD.

A Since Christ is head of the church then is is over the church. All authority in the church is within Christ. In **Matthew 28:18**; "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'"

B The word "all" eliminates any other authority for anyone. Thus all those in the church are under His authority. There is no other authority.

C My head controls the actions of my body. It does not control the actions of any other body. There are many bodies claiming that Christ rules over them. But if they are not the body of Christ then Christ does not rule over them. He rules over His body.

D Anyone refusing to enter the body of Christ rejects His authority and refuses to let Christ rule over them. They are letting Satan be their leader. **Hebrews 2:8** "You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him."

2 Corinthians 10:5 "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

THIRD, THE BODY DOES THE WORK THAT THE HEAD DIRECTS IT TO DO.

A The head sends out signals by means of the nervous system to different parts of the body. The body reacts to the direction of the head by doing what it wants done.

B Paul uses the physical body to show that each one must assume the responsibility assigned to it and carry out whatever is required.

1 Corinthians 12:12-30 discusses this relationship. "For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body so also is Christ.....For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, 'because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'because I am not an eye, I am not the body,' is it therefore not of the body?....."

Paul says in **verse 25** the purpose of all this is "That there should be no schism in the body, but that members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

C These verses are a lesson on the complete cooperation that among members of the body of Christ.

D No one member has a right to refuse to function as directed. All parts are necessary and the functioning of each part is essential to the success of the body.

E Prominence does not assure one any greater reward than one who is not so prominent, The obscure worker is just as pleasing and loved by the head (**Christ**) as the most prominent workers in the body.

FOURTH, LIFE IS WITHIN THE BODY.

A No one member can continue to maintain life when separated from the main body. Several things make separation impossible.

One would not have the direction of the head.

One would not have the cooperation. Help, love and encouragement of other members

One would not have the benefits of the blood which is in the body.

If one ceases to **"Walk in the light"** he cannot expect Christ's blood to keep on cleansing him from all his sins.

One would not have the benefit of other life giving elements.

HOW DOES ONE ENTER THE BODY OF CHRIST?

A Paul says in **1 Corinthians 12:13**; **"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."**

B In **Galatians 3:27** Paul writes; **"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."**

C What a privilege, an honor, to be in the body of Christ where we can **"partake of the divine nature."**