

WHAT IS THE BODY OF CHRIST?

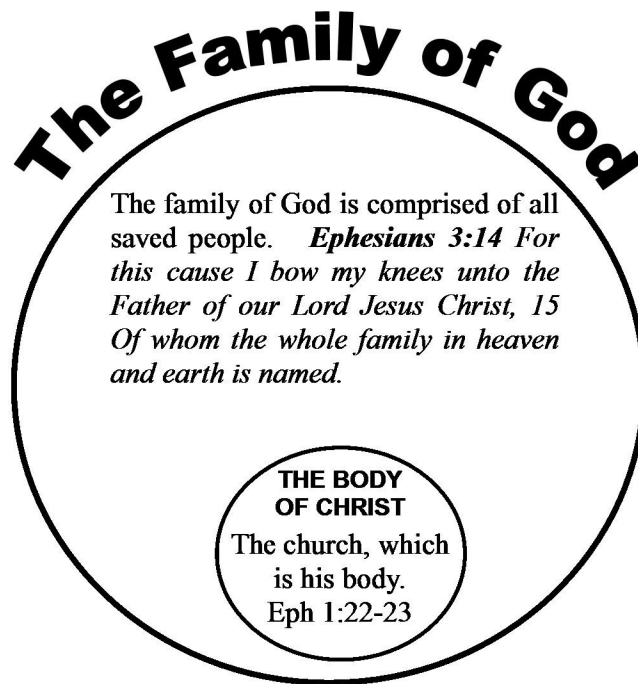
by D. Curtis Martin, PhD

The Body of Christ is one of the most misinterpreted phases in the Bible. This misinterpretation is Satan's attack on the most powerful institution created by God. This tract does not present a complete exegesis on the subject, although it does succinctly set forth the scriptural view of the Body of Christ.

A Biblical interpretation of the New Testament church will prove that it is a local assemble. One would have to add to the Scriptures to come up with the theory of a universal invisible church. The writers of the New Testament as well as the believers of the first century knew nothing of a universal invisible church. This is evident in the Greek word *ecclesia*. It is a compound word meaning "a called out assembly," One example of this is found in Acts 19:39-41.

Those that hold to the universal invisible church view are not being honest to the meaning of *ecclesia*. Throughout the New Testament, *ecclesia* is used as an **assembled** group of people. How can one have an unassembled invisible assembly? That is the ultimate paradox.

Many people talk about the body of Christ as though it contains all believers. This is promoted by those that espouse the man-made theory of the universal invisible church. This crowd believes that when one is saved they enter the body of Christ. This view is not supported by scriptural. On the contrary, the Bible teaches that a person can be saved and **not** a member of the body of Christ. The burden of proof lies on the universal invisible church crowd to prove this wrong. This, of course, can not be done scripturally.



Therefore, consider these thoughts. The Body of Christ is not to be confused with the family of God. They are not one and the same. Rather, the one is part of the whole. The whole is the family of God which is comprised of all saved people. (*Ephesians 3:14,15 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*). The only way into the “Family of God” is to be born again. All who are born again are in “The Family of God.”

So then what is the body of Christ? Read the following verses:

Col. 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 preeminence.

Eph. 1:22-23 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

*1 Cor. 12:27 Now ye (the church at Corinth) are the **body** of Christ, and members in particular.*

Eph. 5:22-32 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 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. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 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. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 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. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

The Bible teaches us that the Body of Christ is the local New Testament church. There are many other passages of scripture that support that teaching. The entire 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians is directed to the local church. Yes even verse 13, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*” If one is to be honest to Biblical interpretation, one would find that this verse does not teach that the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into the body. This verse is teaching that believers are brought into the membership of the local church through water baptism.

Consider the following thoughts taken from an article entitled “Heart Disease and the Body of Christ” written by E. L. Bynum:

Use Common Sense in Regard to the Body

“It has been said that the home is the backbone of a nation. Whether this is a true statement we will not enter into. Does this statement mean that there is a universal home? No, of course not. It is being used in an institutional sense. It can truly be said that the automobile has changed our way of life. Do we mean that there is a great universal automobile that exists in invisible form somewhere? Certainly not! There are millions of automobiles, but they are all local and visible. There are many other illustrations that could be used to amplify this point, but we will let our reader think of some of those.

It is sad that such confusion reigns concerning the use of the words church and body in the Christian world. A great deal of this confusion is due to the failure to understand the abstract use of singular nouns.

Abstract Use of Singular Nouns

*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** (Eph. 5:23). We have emphasized four singular nouns in this verse by placing them in bold face type. No reasonable person would consider that the above verse teaches a universal husband or a universal wife. We all recognize that these two nouns are used in the abstract sense, and that they refer to any husband and wife and could not be used to perpetuate the idea of a universal husband or a universal wife. Why do reasonable people insist on making the singular nouns church and body into some mystical, invisible, imaginary, and impossible thing? They are to be understood in the same way as husband and wife in this verse.”*

The Body of Christ is the local New Testament church. Therefore, if one is to be a part of the Body of Christ one must be a member of a local New Testament Baptist church. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Pastor Martin.

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