

**One Church In Christ  
In All Ages**

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# One Church In Christ In All Ages

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(Reprinted from "The Faith and Hope of The Future")

There was one Church in Old Testament times, there is one Church now in the present dispensation, and there will be one Church in the millennial dispensation, and all the members of the Church in all the dispensations constitute the one Church.

There have been those who have denied the truths concerning the Church which we seek to set forth. There was a clergyman, a writer of many books on prophecy, who tried to convince us that there was no knowledge of a Church at all until it was revealed to the apostle Paul. That he said, was the "mystery" of which we read in Ephesians 3.

In reply to such views, we will point out the facts. Psalm 22 says: I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee". This passage is quoted in Hebrews 2, where we read: "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying. I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee".

Thus, Psalm 22 teaches the doctrine of the Church. It teaches that all believers are Christ's brethren, and that He praises the Father in the midst of the Church.

Then our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He mentioned the Church long before the apostle Paul was converted. Then we read in Acts 8 of the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:8, 9, that the apostle himself says: "Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God". How can it be said, then, that there was no Church until it was revealed to the apostle Paul after his conversion, when he himself expressly declares that in his unconverted days he persecuted the Church of God? The same people who teach that doctrine not only say that the Old Testament saints are not part of the Church, but that the twelve

apostles are not part of the Church, and that there was no Church at all prior to the apostle Paul! All that is contrary to the teaching of Scripture, and is therefore dangerous.

#### **The Church's Unity is suggested by the first Old Testament Type**

The apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, teaches that Adam was a figure or a type of Him that was to come. If Adam was a type of Christ, Eve was a type of the Church, and what we are taught in Genesis 2 concerning Eve is typical of the Church. We are taught that Eve was provided for Adam as a result of the divine purpose. The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

The Lord God formed Eve from a living bone taken from Adam. Eve was therefore, in the man before she was formed and called into being. The Church was in Christ before it was called and justified and saved. Eve derived her life from Adam. It was a living bone, which was taken from him, and with that living bone the Lord God built a woman.

Eve was presented to Adam by God, and when she was presented Adam recognized her as part of himself. He said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man".

We read in Ephesians 5, "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". There is an analogy drawn by the apostle between the relationship of a husband to his wife and the relationship of Christ to His Church. The husband is the head of the wife, Christ is the head of the Church.

The Lord Jesus Christ regards the Church as part of Himself, and He nourishes and cherishes all the members of His mystical body. As a wife is part of her husband, they twain being one flesh, so we have been chosen by Christ as members of His body.

"This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church". Christ and His people are one, and Christ has but one Church, even as Adam had but one wife.

The believer obeyed with Him: he died with Him: he rose with Him; he is now above all principality and power, and above every name that is named in the heavenly places in Christ. Representatively the Church is already in heaven. Actually she *will* be there because she is representatively there already. Our Forerunner is there already. His presence there, is the pledge that His people will be there also.

#### **The Church Will Be In Christ When He Comes Again**

Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His body. You cannot separate Christ from the members. The Church's life is derived from Christ. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." said Paul. When Christ descends, His Church will be with Him. They also which sleep, God will bring with Jesus. The dead in Christ shall rise; the living shall be changed, and they will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. Then they will be manifestly with Christ and consciously in Him. When He appears, they will appear. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

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**The Church's Unity Is Taught By The Gospel Promise To The Patriarchs**  
That promise was made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Genesis 22:18 contains it as well as other parts of the Old Testament. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed My voice."

Now that is a gospel promise; let me ask you to look at Galatians 3:8, "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

When God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that all the nations of the earth would be blessed, He was announcing that the blessing which He intended to bestow on Jews and Gentiles, on a great multitude which no man could number through all the ages, would be justification by faith—"So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

The apostle Peter, in Acts 3:25, 26, said to the Jews, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." All the nations then were to be blessed through Christ, the seed of Abraham, and those who were of faith, those who are justified by faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham, not blessed apart from him. Dr. Bonar put it thus; "We are to enter on Abraham's privileges" (Gal. 3:9), we all constitute, therefore, one family.

#### **The Church's Unity Is Suggested By A Prophecy in Isaiah**

The Father said to Christ, "It is a light thing that Thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). In other words, it was God's purpose that Christ, the Messiah, should not only save the preserved of Israel, but that He should be the Saviour of the Gentiles to the ends of the earth. But no man is saved apart from faith in Christ. The moment a Jew or a Gentile believes in Christ, he becomes manifestly a member of Abraham's spiritual family and a

member of the family of God, and therefore a member of the one family in heaven and in earth.

### **The Church's Unity Is Taught By The Lord Jesus Christ**

We are reminded of John 10:8. Our Lord says, having said He was the door: "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." Thus there were sheep in Old Testament times. Then our Lord goes on to declare that He is the shepherd of the sheep, that He was to give His life for the sheep, and that all the sheep were given to Him by the Father. Now, the sheep and the Church of God are identical. The apostle Paul said in Acts 20:28 "Take heed 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." The sheep, then, are the Church, and the sheep are all given to Christ. In Psalm 80 Israel cries, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."

Our Lord says in John 10:16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." The Jewish sheep, the sheep who belonged to Old Testament times, and the sheep now being gathered, are *one flock*. The Lord, then, teaches the Church's unity throughout the ages.

### **The Church's Unity Is Taught In The Epistles**

Note the teaching of Ephesians 2:11-15, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Made nigh to God and made nigh to the commonwealth of Israel! Christ is our peace. "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity,

of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." That is to say, when Christ died, all His people died with Him. We have the same truth in Colossians (2:20). "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances." Again, (3:3): "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Then Galatians 2:19, 20: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"—I have been crucified with Christ. Literally there were only two persons crucified with Christ—the two thieves—but the Church was crucified with Christ representatively. When Christ died the Church died.

### **The Church Was In Christ In Resurrection And Ascension**

When He arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the Church rose and ascended with Him. This truth is clearly set forth in Ephesians. 2:4-6. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now, no doubt this chapter refers to the great change, which takes place at regeneration. It points out that those who were dead in sin are quickened. Regenerated by the Holy Ghost, so that they are created in Christ Jesus unto good works: but there is an important sense in which the three verbs which are used in the fifth and sixth verses point to our union with Christ representatively in resurrection and ascension. God has raised us up together and representatively made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The Church is now in heaven representatively. The Church was quickened when Christ was quickened, because you cannot separate the Church from Christ. The Church was raised when He was raised, and the Church is now representatively seated with Christ in heavenly places. "Ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God." Thus we see the Church was in Christ before the foundation of the world.

enjoys when he is called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. You cannot separate the head from the body. Christ is the Head of the Church. In Romans 5:19, we read: "As by one man's disobedience many were constituted sinners [apart from any sin of their own: they were constituted sinners through one man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden] so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." So all in Christ are treated and regarded as righteous because of His obedience. Thus when He obeyed, the Church obeyed in Him.

Why was Christ made under the law? We read: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4:4, 5). He was not made under the law for His own sake, but for the sake of the members of the Church. He obeyed on their behalf. They disobeyed in Adam and He obeyed as their Head and Representative. In one of Mr. B. W. Newton's excellent tracts he quotes one passage from Archbishop Usher, who said something to this effect: that the sinner has contracted a double debt, he was under obligation to suffer the law's penalty, which is death. Christ came and met both these obligations. As Professor Smeaton points out, Christ met the *preceptive* and the *penal* claims of the law. He met the penalty which the law demanded for the sinner; He died in the place, room and stead of the Church.

#### **The Church Was In Christ When He Died On The Cross**

The apostle says, "How shall we, that *died* to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Then, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:2-8). The sole point I want to make in connection with these is to show that the Church was in Christ when He died. When He died, we died with Him. This truth is set forth in 2 Corinthians 5:14, where the apostle says: "For the love

even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

The Lord Jesus Christ abolished the law in all its forms as the means of justification. He abolished the ceremonial law, that is to say He abolished its sacrifices, its altars, and its priesthood. "He taketh away the first," as Hebrews 10 tells us, "that he may establish the second." Christ then abolished every form of law as a means of justification, so that He might make in Himself of twain one new man, and that He might reconcile them to God. As a result of this, He preached peace through His messengers to them that were afar off and to them that were nigh. The far-off ones and the near ones both have access, or introduction by one Spirit unto the Father.

"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This great truth was, by revelation, made known to the apostle Paul, as he says in Ephesians 3:3-5. "By revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets". This secret is that the Gentiles were to be fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of this promise in Christ by the Gospel. They are members of the same family. They are fellow heirs of the same inheritance. They are members of the body, the one body of the Lord Jesus Christ, His mystical body. They are partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel. The same truth is set forth in the Epistle to the Galatians.

Look again at the Epistle to the Hebrews 11: it is perfectly true that the great majority of the Old Testament saints belonged to Israel. There were, however, a few exceptions. Job did not belong to the Israelitish nation—Melchizedec did not belong to it, Enoch did not belong to it. Noah did not belong to it. But what does the Epistle to the Hebrews tell us? "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness

which is by faith." That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Noah was an "heir of the righteousness which is by faith," that righteousness which is unto all them that believe.

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past;"—done by the Old Testament saints—"to declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness"—in pardoning sinners, whether they belonged to Old Testament times or to New Testament times. Noah was justified by faith. Faith characterized Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Is there anything greater, is there any blessing greater than that—that God *should not be ashamed to be called their God*? That is the great Covenant promise of God.

When you get to Revelation 21 you get nothing higher. "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us, should not be made perfect" We are all to be perfected together. Take the Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle is dealing with the problem of Israel. In Chapter 11, the apostle says, "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not the against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Thus, there is but one olive tree. the Gentiles being grafted in to the Jewish olive tree, and when the Lord comes, all Israel shall be saved. They will be grafted into their own olive tree. There will be one Church, one body. one family, one temple of the living God. The whole company of God's people in all ages. Past, present and future, form one Church of the living God, one spiritual temple, one family of

whom our Lord Will say when they are all gathered round Him in glory, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me" (Heb. 2:13).

### **The Church Was In Christ Before The Foundation Of The World**

This is the statement of the apostle, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Those who eventually will constitute the complete Church of God which Christ purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28) were all loved of God with an everlasting love; chosen of God in Christ who was set apart in the everlasting covenant of grace to be the Head and Representative of His people, the Church: and so in the mind of God they were "in Christ" before they had any existence. We have a beautiful illustration of this in Psalm 139:16, where David is speaking of the human body, "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect: and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

The 17th Article of the Church of England reads: "Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." Every conscious member of the Church owes his spiritual existence to God's eternal love, His everlasting purpose, to His choice of him in grace. That is one great truth of the Church being in Christ.

### **The Church Was In Christ When He Became Incarnate**

The apostle says, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The whole human race was in Adam when he fell just as we read in chapter 7 of the Epistle to the Hebrews that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedec. So the Church was in Christ before it had any being. The apostle speaks of some saints who were in Christ before him. This is experimental union, which the believer