

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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“THERE IS ONE BODY”

PART TWO

by Lee Moses

It is said, “Big things come in small packages.” “*There is one body*”—these four short words inspired by the Holy Spirit come together to form a weighty statement of doctrine. Sadly, the present disembodied state of professed followers of Christ belies a profound unawareness of this passage and its implications. As we noted last month, this passage teaches that there are not multiple bodies as far as God is concerned, and that other “bodies” are not part of the *one body*. Let us consider some further implications of the statement, “*There is one body.*”

One cannot simultaneously be a member of the *one body* and another body. As observed last month, a body is composed of its different members. And each member belongs specifically and exclusively to only one body. Two people cannot say that one hand belongs equally to both their bodies—it only belongs to one body. Two people cannot say that one ear is part of both their bodies. So it is with the *one body*—one cannot simultaneously belong to it and to another body.

Many are convinced in their minds that they are Christians, belonging to the body of Christ. But they insist upon being “hyphenated Christians”—they want to be “Episcopal-Christians,” “Presbyterian-Christians,” “Community Church-Christians,” and so forth. Their allegiance to their particular denomination is just as great as, if not greater than, their allegiance to what they deem the body of Christ.

However, Christ will not accept such divided loyalties. “*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*” (Matthew 12:30). “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love*

the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (6:24). “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*” (6:33). The kingdom that Christ commands men to seek first is His church, the *one body* (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9). The denominations to which men insist they must belong are founded upon the doctrines of men, otherwise they would not exist. And when one’s loyalty is divided between loyalty to Christ and loyalty to manmade doctrines and religious bodies, he has a heart far removed from God—as such his religion is worthless: “*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:8-9).

The *one body* must not be trivialized.

The plain statement “*There is one body*” emphasizes the body’s importance. It immediately calls to mind the essential Biblical teaching, “*There is one God; and there is none other but he*” (Mark 12:32; compare with Deuteronomy 4:39; 6:4; 1 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 44:6, 8; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19). God would not accept people giving His rightful glory to another so-called “god”: “*I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images*” (Isaiah 42:8). Likewise, God will not accept the glory due the body of Christ being trivialized or given to another so-called “church.”

The simple statement “*There is one body*” is grave enough, but consider the context in which it is stated. The *one body* is presented as one of the “seven pillars of unity.” While the term “seven pillars of unity” is not expressly stated in

the Bible, it is an accurate description of the Biblical function of the seven “ones.” “Unity” simply means “oneness,” and Ephesians 4:4-6 gives markers of essential oneness in order that willing followers of Christ may indeed be one. The “*one body*” is a **pillar** of unity. A pillar gives support; and as inspiration recorded the words of a desperate soul, “*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psalm 11:3). This becomes a very valid question when applied to any of the pillars of unity. If any one of them is taken away, the entire platform of unity falls.

It is not coincidental that this list begins with “*one body.*” The primary focus of the entire book of Ephesians is the *one body*, the church. While not saying that the church was more important than the other pillars of unity, Paul focused first on the church. When seeking true unity, we have to focus on the church, the *one body*.

In discussing the *one body* in First Corinthians 12, Paul discusses the unity of the human body:

But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.... And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it (verses 20-21, 26).

Paul emphatically points out how ridiculous it is to have the members of a human body operating in any other way than in perfect unity with one another. If any member causes the body to run out of synch, an operation must be performed to correct that body part or remove it.

Of course, the church to whom Paul wrote was **not** operating in perfect unity (1:11-12; 3:1-4; 5:2; 8:12; 11:17-22; 14:4). But he commanded them to change: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye*

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(continued from page one)

all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1:10).

Where multiple bodies exist, unity cannot; because they do not "*all speak the same thing.*" Two people can only have unity where they are in agreement (Amos 3:3). To take away the Lord's focus upon the *one body*, the church, is to knock out an essential pillar of unity.

People trivialize the *one body* in various ways. Many trivialize it by saying, "You do not have to belong to any particular church to be saved." Such people will recommend belonging to a church, but they will give such unconstructive counsel as "Attend the church of your choice." Others say, "Preach Christ, not the church."

But consider what the other pillars of unity include: "*...one Spirit, even as ye are 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*" (Eph. 4:4-6). What if people were to say similar things about the other pillars that they say about the *one body*?

What if one were to say, "It's not

important whether we worship any one particular god"? Or maybe, "It's not important whether we submit to any one particular lord." How about this for a slogan—"Worship the god of your choice." Should preachers be encouraged to "preach Christ, not God"? Such statements would clearly be false and blasphemous. But why do so many professed Christians fail to realize that they likewise speak falsely and blasphemously when they say there are multiple religious bodies acceptable to God? The *one body* is not only a body, it is **the** body. Furthermore, it is **Christ's** body (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12). Christ died for that *one body* (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). "*[Christ] is the Saviour of the body*" (Eph. 5:23).

Some apparently consider it a cardinal sin to assert that there is only one true church. However, when one asserts that there is but **one** church in which men and women can please the Lord, and decries all others, he is on the right path to giving the *one body* her proper honor.

There are observable differences between the *one body* and other bodies.

A body is distinguishable from other bodies. I can readily discern my wife and children from another man's wife and children. While there are indeed numerous religious bodies in existence today, that the Holy Spirit would inspire "*There is one body*" as a timeless truth tells us we can know the difference between other bodies and the *one body*. As Jesus said, "*If ye continue in my word...ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31-32). By looking steadfastly to the New Testament, the word of Christ, one can know the differences between the *one body* and other religious bodies.

One can observe an obvious difference between the *one body* and other bodies by looking at their **names**. Scripture designates the *one body* by various names—the *church*, the *churches of Christ*, the *church of God*, the *kingdom of [God's] dear Son*, and other names as well. The *one body* will likewise refer to herself by these designations; and of these will probably be found more usually referring to herself as *the church of Christ*.¹ Denominations often refer to themselves after the names of men, such

as Martin Luther or John the baptist; or after the names of their particular structures and practices, such as the Presbyterian or Episcopal systems.

The *one body* can be distinguished by her offering **worship** to God only by Scriptural acts; including prayer led by Christian males (Acts 12:5; 1 Timothy 2:8), congregational singing (Eph. 5:19), giving on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), partaking of the Lord's Supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and participating in Biblical reading, exposition, and exhortation (Acts 20:7). Other bodies may be found having prayer led by women; music that includes instrumental accompaniment, solos, or choirs; giving on various days of the week; the Lord's Supper being partaken of at irregular times; and drama being used in place of preaching.

The *one body* can be distinguished by her **mission and work**. The *one body* has the mission to "*Go...therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19-20). Accompanying this work is edification (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25) and benevolence (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27), but the church's principal mission and work is evangelism. Other bodies will be found busily engaged in raffles, plays, and festivals; occupied with social issues, but rarely interested in preaching the Gospel.

Another observable difference between the *one body* and denominations is its **government**. The *one body* may be described as governed by a constitutional monarchy—that is, being ruled by a sovereign king and governed by an established body of law. In the case of the *one body*, the sovereign king is Christ: "*[God] hath put all things under [Christ's] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:22-23; compare with Acts 2:30-36). The established body of law is the New Testament and only the New Testament (John 12:48; 16:13; Eph. 4:4-5; James 1:25; Jude 3). Outside of their accountability to Christ and the New Testament, local congregations are autonomous, being governed in matters of expedience by Scripturally qualified

elders (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Deacons are Scripturally authorized assistants to help the elders (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-10).

Other bodies are governed differently. The Roman Catholic Church may indeed be governed by a form of monarchy, but they have an unscriptural hierarchy in place, and the wrong man sitting on the throne. Also, their established body of law is the decrees of councils, writings of “church fathers,” and papal bulls. Protestant denominations are likewise usually governed by various hierarchies, and their established body of law includes manmade creeds in addition to the New Testament. Many denominations add the Old Testament to their established body of law (against Romans 7:4-6; Galatians 3:23-25; Hebrews 7:11-12; et al.).

Many denominations implement a democratic form of government, whereby the majority rules. In a representative democracy, elected representatives are always held accountable to the preferences of their constituents. If voters do not like the decisions their representative has made, they can vote him out of office. If they do not feel like following him, they can follow someone else. This is not how the Lord designed His body to function. Members are to “obey” and “submit to” their elders (Hebrews 13:17). If their elders become disqualified or otherwise persist in sin, accusations are to be brought against them (1 Timothy 5:19-20). But until that happens or they resign, elders are shepherds over their flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

Another observable difference between the *one body* and religious denominations is that the *one body* is thoroughly **undenominational**. Some churches profess to be “non-denominational,” which merely means they are “open or acceptable to people of any denomination.”² But to be *undenominational* involves a complete rejection of the principles of denominationalism. The very statement “*There is one body*” tells us this is how we should be.

Yet we see a religious world full of the “hyphenated, divided allegiance Christians” discussed earlier. When someone says, “I am both a loyal member of my denomination and of the body of Christ,” he betrays that his professed alle-

giance to the body of Christ is not to the body of Christ at all. Such a person’s loyalty is to a loosely affiliated conglomeration of bodies that all profess faith in Christ. The *one body* is not a loosely affiliated conglomeration of bodies—as noted last month, God does not recognize multiple bodies, and other bodies cannot be part of the *one body*.

One will find denominations called by a plethora of names, worshipping differently, holding different standards of doctrine and practice, being organized differently, and missing the need for undenominational Christianity. Yet God assures us, “*There is one body*”—and if we will look, we can discern that body from the throng.

“*There is one body*”—this short phrase tells us quite a bit about the nature

and significance of that body. So much more could be said about the *one body*, for indeed the Bible says much more about it. Sadly, the denominational world has obviously failed to consider this weighty four-word statement for its worth; for grasping and complying with its meaning will force one to abandon all ties with denominationalism. May we ever love and cherish the church of our Lord—for “*there is one body*.”

1 See “Why Persist in Calling the Church ‘the Church of Christ?’” May 2007 *FCGN*.

2 *Oxford American College Dictionary*, s.v. “nondenominational.”

WAS JOHN A BAPTIST?

by Orbie Robbins

(deceased, from *FCGN*, December 1962)

People who wear the name “Baptist” claim that John was a Baptist and all whom John baptized became Baptists. John baptized Christ and that made Christ a Baptist. Now does the Bible teach that John was a Baptist? The expression a Baptist is not found in the entire Bible. John was called the Baptist. “*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea*” (Matthew 3:1)

Baptist is a title, and denotes or shows what John did. He introduced baptism and baptized people (Jews only). If all John baptized became Baptists because he was called the Baptist, then according to the same reasoning and logic all that Paul baptized became Apostles because he was called Paul the Apostle. All whom Luke baptized became physicians for he was called Luke the physician, and all whom Philip baptized became evangelists for he was called Philip the Evangelist. To illustrate: the blacksmith whose name is John would be called John the Blacksmith. So according to the position mentioned, every horse shod by him would become a Blacksmith. If not, why not?

The following scriptural reasons will show why John could not have been a Baptist.

1. Baptists teach that one cannot fall from grace. John taught that people could fall and be lost. (Matthew 3:8-12).
2. Baptists teach that baptism is not for remission of sin, but rather because of remission of sins. John taught baptism was for remission of sins. “*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*” (Mark 1:4).
3. John baptized Jews who confessed their sins, “*Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea and all the region round about Jordon, and were baptized of him in Jordon, confessing their sins*” (Matthew 3:5-6). Baptist preachers have people to confess their feelings, the church votes and if the vote is unanimous the candidate is then baptized.
4. John did not baptize anyone except Jews. Matthew 3:7 Baptist preachers will baptize every Gentile that will

confess their feelings tell their experience of grace, if the church votes for them to be received.

5. Jesus said he (John) was not in the kingdom, or church, and that the least in the kingdom was greater than he (Matthew 11:10-11). But those who become Baptists say they are in the church or kingdom.

6. John taught that his work would decrease, but Christ's would increase (John 3:30). The work done by the authority of Christ under the great commission did increase (Matthew 28:19-20) And will continue to increase as the gospel is preached, believed, and obeyed until time shall be no more. On the day of Pentecost this great work of Christ began under his chosen Apostles. *"Three thousand gladly received the word and were baptized"* (Acts 2:41) and they continued to increase. *"The Lord added to the church daily those that should be saved"* (Acts 2:47). It continued to increase - 5000 were added unto them (Acts 4:4).

Now by what name were those called who were added to the church because of their obedience unto the gospel of Christ? *"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch"* (Acts 11:26). Peter says that God can be glorified in this name (Christian) (1 Peter 4:16). Since we can glorify God in the name Christian, could we glorify him in any other name such as Baptist, Methodist, etc.? All will have to agree that it is infallibly safe to wear the name Christian because it is a worthy name; it honors Christ; it shows our relationship unto him; and it is a name that was given by the mouth of the Lord (Romans 7:4; James 2:7; 1 Peter 4:16; Isaiah 62:1-2). Therefore all other names are questionable. Why not be safe and sure by just becoming a Christian, and wearing the name Christian? This can be accomplished by obeying the gospel of Christ.

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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