

## **Why Church? - The Body of Christ**

***For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 3:11.***

### **Given For Us**

**This holy meal we call the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, was given to us by our Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed. It is the most common form of Christian worship around the globe and throughout time. Through this act we are reminded of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, to take away our sins, and we are reminded to take Him into our lives as though He were our daily bread.**

**Every time we gather together to share in Holy Communion we are sharing in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And each time we hear the words over the bread "This is Christ's body, broken for you," we are reminded of His sacrifice on the Cross. He gave His mortal body, to be broken, His blood to be shed, that He might carry away all our sins.**

**Yet, there is another meaning to "Christ's body" of which we speak. St. Paul used the metaphor of the body to illustrate the meaning of church. You recall that Church (with a capital "C") refers to the Church universal, throughout the ages. It is the gathering of those who have professed their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior and have assembled to be God's agents in this world, to proclaim forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ. It is a grand and wonderful undertaking of God, enlisting people from all races, nations, languages, and ages to extend His kingdom among humans. Sometimes in contrast to this glorious vision of the Church universal, is the local church of Christian believers in Jesus. They come together with all their real personalities and problems to embody the presence of Christ in this world. Here the Body of Christ is manifest in its earthly form, with all its foibles and flaws, seeking to be Christ's presence in the world.**

**A free-lance missionary visited a pastor asking for financial support. "What group are you associated with?" the pastor asked. The man replied, "I belong to the invisible church." The pastor then asked, "Well, what church is that?" Again, he got the answer, "I belong to the invisible church!" Getting a bit suspicious, the pastor asked, "When does this invisible church meet? Who leads it?" The missionary then became incensed and said, "Well, your church here isn't the true church. I belong to the invisible church!" The pastor replied, "Well, here's some invisible money to help you minister to the invisible church!"<sup>1</sup>**

**The Body of Christ is not invisible. It takes form through every local congregation gathered in His name, truly living by His Spirit and authentically doing His will. Each local church does so imperfectly but we always pray that we do so faithfully.**

**The Church is His Body**

**St. Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians, *Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it*, 1 Cor. 12:27. From there he goes on to describe various functions in the church as gifts given to individuals, just as a body has various parts to do essential tasks for the whole body. The point is that each individual is there serving God in the service of one another, and each one serving in harmony with the service of others, just as all our body parts must work together for good health. This obviously makes church more than simply an individual endeavor. Individually, people tend to strive for a "personal spirituality" that puts the focus on personal fulfillment. The problem is that we tend to be overly generous with ourselves and downplay our own reoccurring weaknesses.**

**Paul addresses the God given objective as a corporate endeavor. We are to encourage one another to maturity in all areas of Christian life: intellectual, emotional, physical and relational. The standard and the goal is that *... we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*, Eph. 4:13. We don't all do the same thing, but we belong to the same body ... the Body of Christ (See 1 Cor. 12:28-31).**

**Of course, we must remember — that the local church is composed of sinners. People enter church with various degrees of spiritual and emotional brokenness and maturity. In that sense, the Body of Christ is still broken. To authentically be the Church, the local community of believers must know the church has been created by God and is dependent on Him for its very life and energy, and therefore the members must be willing to exercise grace with one another.**

**You don't have to be perfect to get into Church. But you should be willing to allow Jesus to be your Savior and your Lord. That means allow Him, along with the congregation's encouragement, cleanse you of your sinfulness, and allow Him to guide you into all truth, even if it means confronting some of your own notions about truth. He takes our brokenness, and if we let Him, He teaches us and heals us and restores us, and then uses us to bring His grace into the lives of others who are broken. The Church is still God's chosen vessel to communicate His truth and purpose to us and the world.**

**Wisdom would have us remember that Church doesn't exist primarily because of our personal needs. It exists primarily because of God's purposes, and secondarily because of the need of all people. Christ has called us to follow Him, through His church, to be healed and to become healers, sharing His grace to others who do not yet know Him. Through His Church Jesus calls us to come to Him and be cleansed of sin, and then go for Him to extend His invitation to others to come and be cleansed. Yes, the local church is filled with people who are imperfect in this aspect. *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us*, 2 Cor. 4:5-7. His grace is sufficient for our imperfection.**

### **The Church Is More Than An Organization**

**Although we can learn some good techniques from business, we are the Body of Christ, not a business. Although we can learn good practices from some organizations, the church is an organism not an organization. That means even the local church is a living, breathing, changing body of believers. It may grow, it may grow old, it may grow young, it may rest, or even (God forbid) die. No matter the season, a church and**

individuals, at all times should be seeking counsel with Him who is head of it all. Perhaps it would behoove us always to be reminded that ... *God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way, Eph. 1:22-23.*

### **The Church Is One**

When Jesus said, “I will build my church,” he used the singular, not the plural—“churches.” Jesus promised to build one church and one church only. There is only one true *ἐκκλησία*—the assembly of those who have been called out of the world to follow Christ. The oneness of the church is the basis for true Christian unity. Or to say it negatively, without that oneness, unity would be impossible. St. Paul explained this in His letter to the Ephesians by using the word “one” seven times in a single passage. *There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all, Ephesians 4:4-6.* The basis of our unity is in: One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, and One Father of all.

The Church is one because its foundation in Jesus Christ: *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:11.*

### **The Church Is A New Covenant**

At the Last Supper Jesus took the cup saying, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me, 1 Cor. 11:25.* By this Jesus meant he was establishing the new covenant promised by the prophet Jeremiah: *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah,”* Jeremiah 31:31. The Last Supper illustrates that, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God was entering into a new agreement with His people based on His forgiving and atoning love.

Through Christ – with all He accomplished on the Cross and through His resurrection – we are offered the opportunity to be made anew ... some say “born again.” The old, human nature, awash in sin and incapable of fully living the life of full communion with God, is exchanged for a new nature, renewed by Christ’s payment of all the consequences of sin, and made capable, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live for God. *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant, Hebrews 9:15.*

Yes, the Church is the Body of Christ and we are members of His Body.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W.; The Bible Exposition Commentary, (1996, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) vol. 2, 38.