

Series: Understanding the Body of Christ
Tonight's Lesson: Are You a Member of the One Body?

Introduction:

1. Since the world began, prophets have declared the fact that God would one day bring the restitution of all things on the earth. Peter taught Israel that this wonderful event would commence with the return of Jesus Christ to earth. **Acts 3:19-21**
 - This divine earthly kingdom would be vested in the nation of Israel, with the Davidic throne restored on the earth through Jesus Christ.
2. But hidden in God were some spiritual truths that Paul referred to as "the mystery." In this dispensation of grace, God is forming a brand new organism, called the church, the body of Christ. **Ephesians 3:1-6**
 - The prophetic plan involving Israel and the earth will still happen, but it has been temporarily postponed and suspended.
3. In this dispensation, a person is either:
 - Dead in their trespasses and sins - **Ephesians 2:1**
 - Alive in Christ - **Ephesians 2:4-5**
4. God is taking believers and bringing them into spiritual union with Jesus Christ, and forming the church, the body of Christ. **Ephesians 1:22-23**
5. Today, God accomplishes His work on the earth through the church, the body of Christ. **Ephesians 2:10**
6. It is absolutely crucial that every believer understand what God's Word teaches about the body of Christ. If not, we will never understand the purpose and plan of God for this dispensation of grace.
7. Here is the first foundational truth that every believer must grasp:

There is only one body of Christ, not many.

1. **Ephesians 4:4** makes this quite clear. It states, "*There is one body...*"
2. **Ephesians 2:15** refers to the body of Christ as "one new man."
 - The body of Christ has not replaced earthly Israel, as some people teach.
 - The body of Christ is a **new** living organism that previously did not exist.
3. The Bible is emphatic that every person who is saved is reconciled to God in **one** body. **Ephesians 2:16**
4. This destroys the notion that when the Bible speaks of the body of Christ, it is speaking of a particular local church.
 - This would mean that there would be as many bodies as there are local churches in the world.
 - This would not be one body, but several bodies.
 - If the body of Christ is speaking of a local church, there is another obvious problem. Because man cannot see the heart, every local church is sure to have some members in it that are lost. This would mean that there are lost members in the body of Christ. What an absurd thought!
5. It is obvious from Scripture that the body of Christ is far more encompassing than a local body of professing believers.
6. The body of Christ speaks of a heavenly, called out assembly of true believers that have been made one with Jesus Christ.

- There are some who recoil at this thought, saying that they do not believe in the idea of an invisible church.
7. According to **Ephesians 1:22-23**, how does Paul define the church? He defines it as Christ's body.
 - All who are part of Christ's body have been raised up and **seated** in heavenly places. **Ephesians 2:6**
 - You and I are not able to physically see who is seated in that heavenly called out assembly. Only God knows this. **2 Timothy 2:19** states, "*The Lord knoweth them that are his.*"
 - If somebody doesn't like the term "invisible church" we could probably more accurately call the body of Christ the "heavenly church," but we cannot deny the truth of it.
 8. Paul was a member of the **local** church at Antioch (**Acts 13:1-3**), yet he claimed to be a member of the same body as believers at Rome (**Romans 12:3-5**), Corinth (**1 Corinthians 10:16-17**), and Ephesus (**Ephesians 5:30**). Paul had never even been to Rome.
 9. Paul is writing to a group of local assemblies in Galatia (**Galatians 1:2**), yet he declares that they are all one in Christ Jesus. **Galatians 3:26-28**
 - You become part of the one body by faith alone in Jesus Christ.
 - The moment a believing sinner trusts Jesus Christ, God's Spirit baptizes him into a living union with Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:10**
 - In the church, the body of Christ, there is no racial, physical, or gender distinctions.
 - A believer is not a spiritual Jew, and the church is not spiritual Israel.
 - In the local, visible assembly there are physical and gender distinctions that Paul recognizes (**1 Timothy 2:12, 5:1-2, 6:1-2**), but not in the heavenly assembly.
 10. Local churches should be composed of individuals who have been made one with Christ (through Spirit baptism) and are members of the one body, the heavenly church.
 11. Believers of the heavenly church come together in a local church for the purpose of studying God's Word together, edifying one another, praying for one another, and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1:27**
 12. The most crucial question that every person must ask himself is not, "Am I a member of a local church, and have I been baptized in water by a local church?"
 13. The question is, "Have I trusted Christ as my Savior and been brought into a spiritual union with Jesus Christ and become a member of the one body, the body of Christ?"