

Series: Understanding the Body of Christ
Tonight's Lesson: Rightly Dividing the Body of Christ

Introduction:

1. In time past, God worked on the earth through the agency of the nation of Israel. This is not the case today.
2. Today, God is working through a living organism, a new creation called the church, the body of Christ.
 - **1 Corinthians 12:13** proclaims, *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."*
 - **1 Corinthians 12:27** states, *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."*
3. All those who believe on Jesus Christ are placed into a spiritual union with Christ at the very moment of salvation. We become members of the church, which is His body. **Ephesians 1:22-23**
4. In tonight's lesson, we will consider three important principles in rightly dividing the church, the body of Christ.

Never confuse the future kingdom church with the church, the body of Christ.

1. The word "church" does not always refer to the body of Christ. The word "church" can have a variety of applications.
 - The word "church" simply means "called out." It carries the idea of an assembly.
 - It can refer to a **local** assembly of professing believers or the **heavenly** assembly of true believers that have been seated in heavenly places.
 - It is also used in reference to the nation of Israel when God called them out of Egypt into the wilderness. **Acts 7:36, 38**
2. The word "church" is also used twice in the book of Matthew (16:18, 18:17). Because of this, some people have assumed that either:
 - The church, the body of Christ, began in the gospels (Matthew - John)
 - Or Christ was laying down (in the gospels) the structure for the future church of this dispensation of grace.
 - Neither one of these assumptions is correct.
3. The entire context of the book of Matthew is preparation for the coming kingdom church. **Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:6-7, 19:27-28**
4. The kingdom that was to come from heaven to earth is mentioned over fifty times in the book of Matthew.
5. Christ did not come to earth to establish the church, the body of Christ. He came to establish the Messianic church, in which Christ would rule and reign as King over all the earth. **Matthew 25:31-32**
6. This kingdom church was talked about, explained repeatedly, and was prophesied in great detail. It is what the disciples were expecting and anticipating. **Acts 1:6**
7. The truth of the body of Christ is said to be a mystery that was hid from ages and from generations. **Colossians 1:24-26**

Christ is the Head over the Body of Christ.

1. The kingdom church will be built upon the foundation of Christ ruling and reigning on earth as the visible Messiah. **Zechariah 14:9, 16; Matthew 25:31-32**
2. Today, the church, the body of Christ, is being built upon the foundation of Christ (rejected on earth) exalted in heavenly places as Head of the body.
Ephesians 1:20-23
3. As members of His body, we have the unique privilege of being in Christ. This means that we, too, are exalted and seated in heavenly places. **Ephesians 2:6**
4. Unlike the future kingdom church, we do not know Christ after the flesh in a visible, physical way. **2 Corinthians 5:16**
5. We have spiritually been raised with Him in the heavenlies, and our life is hid with Christ in God. One day when He appears at the rapture, we will appear with Him in glory. **Colossians 3:1-4**
6. The church, the body of Christ, is built upon the truth of Christ, exalted at the right hand of the Father as our heavenly Head. **Colossians 1:18**
7. The future kingdom church will be built upon the truth of Christ, as conquering Messiah and King. **Matthew 16:15-18**
 - It is on this declaration of Jesus as the Christ that the kingdom church will be built.
 - One side-note: isn't it interesting that Jesus doesn't say, "Satan will not prevail against it."
 - We know that today Satan is our adversary and seeks to hinder the body of Christ in everything today. Sometimes Satan **does** prevail.
1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Timothy 5:14-15; 2 Timothy 2:26
 - Why would Jesus use the term "gates of hell" when referring to the future kingdom church?
 - Where will Satan be when Christ returns and the kingdom church is established on earth? He will be shut up inside the gates of hell with a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more. **Revelation 20:1-3**
 - Christ's servants will be able to teach God's Word to the nations with absolutely no Satanic influence or hindrance. Satan may roar inside the gates of hell, but it will be to no avail.

The Holy Spirit places members into the body of Christ.

1. How does a person become part of the body of Christ? Is it by performing good works, joining a local church, being baptized in water, performing a series of religious rituals?
2. **1 Corinthians 12:13** states that *"...by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."*
3. In order to get into the body, the Holy Spirit must place you and identify you in the body. How does the Holy Spirit decide who to place in the body of Christ?
4. The Bible is clear - the Holy Spirit immediately baptizes a person into Christ the moment that person exercises believing faith in Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 1:12-13; Galatians 3:26-27**

5. The moment a person trusts Christ, a spiritual operation of God takes place whereby the believing sinner is completely cleansed of all sin, and given the life of Christ.
Colossians 2:11-13
6. Are you thankful to be a part of the body of Christ? What a position we have in Christ! **Colossians 2:9-10**

(Scroll down to see Bible Study chart.)

KINGDOM POSTPONED

