

## CHAPTER D18

## THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church, which is Christ's body (**Ep 1:22,23**), has many members including Old Testament saints (**1 Co 10:4; Ac 7:38,45**), New Testament saints (obviously), and good angels (**Re 19:10; 22:8,9**). Christ's body, the church, is to do God's will. Read **He 10:5,7** with that in mind. Then compare **He 10:10** where it says "we are sanctified through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all" with what **1 Jn 3:16** says in order to see that Christ died for the church and we are to do the same. Christ's body was – and is – a sacrifice (**Ro 12:1**) because we are His body. The church is saved by the obedient death (dying to self by subduing the carnal mind and obeying God) of Christ's body, the church, us. (Some, who do not believe this, will ignore the Scripture and angrily protest that I'm "just trying to take away from what Christ did on the cross!" Which I easily counter by saying, "No I'm not!" Answer a fool according to his folly – if they want to leave Scripture out of their thinking and use Reasoning that's their prerogative.) In the same context as 1 Jn 3:16 read **2 Ti 2:10** and **1 Pe 4:1**. When we die to self and do Christ's will, we help the rest of the church to live (**2 Co 4:10-12**). Our job is to minister unto the saints; that is why Ro 12:1 is followed by chapters 12 through 16, which tell us *how*. **Ja 1:22; Jn 8:39; 14:12** show that it is a works religion because the purpose of the body is to *do* what is ordered by the head. In fact, that is the test of **Ro 6:16** – either the body of saints will obediently follow the dictates of Christ the Head or it won't.

Christ the Head went back to Paradise but His body remains on earth to do His will. His will is that the church be saved and that the gates of hell not prevail over it. We are merely continuing His work of salvation because we are His workers. That is what the "greater works" of Jn 14:12 are, they are our continuing in Christ's afflictions of the past (**Co 1:24; 1 Pe 2:21**). For what reason? For the sake of the church. Those afflictions are sufferings (including daily, disciplined Bible study) that lead to obedience, which leads to perfection and salvation (**He 5:8,9**).

In the next several paragraphs I'm going to deal with a group of verses that, if taken literally, seem strange. I'm reviewing them because they're in the Bible and shouldn't be ignored – but I'm not being dogmatic about them:

Just as Christ's righteousness saves the obedient members of His household, so does a Christian's borrowed righteousness save his own family: **AND THY HOUSE: Ge 7:1; 17:12,13; 19:12; 20:7; Nu 16:26-33; Josh 2:18; 7:24-26; Ju 1:24,25; 2 Sa 15:21; Ezr 2:59,62; Is 4:1; Mt 18:25; Ac 16:31; 1 Co 7:14,16; Ep 5:22-33; He 11:7**. In order to see how carefully we must read the Bible, notice the full meaning of Scripture is revealed by paying attention to every word. In Ep 5:23, for example, the word For (which means *because*) says this verse is about to explain why "as unto the Lord" in the previous verse is so important. The key words in v.23 are even as and and. They make us go back to v.22 and focus on as unto the Lord. In v.23 the words even as and and say the husband is the saviour of his body even as Christ is the Saviour of His body. And that, in turn, makes us realize all the "AND THY HOUSE" verses mean exactly what they say. And then the word Therefore in v.24 emphasizes the importance of the previous two verses by repeating the point: We are to render submissive obedience to Christ, and Christian wives are to render submissive obedience to their husbands, *because authority and obedience are critical parts of salvation*.

Notice in Josh 7:24-26 that a man and his household are so inseparable that Achan is called both *him* and *them*. Also compare **2 Pe 2:7** with **Ge 19:15**. This situation is reminiscent of **Ge 1:26-28**, which is covered in chapter D26.

How can a man save his household? You must understand authority, unity, inheritance, and privilege in order to understand that. But – you object – your wife doesn't deserve to be saved! Two points: First, neither do you, but if you are an obedient wife to Christ He will save you anyway. Second, if you are a Scriptural husband you'll lead a Scriptural life, which will result in your ruling well over your household. Therefore, how your wife turns out is largely up to you. If she turns out to be a Lucifer, a Cain, or an Absalom, the Lord may call on you at Judgment to demonstrate how much you've learned from Him about ruling: **1 Co 6:3; Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26; Dt 21:18-21; Mt 5:29-32**! The Bible is a tough Book isn't it? The Lord is a hard Master. This is war, and we're fighting for our lives.

In **He 11:39,40** notice that Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc., have not received "the promise." They *are* with the Lord in His Kingdom of God, but they are only *hoping* to inherit the new Kingdom of Heaven. They have not yet inherited that promise because they cannot do it "without us."

Why can't they inherit it without us? Well, here's how the usual answer goes: "The Old Testament and its animal sacrifices could not take away sin (**He 10:4**). Therefore, the Old Testament saints could not receive the promise until the Lamb of God died on the cross to take away the sins of the world." That's a reasonable guess until you realize He 11:39,40 was written after Christ had taken away the sins of the world. The sins of the Old Testament saints were already paid for when it was written, that's why they were in Heaven when it was written! And they are *still* waiting to inherit the promise.

One reason they can't inherit the promise is the new heavens and new earth are not finished yet. The present earth took seven days to make. The first temple took seven years (**1 Ki 6:37,38**). We, the house or temple built without hands, will take seven thousand years. And that is how long the new heavens and new earth will take.

Another reason the Old Testament saints can't receive the inheritance (even New Testament saints can't receive it yet) is the war is still undecided. That's what **1 Ti 2:15** is referring to. In it the "woman" (a type of the church) will only be saved *if* her *children* continue in the faith. The purpose of the Old Commission and the Great Commission comes into play here: The church will only be saved, first, *if* succeeding generations retain the doctrinal purity of the literal word of God, and second, *if* those new generations keep the faith. Now are you beginning to see why we are supposed to give our lives for the welfare of the church? Does **Pv 22:6** take on increased significance? Do you see why He 12:1 immediately follows 11:39,40, and do you now understand why 12:1 begins with *Wherefore*? And why chapter 12 is an exhortation to keep the faith?

**1 Th 3:8** is another indication that even our fellow New Testament saints who have gone before cannot make it without us. It says the same thing He 11:40 says: They only make it if we, the succeeding generations, their "offspring" if you will, keep the faith. Now you know why godly *children* (**1 Ti 3:4,12**) are so important to the "care of the church" (**1 Ti 3:5**).

If you put it into perspective you can see that Christ did all the important stuff and we do the legwork. As His body we continue His work, which is Christ doing the work as long as our works are obedient manifestations of Him in accordance with the Bible. (If our works are not in accordance with the Blueprint/Bible, we'll still be building a house but it won't be the house of God (**Ps 127:1; Mt 7:24-27**), it'll be the synagogue of Satan. There is no substitute for knowing and following the

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Blueprint.) That is how we keep the gates of hell at bay so the dead saints, we, our disciples who live after us, and their future disciples, can inherit the promise. That's what **1 Co 15:29** is all about: We get baptized and continue the race for the dead saints who have gone before, and we prepare our disciples to do the same after we're gone. Interestingly enough, our spiritual forefathers understood this and knew a lot of what they did was not for themselves, but for you and me (**1 Pe 1:10-14**).

This means slothful, do-nothing saints who aren't working toward being experts on the Bible, and saints whose doctrine is wrong, and saints who are Enlightened, are very bad for the dead saints and for us. The slothful ones who are not gathering with Christ are against Him. And the ones who have accepted the leaven of the Pharisees are sabotaging us from within. Obviously, instructing them in the way of truth is important. But just as most children need firm discipline until they mature, so will most Christians. Discipline in the form of public and private rebuking must return to Christianity. Church discipline needs to increase in number and severity. But we live in a willful, democratic society, and most carnal Christians will not repent – they'll sue you (**1 Co 6:1,6**). They must be shunned quickly and completely lest they drag the church down to hell with them. I cannot overemphasize that.

Our responsibility as Christ's workers is obviously more serious than most Christians think. But let's look at something with humbling and scary – if not ominous – implications. Read **Ep 2:13-18** and note that the whole book of Ephesians has a lot to do with marriage and the family. A look at the verses:

Verse 13: Through Christ's blood we become one with Him, we become His bride.

Verse 14: Christ is our peace with God, who hath made two into one. The word "both" refers to the marriage partners, Christ and the church. Yes, it is perfectly acceptable to view the verse as talking about Jews and Gentiles getting together because when two brides marry the same Lord each becomes one flesh with Him, and the two are united in the same body. But because marital unions are generally thought of in terms of male and female, I am viewing this as the union of Christ and His bride.

Verse 15: By dying physically on the cross Christ got rid of the law in order to take *two* (Christ and the church) and make *one* new married man, Christ. (This is the same as **Ro 7:4**.)

Verse 16: Christ's work was done, not just to form the union of v.15, but that He might reconcile *both* (Christ and His church) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the *enmity* (**Ro 8:7**) thereby.

Verse 18: For through Him (Christ) we *both* (Christ and His church) have access to the Father.

The word *both* is what grabs me. It could have said, "Through Christ *the believers* might be reconciled unto God." But it doesn't. It looks like our Head has tied His future to that of His body – us. If the church makes it, He makes it. (No body can live without its head, and no head can live without its body.) It looks like Christ's physical death and resurrection, imputed to us, mean we are to die daily to carnality (enmity) by subduing our old man by walking after the Spirit. That means v.18 is saying, "For *through Him* (if we eschew carnality by serving Christ) we both have access to the Father." That means **1 Co 9:27** has more than just an application for us as individuals, it also could be Christ saying, "I keep under my church, and bring it into subjection: lest I myself should be a castaway."

It looks like if the gates of hell prevail over the church, Christ won't make it either. Because of **Ps 102:28** and **Mt 16:18** I believe the church will make it. But the grave implications of the above help show why Christ is such a hard Master, and they make the lake of fire look like a just punishment for Christians who defraud the church – because whatever we do to His body, we do to Him. This interpretation also fits with the conclusions in chapter D6 about God losing His status as God if Satan wins the war.

Another indicator that our Bishop's (**1 Pe 2:25**) future is somehow linked to ours is 1 Ti 3:4,5. Only if His church is obedient does the Lord qualify as one that ruleth well His own house; if the body is obedient the Head looks like a good shepherd. This means lazy Christians are a real threat to the Lord, and that helps explain why He gets so angry when we do not properly submit to authorities over us.

According to the rules of this war, Satan knows if he loses he and his servants will go to the lake of fire. But if Satan wins, we, his wives must serve him. Christ is not a bride of Satan and therefore won't be his servant. I don't know what might happen to Christ if Satan wins. I only know our duty is to serve Him in strict accordance with the words He put in the Bible. If we do that we'll live happily ever after.