

# The Many-Membered Christ

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."*

~ I Corinthians 12:12

*"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."*

~ I Corinthians 12:27

**I**n First Corinthians chapter twelve Paul makes an analogy between our physical bodies and the Body of Christ. In verse twelve he uses what might appear to some to be a most startling phrase – “*so also is Christ.*” In so doing Paul calls the Body of Christ, simply – “*Christ.*”

In this verse Paul is not referring to the *actual* Person of Christ Himself, but he is discussing the many-membered Christ – God’s *ecclesia* – the Church, the Body of Christ. In doing so he highlights the divinely significant relationship between Christ and the believer; between Christ and the members of His Body. The believer is *one* with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are so in oneness with Him, and so fully identified with Him that Paul calls us by His name – “*Christ.*”

A similar example can be seen in the relationship between Adam and Eve. We are told:

*"Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and **called their name Adam**, in the day when they were created"* (Genesis 5:2).

Eve was *one* with Adam, her husband. Adam and Eve had a *unified* identity before God.

*"And they twain shall be **one flesh**: so then they are **no more twain, but one flesh**"* (Mark 10:8).

*"... **For two, saith he, shall be one flesh**"* (I Corinthians 6:16).

“... A man ... shall be joined unto his wife, and **they two shall be one flesh**”  
(Ephesians 5:31).

So it is with the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ:

“*But he that is joined unto the Lord is **one spirit***” (I Corinthians 6:17).

There is the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and then there is the *Many-Membered Christ*. These have an inseparable union. The *Many-Membered Body of Christ* is one with the *Lord Jesus Christ* – He being our Head.

### **THE BODY OF CHRIST: A MYSTERY BODY**

The *Many-Membered Christ* was a mystery. It is called “*the mystery of Christ.*” Not that it was Christ’s secret as such, but that it was an undisclosed aspect concerning Christ. That there would even be a *Many-Membered Christ* was not revealed to anyone prior to “*the revelation of the mystery*” (Romans 16:25) committed to him. Read Paul’s revelation of this mystery element of Christ:

“*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery of Christ**, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; **that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel***”  
(Ephesians 3:4-6).

The *Many-Membered Christ* was not only referred to by Paul as “*the mystery of Christ,*” but he also called it “*a great mystery*” – one that concerned “*Christ and the Church.*” Again, listen as Paul expounds on this “*great mystery.*”

“*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. **This is a great mystery:** but I speak concerning Christ and the church*” (Ephesians 5:28-32).

What then was the issue of this “*great mystery?*”

- **We are One with Christ!**

“*So we, being many, are one body in Christ ...*” (Romans 12:5).

“*... Ye are all one in Christ Jesus ...*” (Galatians 3:28).

“*... He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*” (I Corinthians 6:17).

- **We are under His Headship!**

*“And He is the Head of the body, the church ...”* (Colossians 1:18).

*“... The Head over all things to the church, Which is His body ...”* (Ephesians 1:22-23).

*“... Christ is the Head of the church ...”* (Ephesians 5:23).

*“... the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered ...”* (Colossians 2:19).

- **We are Identified “with Christ!”**

In His Crucifixion *“... crucified with Him ...”* (Romans 6:6).

In His Death *“... dead with Christ ...”* (Romans 6:8).

In His Burial *“... buried with Him ...”* (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

In His Resurrection *“... risen with Him ...”* (Colossians 2:12).

In His Enthronement *“... sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:6).

- **We are under His Coverture – “in Him!”<sup>1</sup>**

*“... Redemption ... in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 3:24).

*“... No condemnation ... in Christ Jesus ...”* (Romans 8:1).

*“... Life in Christ Jesus ...”*(Romans 8:2).

*“... Love ... in Christ Jesus ...”* (Romans 8:39).

*“... Sanctified in Christ Jesus ...”* (I Corinthians 1:2).

*“... Hope in Christ ...”* (I Corinthians 15:19).

*“... Triumph in Christ ...”* (II Corinthians 2:14).

*“... New creature ... in Christ ...”* (II Corinthians 5:17).

*“... Simplicity that is in Christ”* (II Corinthians 11:3).

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1. See the Bible Student’s Notebook for more information on the subject of Biblical coverture as it is related to the husband-wife relationship (#37, #38), to the father-daughter relationship (#43), and to the believer-Christ relationship (#51).

“... *Created in Christ Jesus* ...” (Ephesians 2:10).

“... *Consolation in Christ* ...” (Philippians 2:1).

“... *Rejoice in Christ Jesus* ...” (Philippians 3:3).

“... *Saint in Christ Jesus* ...” (Philippians 4:21).

“... *Perfect in Christ Jesus* ...” (Colossians 1:28).

“... *Built up in Him*” (Colossians 2:7).

“... *Complete in Him*” (Colossians 2:10).

“... *Glorified ... in Him*” (II Thessalonians 1:12).

“... *Salvation ... in Christ Jesus* ...” (II Timothy 2:10).

“*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*” (Romans 8:33-34).

It is the acknowledgment and recognition of this “*great mystery*” that allows our faith to become effectual.

“*That the communication of thy faith may become effectual **by the acknowledging** of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus*” (Philemon :6).

## **THE BODY OF CHRIST: A UNIFIED BODY**

It is not just that the *Many-Membered Christ* is one with the *Lord Jesus Christ*, but that we are also united to each other.

“*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and **every one members one of another***” (Romans 12:5).

“*For as the body is one, and hath **many members**, and all the members of that one body, **being many, are one body: so also is Christ**. For by one Spirit are **we all baptized into one body** ... For the body is not one member, but many” (I Corinthians 12:12-14).*

“*But now are they **many members**, yet but **one body** ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* (I Corinthians 12:20, 27).

“... We are **members one of another** ... For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Ephesians 4:25, 4:30).

“... Ye are **all one** in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

### THE BODY OF CHRIST: AN ANOINTED BODY

Paul calls us “*Christ*.” Christ is not the *proper* name of Jesus. Christ is actually one of His *official* titles. What does the word “*Christ*” mean? The word means “*anointed*.”<sup>2</sup> We are the Many-Membered Body of the Anointed One.<sup>3</sup>

“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and **hath anointed us**, is God” (II Corinthians 1:21).

As the *Many-Membered Christ*, the Father has anointed us – “He which ... hath anointed us, is God.” Anointed is Strong’s *Greek Lexicon* #5548, *chrío* meaning “to consecrate to an office ...” “*Chrio*” is the root of “*Christos*” which is the Greek word used to translate “*Christ*” in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, prophets,<sup>4</sup> priests<sup>5</sup> and kings<sup>6</sup> were anointed to their service.

We are the Body of Christ – the Body of the Anointed One. We ourselves are anointed by the Father. We have been anointed, along with our Head – the Lord Jesus Christ – to serve with Him in the *ages to come*. We have been consecrated to a divine office in the *heavenly places*.

### THE BODY OF CHRIST: A BODY OF HEIRS

Yet we are actually much more than mere servants of God. The Many-Membered Christ – the Body of Christ – is destined to inherit everything that God possesses.

Our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ has been made the heir of all things that belong to His Father.

“... His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things ...” (Hebrews 1:2).

By our eternal union with the Son of God, we too have come into the sonship-inheritance of the Father. We are now positioned co-heirs with Him (our Head) as the *Many-Membered Christ*.

“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, **then an heir of God**”

2. “*Christ* itself means *the Anointed One*.” C.F. Baker, *Dispensational Theology*, 1980, page 446.

3. I Kings 19:16; 1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15.

4. Exodus 29:29; Leviticus 4:3.

5. I Samuel 16:13; II Samuel 2:4.

6. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

**through Christ**” (Galatians 4:7).

“And if children, then **heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs WITH CHRIST ...**” (Romans 8:7).

Along with the Lord Jesus Christ our Head, we as the *Many-Membered Christ* have been made the co-inheritors of all of our Father’s universe.

### **THE BODY OF CHRIST: A GOVERNING BODY**

As a result of all the truths above, Christ’s Many-Membered Body will be the ruling body of the universe.

“... *We shall also **reign with Him** ...*” (II Timothy 2:12).

The Greek word used to translate “reign” here is *Strong’s Greek Lexicon #4821 “sumbasileuo”* meaning “to be co-regent.” Webster defines “regent” as “a governor; a ruler ... one invested with vicarious authority.”

We will co-reign as co-regents with the Lord Jesus Christ, because the Father has made us one with Him, as our Head. This is “*a great mystery*” – “*the mystery of Christ*” – our eternal living union with Him as His Many-Membered Body.

No wonder Paul could write to the Corinthians regarding their earthly, carnal, and immature behavior:

“*Do ye not know that the saints shall **judge** the world?*” (I Corinthians 6:2).

“*Know ye not that we shall **judge** angels?*” (I Corinthians 6:3).

By God’s measureless and matchless grace we have all been made a part of Christ’s mystery Body, His united Body, His anointed Body, the Body of His inheritance, His governing Body from the “*heavenly places*” in the “*ages to come*.”

It is all of Him!

“**Where is boasting then? It is excluded.** By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith” (Romans 3:27).

“*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that **no flesh should glory in His presence.** But of Him are ye in Christ*”

*Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, ‘**He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord**’” (I Corinthians 1:26-31).*

Taken from the *Bible Student's Notebook*<sup>™</sup>, a weekly Bible study publication available in two formats (electronic and printed).

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