



# The Lighthouse

## NEW TESTAMENT NOTES

# Ephesians

Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

# The Lighthouse

## New Testament Notes

### Ephesians

By  
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**Published Under the Authority**

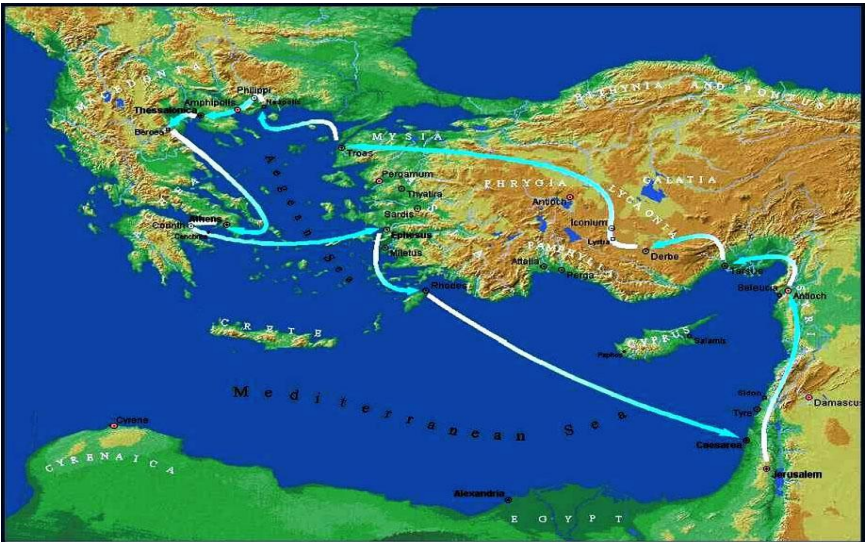
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# The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

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Ancient Ephesus



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

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## Preface

In the apostolic period the congregation of Christ was the visible and representative expression of both the kingdom and family of God. To be a “*disciple*” of Christ during the apostolic period was defined as an immersed believing member of the congregational body of Christ (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:21-22; 2:41-42). All of the congregations found in the apostolic period were like faith and order with each other, as there was no such thing as denominations. There were just the Lord’s congregations and all who opposed them were regarded as heretics (Rom. 16:17-18; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Thes. 3:6; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1). Most of the New Testament was written for the very express purpose to maintain congregational unity in the apostolic faith and practice.

Therefore, the historical “*we*” and “*us*” found in the New Testament letters were those of like faith and order with the apostles. They were not professing Christians in different denominations due to divisive doctrines and practices. Like faith and order is the historical context of the New Testament letters. However, that historical context no longer characterizes professed Christianity after the apostolic period.

In the post-apostolic period we find the gradual division of professed Christians into denominations and congregations that are not like faith and order. Prior to Augustine we do not find any use of the Greek term *ekklesia* that describes a congregation whose members are spatially spread out **universally** over this world. Even upon Augustine’s introduction of this kind of *ekklesia* it was met by resistance in the very first post-apostolic conference about the ordinances, discipline and character of the congregation of Christ. His concept of the universal character of the congregation of Christ was a reaction against the Donatist practice of church discipline of

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known repeated offenders who denied Christ in times of public persecution. It was also a reaction against the Donatist practice of “anabaptism” that rejected what became known as the Roman Catholic Church and its ordinances. He argued on the basis of Matthew 13:25-30 that such should not be excommunicated from the congregations and that the term “*field*” in Matthew 13:24, and thus the kingdom represented the congregation of Christ. The Donatist bishops rightly responded that Christ explicitly interpreted the “*field*” to represent the “*world*” not the congregation of Christ.

Moreover, in post-apostolic history we never find the use of the Greek term *ekklesia* to describe an **invisible** kind of congregation prior to Luther and Calvin in the Reformation. In fact, both Luther and Calvin believed that the **universal visible** Roman Catholic Church was the true congregation of Christ and they were not seeking to withdraw from its membership or to start new denominations, but only seeking to reform it – thus the “Reformation.” Only after they were excommunicated and their doctrines were condemned by Rome did they seek some other kind of justification for their existence outside of the universal visible Roman Catholic Church. They too, appealed to the very same parable that Augustine appealed unto in order to escape the very same problem – congregational discipline – and added a further qualification of *invisibility* to the universal congregational doctrine of Augustine. They still interpreted the “field” to be the church, but saw the “seed” as the “true” church hidden or invisible among the “tares” but yet universally dispersed throughout the world. However, if they had properly interpreted the “field” to be the “world” as explicitly stated by Christ (Mt. 13:37) then they would have been forced to apply this to the manifest “kingdom” of God rather than the church.

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Another exegetical mistake of the Reformers was their confusion of the church with salvation as they defined “*in Christ*” with regard to salvation as inseparable from being in the “true” church or the “*seed*” of the kingdom. Hence, they advanced the Roman Catholic Church “church salvation” theory as part of their Reformed ecclesiology. In so doing, they were ultimately forced to adopt another kind of salvation beginning at Pentecost than prior to Pentecost as the baptism in the Spirit was interpreted to be the means for incorporating the elect into the “true” church or mystical body of Christ. Since, both the church and the baptism in the Spirit are fixed in time to the New Testament this brought about the development of “dispensationalism” that ultimately denies regeneration, personal indwelling of the Spirit prior to Pentecost. In essence, this church salvation theory demands another kind of salvation prior to Pentecost than after Pentecost.

The letter to the Ephesians is the primary Pauline epistle that advocates of the universal invisible body of Christ theory seek to use to justify their ecclesiology.

It is my view, and the view of many Baptists, that the attempt to defend the Augustinian/Lutheran/Calvin view of a universal invisible congregation from the writings of Paul is based upon improper principles of interpretation. Among those principles that are ignored and/or perverted:

1. Improper understanding and use of metaphors
2. Failure to recognize the abstract use of nouns, especially the institutional and generic use.
3. Failure to understand and acknowledge the apostolic context of like faith and order.
4. Failure to recognize the historical and consistent use of the Greek term *ekklesia* applied only to a visible localized congregational body of qualified members in pre-New

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Testament secular history, in contemporary secular history and in the Septuagint.

5. Failure to recognize the apostolic historical context of like faith and order between the writers of the New Testament and their intended audiences. This is especially true of Paul and the congregations he founded.
6. Failure to understand that the nature of the “*middle wall of partition*” distinction in the previous public house of worship was between **believing** Jews and Gentiles, which is removed in the new public house of worship.
7. Failure to recognize that each individual believer’s physical body is equally characterized as the “*temple*” of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), as is each congregational body of baptized believers (1 Cor. 3:16).

In the following brief commentary notes on the letter to the Ephesians, these principles are properly applied in all references to the congregational body of Christ.

Mark Fenison

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## Introduction to the Letter to the Congregation at Ephesus

**Audience:** Marcion the Gnostic heretic in the early second century omitted the words “*which are at Ephesus*” (Eph. 1:1). Marcion produced numerous copies of his edited Scriptures. Therefore, it should not be surprising that many early manuscripts from the second century forward also leave out this phrase. However, the majority text and the Textus Receptus include these words. Also the earliest translations of the New Testament into (old) Syriac and (old) Latin include these words. Universal congregation advocates like to follow the Marcion type manuscripts that leave out these words in order to support their Gnostic type of universal congregation theory that separates Old Testament from New Testament Christians into two different types of spiritual relationships with Christ.

However, the designated audience was the congregation at Ephesus (“*which are at Ephesus*”) who are further designated as “*the faithful*.” This additional description of the congregation at Ephesus is further verified by Christ in Revelation 2:1-2:

*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” (Rev. 2:2-3).*

There is little question that even those Pauline letters that are designated to specific congregations were intended to be shared with other congregations as this is explicitly stated in Colossians 4:16:

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*And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. – Col. 4:16*

Ephesus was located in the province of “Asia” within what is known today as the country of Turkey.

The “*we*” and “*us*” of the Pauline epistles are not to be confused with post-apostolic type of Christianity divided into denominations by various doctrines and practices. The historic contextual identity of the “*we*” and “*us*” of his epistles are those congregations he established which are all like faith and order with each other in all the essentials of the apostolic faith and practice. Indeed, many of his letters are by design to correct areas of departure from the common apostolic faith and practice that characterized those apostolic congregations. Therefore, it should be an elementary truth that such letters, by their very design, are meant to be circulatory letters among congregations of like faith and order, and therefore, would use abstract nouns that make it applicable to each congregation that heard these letters read before them. Hence, the readers would understand “one body” to be both one in number (the one where the readers individual membership resides) and one in kind – the apostolic kind of like faith and order.

**Theme:** The letter is about the congregational member’s common source of riches (Eph. 1-3) and responsibilities (Eph. 4-6) in Christ. Glorifying Christ in the congregational body of Christ is the theme. An outline of the book is as follows: *Why* we should glorify Christ in the congregational body – chs. 1-2:10? *Who* can glorify Christ in the congregational body – chs. 2:11-3:20? *How* we can glorify Christ in the congregation Body – 4:1-6:24? The key text is Ephesians 3:21. Paul is addressing the congregational body “*which is at Ephesus*” who are “*the faithful in Christ*” (Eph. 1:1). The Apostle John describes them as a faithful congregation.

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This is a letter dedicated to believers in congregation capacity and their blessings and responsibilities as congregational members.

**Date:** There seems to be ample support for a second imprisonment of Paul in Rome. For example, Paul tells Timothy that he had left him in Ephesus to stabilize them as he went to Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3). However, we know this did not occur on his second missionary trip on his way to Macedonia because he never even stopped at Ephesus. Moreover, after leaving Ephesus for Macedonia he took Timothy with him (Acts 20:4). The Second letter to Timothy seems to have occurred during his second imprisonment at Rome when he was expecting to die shortly, whereas, his first trip to Rome was only under house arrest without any impending danger of death (Acts 28:16, 30-31) and for a precise stated time of “two years.”

It seems that the letter of Ephesians was written to this congregation during the second imprisonment at Rome when Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12; Eph. 6:21,24). This would make the time of writing about A.D. 64.

**Writer:** Tychicus is the actual person who penned the words dictated to him by Paul (Eph. 6:24; 2 Tim. 4:12). No one has successfully proven that any person other than Paul wrote this letter. Pauline authorship has not only been strong from the earliest of times, but the very character of the letter demonstrates Paul is the author when compared to his other letters.

**Historical Background:** At first, the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from going to Ephesus in the province of Asia on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6). Instead Paul traveled west to the Greek province of Macedonia and its cities of Philippi and Berea.

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Then he moved southward into the Greek province of Achaia and its cities of Athens, Corinth and Cenchrea. Then as he returned to Jerusalem, he stopped briefly at the synagogue at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-20) but quickly left with the promise that he would return (Acts 18:21). It may be that Aquila and Priscilla were left at Ephesus by Paul, as they were with Paul in Corinth before leaving Corinth and coming to Ephesus (Acts 18:2-3), and they were present when Apollos came to Ephesus (Acts 18:26) after Paul departed to Jerusalem and Antioch. The event of Apollos at Ephesus must be addressed. Apollos was not rebaptized, but only *“instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord.”* Apollos needed instruction in two specific areas; (1) He preached the pre-first coming gospel that did not identify Jesus as the Christ (e.g. Acts 10:43; 26:22-23; Heb. 4:2). He needed instruction that the Christ he preached had come and his name was Jesus. Apparently, Apollos had been baptized by John the Baptist previous to the manifestation of Jesus as the Christ. (2) He needed to be instructed about the congregation of Christ as the authorized (Mt. 18:17; 28:19-20) and Spirit approved (Acts 2:1-3) administrator of the ordinances. He had no authority to continue, or to administer the baptism of John. After Apollos was *“instructed more perfectly”* he preached that Jesus was the predicted Christ (Acts 18:28) and he identified with and submitted to New Testament congregations (Acts 18:27).

Paul then returned to Ephesus and found twelve *“disciples”* that manifested the same characteristics of Apollos (Acts 19:1-6). They were ignorant about the Holy Spirit coming on the day of Pentecost, and they were ignorant about the essentials of the ministry of John the Baptist proving they had never received their baptism from John the Baptist. The congregation immersed in the Holy Spirit ministered spiritual sign gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. The visible absence of such sign gifts among these professed disciples (Acts 19:6) alerted Paul to

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something wrong about their baptism. When asked about their baptism they replied they had been baptized “unto John.” Paul informed them that even John did not baptize in reference to himself, but in reference to Christ (Acts 19:5). John baptized only repentant believers in Christ (Mt. 3:6-8; Jn. 3:36). Upon hearing this, they realized they had been baptized by an ignorant and unauthorized administrator (Apollos no doubt) and submitted to Paul for scriptural baptism and received the sign gifts through the laying on of apostolic hands (Acts 19:6; 2 Cor. 12:12).

It would seem that these fourteen persons (Aquila and Priscilla, the twelve newly immersed disciples) were the founding members of the congregation at Ephesus.

Paul continued in Ephesus two more years and three months establishing and growing this congregation (Acts 19:8-10). Paul then left for Macedonia (Acts 20:1) with “*Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus*” (Acts 20:4). On his way back to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus where he met the “*elders*” of the Ephesians congregation (Acts 20:17) where he reminded them of his ministry among them and warned them of apostasy that would come and exhorted them to remain faithful (Acts 20:18-38). They heeded his warning (Rev. 2:1-3).

It is essential in order to properly understand the Pauline doctrine of the congregational body of Christ in the letter to the Ephesians to first understand that Acts 20:28 is addressed directly to the congregational “*flock*” located at Ephesus with its “*overseers*.” The very same “*flock*” described in verse 28 is the very same “*flock*” described in verse 29 where false teachers can arise within that very same “*flock*” and lead members within that flock to separate from that same “*flock*.” This proves “*the flock*” or “*congregation of God*” under consideration is the visible localized congregational body of Christ located geographically at Ephesus, because it is the

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“*elders*” (Acts 11:17) that the Holy Spirit has made to be “*overseers*” of “all” this same flock. The only reason these obvious facts are disputed by advocates of the universal invisible body of Christ theory is because of the following words used by Paul to describe that “flock”:

*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

However, it is Paul who constituted this “*flock*” at Ephesus and intimately knew them as he explicitly states in verses 31-33. Moreover, membership in this kind of “*flock*” required a profession of faith in the redemptive work of Christ. Paul simply characterized them according to his personal knowledge of them and their profession. This is called the language of accommodation and should be expected. For example, when you first meet someone who professes to be a Christian don’t you recognize it by your language in referring to them as “brother” or “sister” even though you are incapable of knowing the condition of their heart? How much more would you address them as such, if you knew them intimately and were the very instrument that brought the gospel to them and heard their profession and saw the fruit of their lives for more than two years. Paul used this language of accommodation in his description of all the congregations he wrote.

According to Paul, Timothy was sent to Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) to stabilize the congregation during the time of inward apostasy by some of its elders just as Paul had prophesied (Acts 20:29).

According to post-New Testament sources, sometime after the death of Paul, the apostle John came to Ephesus and became its Pastor until his imprisonment on the isle of Patmos, from whence he wrote the Revelation to the seven congregations of Asia.

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Ephesus stands first in the order of congregations, simply because the mail service route began with Ephesus and then proceeded to the congregations in the order they are mentioned. At the time of the writing of Revelation, the congregation at Ephesus had endured the predicted apostasy and opposed it successfully (Rev. 2:1-2).

**Doctrinal Background:** Post-Biblical historical sources identify Simon Magus in Acts 8 and his disciple Meander as the founders of Christian Gnosticism which was in its early stages and invading the ranks of the congregations while Paul was in prison. This error would climax in the early part of the second century with Marcion and his teachings. Many believe that the gospel of John and the first epistle of John were written to primarily counter the tenets of early Christian Gnosticism especially Cerinthus who was the Gnostic contemporary of John. Both Ephesians, Colossians and first and second Timothy also opposed certain tenets of early Christian Gnosticism.

In regard to the Person of Christ early Christianized Gnosticism taught a dualism that separated and distinguished Jesus the man from Christ the spirit or *aeon* from heaven. According to their theory, Christ represented but one of the attributes of the true God. The full attributes of God were called the *pleroma* (translated “fullness” in Ephesians 1:23 and Colossians 2:9). They regarded Jesus as only a man, while Christ was a spirit that took control of Jesus until the cross and then left him to die. Thus according to early Christian Gnosticism Christ did not shed his blood or redeem us by his blood, but only the man Jesus did that. In this manner they maintained their dualism between spirit and matter and light and darkness. They considered matter or all material things as evil and spirit things as good. Salvation according to Gnosticism was found in secret knowledge that informed man how his spirit trapped in his materialistic body could escape and become one

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with God. They classified all men into three categories (1) the carnal; (2) the soulish and (3) the spiritual. Those who possessed this knowledge were called the “spiritual.” The Jews were called the “soulish” of who possessed some of this secret knowledge. The lost ignorant Gentiles were called “carnal.” They regarded Christianity as a continuation of the Old Covenant and its ceremonial laws which they incorporated into their doctrine of justification by works - “*touch not, taste not; handle not*” (Col. 2:18). However, those who achieved the state of being “spiritual” could not be defiled by anything material (gluttony, fornication, etc.) and so it turned into a form of lasciviousness. They denied that mere faith in Jesus Christ was sufficient for salvation, but salvation was a process of revelatory knowledge (Gr. *gnosis* from whence Gnosticism originated) and ascetic practices that they alone could convey. Early Christian Gnosticism sprang from the Jews who believed Gentiles were inferior human beings and thus second class citizens in the kingdom of God and that Christianity was merely an extension of Judaism and maintained the race distinction and inferiority of Gentile believers. The letter to the Ephesians primarily addresses the Gnostic tenet that Gentiles are to be regarded as inferior Christians. Instead, they are co-equal in regard to salvation (Eph. 1:4-2:13, 15-17), in the source of knowledge (Eph. 1:15-17) and especially within the public worship service (Eph. 2:14, 19-21). Unlike the former public “*house of God*” that separated Gentiles from the Jews in the act of public worship by a “*middle wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14), the new house of God made no such distinctions or separation within the public worship service. Instead, Gentile and Jewish Christians are co-equals within the new public House of God.



## Teaching Outline

**Theme:** Glorifying Christ in the Congregational body of baptized believers – Eph. 3:21

**Greetings:** – Eph. 1:1-3

**A. Why Christ should be Glorified in the Congregation – Eph. 1:4-3:21**

1. Because all spiritual blessings of salvation are in Him – v. 3
  - a. The blessing of Salvation purposed before time – not an accident – Eph. 1:4-13
    - (1) Purposed by the will of the Father
    - (2) Provided by the work of the Son
    - (3) Performed by the work of the Spirit
    - (4) Paul’s Praise and Prayer for them to perceive the previous blessings and their future purpose - Eph. 1:14-17
    - (5) The Extent of Christ’s Authority to secure those blessings now and in the future – Eph. 1:18-23
  - b. The blessing of Salvation in time by quickening – Eph. 2:1-10a
    - (1) When God did it – v. 1
    - (2) What “dead in trespasses and sins” meant – vv. 2-3
    - (3) Why God did it – vv. 4-5
    - (4) How God did it – vv. 7-10
2. The Blessings for Gentile Believers – Eph. 2:10b-3:20
  - a. Co-equal in Salvation – 2:11-13, 15-19
  - b. Co-equal in Service – 2:14, 20-21

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c. Co-equality with Jews Revealed to Paul

### B. How Christ should be Glorified in the Congregation – Eph. 4:1-6:24

1. By walking worthily inside the Congregation – Eph. 4:2-16

a. Walking in practical unity – vv. 2-6

(1) Essential attitudes for practical unity – vv. 2-3

(2) Essential Doctrines for practical unity – vv. 4-6

(3) Essential gifts for practical unity – vv. 7-11

b. Walking in personal maturity – vv. 12-16

2. By walking worthily outside the Congregation – Eph. 4:17-6:20

a. Walk as Christ not as the lost – 4:17-32

b. Walk in Love not in hate – 5:1-7

c. Walk in Light not in darkness – 5:8-14

d. Walk Circumspectly not foolishly– 5:16-6:10

(1) Walk in the will of God – 5:17

(2) Walk in the Spirit – 5:18-19

(3) Walk in submission – Eph. 5:20-6:10

- To one another – v. 20

- Wife in submission to her husband

- Husband in submission to Christ

- Congregation in submission to Christ

- Children in submission to parents

- Workers in submission to Masters

(4) Walk in the power of God – 6:11-20

(5) Walk in prayer – 6:18-20

**Salutations** – Eph. 6:21-24

## Brief Outline – Our Condition in Christ

### 1. *Seated in Christ – chs. 1-3:20 – Our Position*

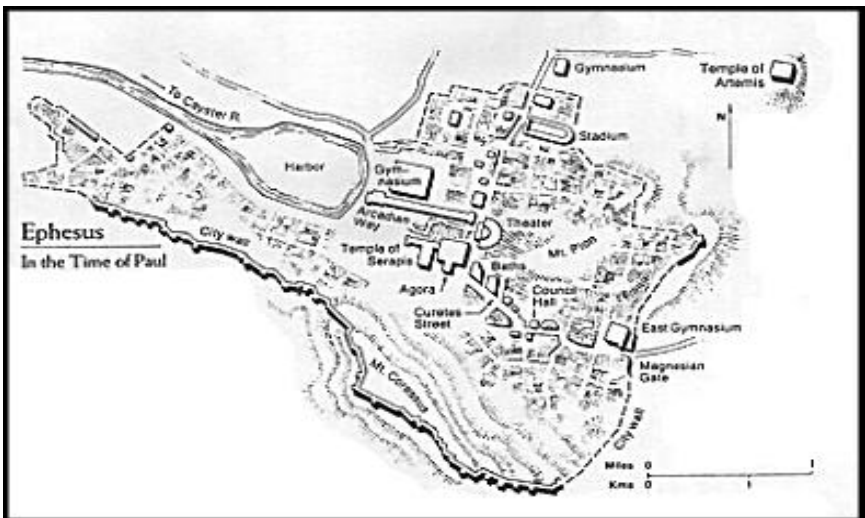
- a. By eternal purpose – 1:4-21
- b. By creation – 2:1-10
- c. By race – 2:11-3:15
- d. By power – 3:16-20

### 2. *Walking in Christ – chs. 3:21-6:10 – Our Practice*

- a. In the congregation – 3:21-4:16
- b. In the world – 4:17-5:20
- c. In the home – 5:21-6:4
- d. In the work place – 6:5-9

### 3. *Standing in Christ – chs. 6:10-18 – Our Power*

- a. In His Amour
- b. In Prayer



Ephesus at the time of Paul

## Seven Distinct and Different Ways to be “in Christ”

The issue that divides the whole Christian world – How is one “*in Christ*”? Depending on the context, at times “in Christ” refers to Him as the object of faith. At other times it refers to the sphere of salvation. At other times it refers to spiritual union with Christ. There are seven distinct ways that one is “*in Christ*” and they fall under two primary divisions: Salvation and Service or cause and consequences.

### I. Your Salvation Union with Christ (Causal)

- A. In Christ by Divine choice – Purposed salvation union – Eph. 1:4 *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:* - Before you existed, so based on His choice. Salvation not an accident but by purpose – Rom. 8:28-31.
  
- B. In Christ by Representation – Representative salvation union – 1Co 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Before you existed. See Rom. 5:12-19.
  
- C. In Christ by Regeneration – Spiritual salvation union – Eph. 2:10 *“For we are his workmanship created in Christ*

*Jesus unto good works... ""Christ in you"" by the Holy Spirit  
internal and invisible (Jn. 3:8)*

- D. In Christ by Justification through faith – Legal or Positional salvation union – Rom. 4:22 *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*<sup>1</sup> ¶ *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: **internal and invisible***

## II. Your Service Union with Christ (consequential)

- A. In Christ by baptism – pictorial service union – Gal. 3:27; I Pet. 3:21 - *For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.* – **External and visible**
- B. In Christ by congregation membership – Representative service union – I Cor. 12:27 – *“ye are the **body of Christ and members in particular**”* (you represent Him by membership in his congregation body) – **External and visible**

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- C. In Christ by Practice – experiential service union - *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:”* – Col. 2:6 – External visible – manifest “walk”



**Ancient amphitheatre in Ephesus**

The phrase “in Christ” can only be properly understood which compared to its comparative contrast “in Adam.” We are “in Adam” first by a creative act of God (Gen. 1:26-27). We are “in Adam” with regard to union (physical). We are “in Adam” by representation (Rom. 5:12-19). Likewise, we are “in Christ” by a creative act (Eph. 2:10). We are in Christ with regard to union (spiritual). We are “in Christ” by representation and legal position (Rom. 5:12-19). Therefore, “in Christ” refers to our redemptive relationship to God through Christ.

## *The Letter to the Congregation at Ephesus*

Greetings – 1:1-2

### *Chapter 1*

**P**aul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will<sup>1</sup> of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:<sup>2</sup>

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> **“By the will of God”** – The term *“will”* translates the Greek term *thelema*. There are two Greek terms translated “will” in the New Testament – (1) *Thelema*; (2) *Boulomai*. The difference is whether the intellect or affections are more predominant in the choice. Both intellect and affections are inclusive but both are not equally predominate in making choices. The will is merely the vehicle of expression of the intellect and/or emotions. If the intellect is the more predominate factor the term used is *boulomai*. If the affections are the more predominating factor the term used is *thelema*. God’s affectionate desires were more predominate in choosing Paul for apostleship.

<sup>2</sup> **“Which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ”** – He is addressing a geographically located audience that is further qualified as *“the faithful in Christ.”* John’s later description of this congregation at Ephesus confirms both qualifications (Rev. 2:1-3). The Pauline *“we”* and *“ye”* and *“us”* are found in the New Testament context of congregations of like faith and order, rather than in the post-first century context of division of denominations and doctrine. The phrase *“which is at Ephesus”* is left out of the early copies produced by the heretic Gnostic Marcion that permeate the second and third centuries. However, it is found in the majority text and in the Textus Receptus. This omission is found in copies originating from those who did not believe in plenary inspiration and the final authority of the scriptures.

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## The Blessings Purposed Before Time – 1:3-14

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:<sup>3</sup>

## The Father's Covenant Commitment – vv. 4-6

4 According as he hath chosen<sup>4</sup> us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated<sup>5</sup> us unto the adoption<sup>6</sup> of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> **“In heavenly places”** – The source of all blessings are from the Father in heaven and are “spiritual” in nature. Unlike early Christian Gnosticism, Paul placed all the elect in all ages on an equal basis in all aspects of salvation without distinction of race.

<sup>4</sup> **“He hath chosen us...that we should be”** The aorist tense middle voice *eklego* (“*chosen*”) indicates this choice was a completed action and that God not only chose by himself, but for himself a certain people. This is not a choice based upon foreseen preconditions, but a choice to bring about in time what we “**should be**” according to God’s eternal purpose. Hence, God did not foresee anything in or by us to cause him to choose us (Rom. 9:11), but chose us in order to cause us to be holy. The Father purposed it (vv. 3-6) and the Son provided the meritorious grounds for it (vv. 7-12) while the Holy Spirit applied it to our person (vv. 13-15). The Father’s choice occurred before the world began, before we were born, and in spite of what we would be by our fallen nature (Psa. 14:2-3). Apart from having chosen us to give to the Son (Jn. 6:37-39) “*no man can come*” to Christ by faith (Jn. 6:44), because no man by natural fallen disposition wants to come to Christ, but is adamantly opposed to God (Rom. 8:7).

<sup>5</sup> **“Predestinated”** - The word “*predestinated*” translates the Greek term *prohorizo* which consists of two words. The preposition *pro* means “before” and *horizo* is where we get our English term “horizon” which is the uttermost



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6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted<sup>8</sup> in the beloved.

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boundary. This term when used in connection with God always refers to previously determining the uttermost boundary lines by His eternal purposes, so that all things are worked together for the good of His elect and His glory (Rom. 8:28-31; Isa. 46:9-11). God's election unto salvation is not based upon foreseen actions of men, but upon God's predetermined will that those who are chosen in Christ "should be holy" all "*according to the good pleasure of His will...wherein he made us accepted in the beloved*" or "in Christ" (Eph. 1:5-6). Our adoption was no accident but was predetermined according to "*the good pleasure of His will*" and "*according to the riches of his grace*" in spite of what He saw in us according to our own intentions (Psa. 14:2-3; Rom. 3:10-12).

<sup>6</sup> "**Adoption**" – We are first born children (Gk. *teknia*) of God by the Spirit, and legally adopted as Son's (Gr. *huios*) based upon justification by faith. We possess eternal spiritual life by new birth, but we obtain legal eternal life by justification, as we were formerly children of Satan by nature and under legal condemnation to eternal death. Although there is no time sequence, there is a logical order. New birth precedes justification followed by adoption.

<sup>7</sup> "**According to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the glory of His grace**" – This is the only reason provided by Paul for why God chose to save sinners. Election is "*of grace*" (Rom. 11:5-6) and is an act of "*mercy*" (Rom. 9:16,18, 22; Tit. 3:5) so there can be no cause found in the sinner or due to what the sinner may or may not do, as the only time Scripture says that God looked down to see what man would do, he found none seeking after God, and none doing good, "*no, not one*" (Psa. 14:2-3; Rom. 3:10-12).

<sup>8</sup> "**Wherein He hath made us accepted**" – In our natural born state we were not acceptable, as we were under the wrath of God even as others (Eph. 2:2-3). On the basis of grace, rather than our works he "*made*" us acceptable (1 Cor. 1:30). Even the child of God does not have the power to will or to do God's good pleasure (Philip. 2:13) as Paul discovered in Romans 7:15-18. The elect are "*made willing in the day of His power*" – Psa. 110:3 by God simply giving us a new "want to" or a new heart inclined to righteousness (2 Cor. 3:3; 4:6; 1 Thes. 1:4-5). "**In the beloved**" is the Person of Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ there is no salvation for anyone at any time in the history of mankind (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 8:8-9).

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### THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

A “covenant” is an agreement between two or more parties that is a binding contract that defines the responsibilities of each covenant member. Ephesians 1:3-14 is the “*everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20) of redemption between the Three Persons of the Godhead. The covenant responsibility of each party is concluded by the phrase - “*To the praise of the glory*” (vv. 6, 12, 14). The Father’s covenant responsibilities are described in verses 3-6. The Son’s covenant commitments are described in verses 7-12. The Holy Spirit’s commitments are described in verses 13-14. This same eternal covenant is described in Romans 8:28-31, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 and 2 Timothy 1:7.

This same eternal covenant is figuratively revealed before the cross in the “*Old Covenant*” administration which anticipates the first coming of Christ. After the cross the “*New Covenant*” administration declares what has anticipated under the old has been fulfilled in the person and work of Christ and then anticipates the Second Coming of Christ. God is the author of both covenants, and God is not the author of confusion. Under the “*Old*” covenant the redemptive work of the Triune God is typically and visibly declared in the ceremonial laws, especially the sacrificial laws and ceremonial types surrounding the Temple, its priesthood and ordinances. The holiness of God is declared in the Ten Commandments. The purpose of the Old Covenant is to define the nature of sin (moral and civil laws) and salvation (ceremonial law) and demonstrate that man is not qualified or capable of covenant partnership with God or assisting in his own salvation. The Laws redemptive types are fulfilled and thereby the continued administration of the Law is abolished by the redemptive life and finished work of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:14-16). The Old Covenant administration has been abolished with the institution of the New Covenant administration (Heb. 8-10).

The Father’s work of choosing, giving and drawing has been administered since the Garden of Eden. The Holy Spirit’s work of regenerating and sanctifying by his indwelling presence has been administered since the Garden of Eden (Rom. 8:8-9; Gal. 4:28-29). The “*promise of the Spirit*” on Pentecost is a multifaceted work of the Spirit in regard to establishing the New Covenant on earth as a public administration that replaces the previous public administration. The empowering of the Spirit on Pentecost was for the salvation of a new people (Gentiles) rather than a new kind of salvation.

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## The Son's Covenant Commitment – vv. 7-12

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood,<sup>9</sup> the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence [moral insight];

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation [administration] of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> **“Redemption through His blood”** – The *“blood”* is the price for the cost of our redemption. However, a mere drop of blood could not pay that price. Under the ceremonial law the animal’s blood must be shed until physical death. The *“blood”* represents the giving of the entire life. Not any kind of life, but a life without *“spot or blemish.”* Only an entire life without sin from birth to death could purchase us out from under the wrath of the Law of God by satisfying its righteous and penal demands. Since, violation of the whole law is accomplished by violating merely *“one point”* of the Law (James 2:10-11), then merely one point of violation within an entire life cannot be justified by the Law. Therefore, a forgiven life cannot justify us, nor can a characteristic life of righteousness justify us. Christ did not offer up a forgiven life or a life characteristically sinless, but offered up a life wholly without sin. That is why justification must be by faith in the finished works of Christ performed solely in his own body and not joined by any kind of righteousness performed in our body.

<sup>10</sup> **“Praise of His glory”** – One definition of sin is coming short of *“the glory of God.”* The glory of God must be the heart motive behind all that we think, say and do or else it fails to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31). The heart motive determines

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### The Spirit's Covenant Commitment – vv. 13-14

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word<sup>11</sup> of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed<sup>12</sup> with that Holy Spirit of promise,

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whether the thoughts, words and actions coming forth from the heart are “*good*” or “*evil*” in God’s sight as God looketh upon the heart. Moreover, God works all things according to His glory. The truth is that anything that does not originate with God does not glorify God. The fallen heart is unable to produce good fruit, because it operates according to motives that do not have God’s glory as the moving force. That is why we must be given a “*new*” heart that does operate from the sole motive to glorify God (Ezek. 36:26-27). That is why even Christians need God to work in and through them both “*to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philip. 2:13) because “*good*” only originates from the new creation within man joined with the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Without the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, the new creation within us is without power to perform the good it would do (Rom. 7:18).

<sup>11</sup> “**Heard....believed....sealed**” Paul may be explaining their salvation according to the chronological order of their conversion experience. If that is the case, then hearing, believing and being sealed is the chronological order from the human perspective. However, All three words “*heard....believed....sealed*” are aorist tense showing identical or simultaneous action. The translators of the King James read into the text a time sequence by adding the words “after that” when the tenses deny such a time sequence but demand simultaneous action by all three tenses. Hence, the proper idea is that *when* they heard, is *when* they believed being the precise time “when” they were sealed. Paul is not referring to the external hearing of the gospel but the internal hearing when the gospel came by the command of God (2 Cor. 4:6) and in power rather than in word only to the external ears (1 Thes. 1:4-5). In Romans 10:17 the Greek term translated “word” is *rhema* not *logos* and conveys the idea that hearing is obtained by the “word of command” as described by Paul in 2 Cor. 4:6. From the conversion experience perspective, we first heard, believed and were sealed, but from God’s perspective it was simultaneous in action.

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### FAITH IS THE WORK OF GOD

Much of modern evangelism functions on the assumption that all human beings have inherent ability to come to Christ by faith. They claim all humans have faith and they exercise it every day. Therefore, they assume they are also equally capable of coming to Christ by faith. They argue, why else preach the gospel unless it is assumed that man has ability to respond to it? These are persuasive arguments.

However, natural faith is only possible where there is willingness to exercise faith in such things. It is equally true that people choose not to exercise faith in many things every day. Many do not choose to place their trust in government, politicians or in certain other people and things simply because they are not willing to do so.

Willingness is always determined by how a person thinks or feels toward a certain person or thing. If we don't like someone or something, or have reason to be suspicious of someone or something, we will never be inclined to place our trust in that something or someone until our mind and/or feelings are positively disposed toward that someone or something. Therefore, this inability to trust is due to a negative inward disposition of thought and feelings toward someone or something.

The position of natural faith assumes that nothing affects the natural inclination of fallen men toward God, and therefore fallen man has no dispositional problems with God which would prevent willing trust in the gospel or God. However, if the fallen nature is naturally disposed against God, then that would prevent willingness to trust or submit to either God or the gospel.

There is sufficient Biblical evidence to demonstrate that fallen man is naturally disposed against God (Jn. 3:19-20; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14) The emotional (Jn. 3:19-20) and intellectual (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14) dispositions of fallen man are in opposition to God, so that he will not come to Christ by faith (Jn. 6:44). Indeed, the Scriptures demand that this internal opposition to God is irreversible by man and can only be changed by a supernatural work of God.

This must be the case with all fallen men or why else would Christ say, "*No man can come to me*" (Jn. 6:44)? That is at minimal, an assertion of universal unwillingness to come to Christ. It is this unwillingness that is the root of man's inability to come to Christ. He said no man "*can*." The Greek term translated "*can*" is *dunamis* or the common Greek term translated "power" or ability. Jesus is saying in the clearest possible language that "*no man IS ABLE to come*

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to me.” If that were not true, then why would the exception clause immediately follow - “*except the Father draw him*”? This exception clause demands that only a supernatural work of God can change that natural inability to come to Christ by faith. Therefore, this proves that natural faith is not sufficient for men to come to Christ or else there would be no exception clause at all.

Furthermore, in response to, why preach the gospel if men are not inherently able to come to Christ by faith, it may be equally argued that the gospel may be the chosen means (2 Thes. 2:13) through which God may choose to empower (1 Thes. 1:4-5) in order to change that inward disposition against God by giving a willingness to come to Christ by faith, and that is why we are to preach the gospel.

14 Which is the earnest<sup>13</sup> of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession [Rom. 8:22-23], unto the praise of his glory.

**Paul’s Praise and Prayer for understanding these Great Blessings – vv. 15-23**

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “**The earnest of our inheritance**” – The indwelling Holy Spirit is the “*seal*” and “*earnest*” of our inheritance. Anyone at any time in history that is without the indwelling Spirit is “*none of his*” (Rom. 8:9) as there are only two possible human conditions at any time in history – those who are “*in the flesh*” due to being born of the flesh; and those who are “*in the Spirit*” due to being born of the Spirit (Gal. 4:27). Our inheritance by common salvation is the new world to come (Rom. 4:13). However, our inheritance within that new world will differ from person to person “*according to their works*.”

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18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened [**brightly illuminated**]; that ye may know [**be sure**] what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,<sup>15</sup>

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward [**the elect - 2Pet. 3:9**] who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

### The Universal Authority of Christ

20 Which he wrought [**effectually performed**] in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the

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<sup>14</sup> **“Give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him”** – If they already possessed this due to salvation there would be no need to pray that God gives this to them. God does not give all of His children the same insights and understanding. There are the elect within the elect. There are those chosen by God to receive greater insights into God’s Word (Mt. 13:9-10), and are able to see and accept truths that other children of God do not see and cannot understand. Election and congregation truths are among those special insights. There are saved people who cannot see or understand the simple teaching of baptism in regard to its proper mode or candidate. There are saved people within The Great Harlot (Rev. 18:4) simply because they cannot see and understand congregational truth. God is no more responsible to enlighten any believer any more than he is responsible to save any sinner. God has his purpose for saving some and not others, as much as he does for enlightening some believers and not others. Some Christians will not follow after the Lord’s congregation (Mk. 9:38-39). The Lord does not approve of that in regard to his revealed will, but he permits it to accomplish His own purposes and therefore commands us to leave them alone, as they are fulfilling some purpose of God that those within his congregations would be hindered from fulfilling.

<sup>15</sup> **“That ye may know”** – Paul wants them to be able to understand that their salvation was no accident but was according to God’s past eternal purpose of redemption according to the everlasting covenant between a Triune God (vv. 3-14; Heb. 13:20). He also wants them to know why God purposed their salvation in regard to the future and in regard to the Person of Christ (vv. 19-23).

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heavenly places [Mt. 26:64; Lk. 22:69-70; Acts 2:32-33; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2],

21 Far above all principality [top rank], and power [authority], and might [mighty force], and dominion, [government ruler] and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the congregation,<sup>16</sup>

23 Which is his body,<sup>17</sup> the fullness<sup>18</sup> [repletion, completion, what is filled] of him that filleth all in all.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “**Head over all things to the congregation**” – The subject of verses 20-23 is the exaltation of Christ as the final authority over all things in heaven and in creation both now and in the future. The metaphor “*head*” conveys authority. Christ is the head “*over all things*” as much as He is the head over the congregation. If “*head*” is forced to convey the idea of *spiritual* union then Paul would be teaching pantheism, as He would be in *spiritual* union with “*all things*” (material universe) as much as in spiritual union with the congregational body (immaterial spirits). He is not teaching spiritual union, but rather final authority. Christ is the final authority “*over all things*,” which obviously would include final authority over the congregation, just as the husband is the metaphorical “*head*” (authority) over the wife. His final authority is manifested in the congregational body in that he has given “*the keys of the kingdom*” to the congregational body alone (Mt. 18:17; 28:18-20) in regard to all administrative affairs within the kingdom of God on earth. Christ’s authority to administer the ordinances and to administer instructional, correctional and purgative discipline belongs exclusively to the congregational body of baptized believers.

<sup>17</sup> “**His body**” He is not speaking of his *literal* flesh and blood body that now sits at the Father’s right hand in heaven. He is talking about his *metaphorical* body which represents Him on earth as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*.” It is the “*one body*” in number that the reader’s membership resided within. It is the “*one body*” in kind found in concrete form in many cities throughout the Roman Empire such as “*the body of Christ*” at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27). See the section entitled “Understanding Metaphors” on pages 57-59.



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The heavenly Blessings realized in Time - vv. 1-10a

## Chapter 2

And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead [spiritually] in trespasses and sins;<sup>20</sup>

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,<sup>21</sup> according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan - Mk.

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<sup>18</sup> **“The fullness of Him”** His headship or authority is inherent to His own Divine Person and Position (v.20). The Greek term translated *“fullness”* is *pleroma*. The Gnostics used that term to define the complete attributes of God (Col. 2:9). Gnosticism regarded Christ as only one of those attributes. Paul is repudiating that limited view of Christ.

<sup>19</sup> **“That filleth all in all”** – This refers to the extent of his authority. His authority extends to all in heaven (v. 20) and in this world (v. 21). It extends over all other positions of authority (v. 21). It extends to the world to come (v. 21c). There is no place in space or time it does not extend to and so it *“filleth all in all.”* This authority is especially manifested in and through the congregational body of baptized believers in the administration of the *“keys of the kingdom”* on earth (Mt. 18:17; 28:19-20) and the preaching of the Word of God.

<sup>20</sup> **“Dead in trespasses and sins”** – Death in all of its forms (spiritual, physical, eternal) is due to sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Here *“dead”* refers to spiritual rather than physical death. They were obviously physically alive before being *“quickened”* as Paul describes their status prior to being quickened in verses 2-3. Therefore, quickening is not being made physically alive but being made spiritually alive. Death is in essence “separation” from the source of life due to sin (Isa. 59:2). God is the ultimate source of life, light and knowledge. Spiritual separation from God as the source of life, leads to physical death, or separation of the material self from its source of life found in the immaterial or spiritual aspect of man, which in turn will lead to eternal separation of man, spirit, soul and body in Gehenna or the Lake of Fire.

<sup>21</sup> **“Ye walked according to the course of this world”** - The *“course”* of this world refers to its system of moral principles, thinking and practices that are opposed to God’s revealed will in His Word. The Bible provides principles and practices to conform and sustain a godly social culture within the world that is

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3:22-23], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:<sup>22</sup>

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation [manner of life] in times past in the lusts [unbridled desire] of our flesh [carnal depravity], fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind [depraved imagination]; and were by nature the children of wrath,<sup>23</sup> even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,<sup>24</sup>

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not “*of the world.*” We are to be transformed into this Biblical culture rather than conformed to the worldly culture.

<sup>22</sup> “**The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**” Obedience to God is credited to the indwelling Spirit of God, as even the saved man without the power of the Spirit can do nothing (Jn. 15:5; Rom. 7:18). The children of Satan (born into this world after his moral likeness – Jn. 8:44-45) also have a “*spirit*” working in them that is manifested by their disobedience to God.

<sup>23</sup> “**Children of wrath even as others**” The elect were “**by nature**” children of wrath.” They did not come into this world already saved, regenerated or justified, but under condemnation (Jn. 3:17-18; 36). We were saved, called, justified, glorified according to God’s eternal purpose but that was not our reality in time and space. “*What I have purposed, I WILL DO it*” (Isa.46:11) is what God said rather than “*What I have purposed, I HAVE DONE it*” as taught by those who espouse a false view of eternal justification and/or that we were sheep by nature from birth. We were “*sheep*” according to purpose before birth into this world but according to birth we were “**by nature children of wrath even as others.**” Don’t confuse God’s purpose before time with what we are in time, as God says what he has purposed that “*I WILL do it*” proving that God’s purpose is not reality in regard to our own person until it is carried out in God’s chosen point in time.

<sup>24</sup> “**He loved us**” – The elect alone among fallen mankind are the sole objects of his redemptive love and that is proven by his choice of them before the world began and his methodical salvation of them in time and space. However, God’s

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5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) [Rom. 5:6; Tit.3:5]<sup>25</sup>

6 And hath raised us up together [Rom. 6:4-11], and made us sit together in heavenly places [Eph. 1:3, 20, 3:10] in Christ Jesus:<sup>26</sup>

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

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benevolent love is shed upon both the elect and non-elect. Indeed, the non-elect benefit from God's redemptive love, as all their temporal blessings are intermingled with God's ultimate plan to work all things for the good of His elect.

<sup>25</sup> **“By grace ye are saved”** – The term “saved” is first introduced in verse 5 as a synonym for the quickening work by God (vv. 1,5) and subsequently also used in verse 8 as a synonym for God's work of quickening. This divine quickening is also further explained as a creative work by God in verse 10 **“His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus”** which is the internal and theological source of **“good works.”** The same Greek construction found in verse 8 **“For by grace are ye saved”** is first found here in verse 5. It is called a periphrastic construct which involves two verbs brought together, one a past tense verb (perfect tense **“saved”**) and the other a present tense verb (**“are”**). What this means, is that **“saved”** is a completed action that remains completed from the time it occurred until the time Paul makes this statement. This salvation is perfected, thus a “perfect” tense. The present tense conveys incomplete action or ongoing action. So Paul is saying in the strongest possible way that at a specific point in the past you were saved by the act of quickening and this act stands completed right up to this point in time. However, the present tense verb proclaims that it goes on continually in this perfected state. This is a grammatical declaration of eternal security in the strongest terms.

<sup>26</sup> **“Made us sit together in heavenly places”** – Christ is now sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Father. To **“sit”** refers to our position in heavenly places **“in Christ”** as defined by God's eternal purpose (Eph. 1:3-4) which is manifested partially in being quickened now on earth, as a preview of things yet to come (v. 7). Quickening makes a radical change in our person and lives (vv. 2-3) so that we are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:12).

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8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God [Jn. 6:29, 37-40, 44, 64-65; Philip. 1:29; 2:13; 1 Thes. 1:4-5; Heb. 11:1]:<sup>27</sup>

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast [Rom. 11:6; Tit. 3:5].

10 For we are his workmanship,<sup>28</sup> created in Christ Jesus unto good works,<sup>29</sup> which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

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<sup>27</sup> **“Through faith”** – This saving work of grace has already been defined as the act of quickening (vv. 1, 5). This act is a completed action at a specific point in the time past which continues as a completed action. This action is described as a creative act of God (v. 10a) whereby one is “*created in Christ Jesus.*” Therefore, to be “*saved through faith*” must be inclusive of this creative quickening act of God, as Paul grammatically places “*through faith*” at the same point of “*saved*” or being “*created in Christ Jesus.*” Hence, it is the whole completed work of God “*saved through faith*” that is “*not of yourselves, but is a gift of God*” but is the “*workmanship of God.*” Jesus plainly says that “*no man can come to me except the Father draw him*” (Jn. 6:44). This is a clear declaration of universal inability to come to Christ by faith. This is a clear declaration that faith is the drawing work of God which is then immediately defined as the internal revelation by God in regard to the new covenant work of God (Jn. 6:45) whereby God reveals himself to all the covenant children of God (Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:33-34; Heb. 8:12-15; 10:15-17) in contrast to being taught God externally by men. Paul is merely claiming that the gospel did not come to them in word only but in power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thes. 1:4-5) as a creative work of God that gave them *a believing heart* (Deut. 5:29; 29:4; Ezek. 36:26-27),

<sup>28</sup> **“His workmanship”** - This is set in direct contrast to the preceding words “*not of yourselves.....not of works lest any man should boast.*” Quickening is a creative act of God wherein no man can help or assist (Jn. 1:13). Furthermore, it is being “*created in Christ Jesus.*” Quickening is being made spiritually alive by being brought into spiritual union with God through Christ. Spiritual death is separation from God. To be in spiritual union with God is to have the Holy Spirit indwelling within you or else you remain in spiritual separation from God and thus spiritually dead. Since your spirit is within your physically body, for “*union*” between God’s Spirit and your spirit to occur it must occur within you –

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### The Biblical Definition of Works – Eph. 2:10

There occurs a distinct transition with Ephesians 2:11 from the previous subject of salvation (Eph. 2:12-6:24) to the subject of “*works*.” Ephesians 2:11 demonstrates the relationship between “*saved by grace through faith*” (2:8) and “*good works*” (vv. 9-10). Good works are the consequence of initial salvation rather than its cause.

The Biblical definition of “*works*” are those fruits of the heart (Mt. 12:32-35) that begin with the internal determinate thoughts (Mt. 15:19 “*thoughts*” Gk. *dialogismoi* = determinate thoughts) which may or may not be externally manifested by words and actions (Mt. 5:22,28; 15:18-19). Hence, the heart choice is the origin of works, both good and evil. The heart of fallen man is wholly corrupted (Deut. 5:29; 29:4) so that its heart determinations are only evil (Rom.8:7). Jesus said an “*evil tree*” (evil heart) cannot bring forth “*good fruit*” (good works) and neither can a “*good tree*” (good heart), but the moral nature of the fruit simply reveals the moral condition of the heart as either already “*good*” or “*evil*.” Since all men have sinned (Rom.3:23) and there is none good, no not one (Rom. 3:10-12; Mt. 19:17), that means all human beings must come into this world with an “*evil heart*” as a “*good heart*” cannot bring forth evil. Hence, the evil condition of the human heart is a consequence of the fall of man rather than in any individual heart determinations by man (Rom. 5:12, 15-19). Therefore, “*no man can come to me*” (Jn. 6:44) in the power of his own will, simply

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thus the abiding indwelling Spirit is essential to quickening. Those without the indwelling Spirit are spiritually dead/separated, and are “*none of his*” (Rom. 8:9).

<sup>29</sup> “**Unto good works**” – Good works are the consequences of regeneration or the creative work of God not the cause of regeneration. Works are Biblically defined to be whatever proceeds from the heart of man as determinate thoughts manifested in words and actions (Mt. 15:17-18). See Article entitled “The Biblical Definition of Works”). We are saved to serve, and thus the close relationship between redemption and congregational membership serves as the transition point (Eph. 2:11-3:20) between salvation (Eph. 1:4-2:11) and congregational service (Eph. 3:21-4:16). Ephesians 2:11 serves as the transition point for dealing with the relationship between salvation and service in the congregational body in Ephesians 2:11-3:21.

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because his heart disposition, from which heart determinations originate, exists in an active aggressive state of sin or rebellion against God (Deut. 5:29; 29:4; Acts 7:51; Rom. 8:7-8). Hence, God must “*give*” a new heart (Deut. 29:4; Ezek. 36:26) before “*good works*” can originate as heart determinations. Therefore, we are “*created in Christ Jesus UNTO good works.*” God simply gives us a believing heart, as the act of regeneration is being created “*in Christ*” or in a believing relationship with Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

### God’s Blessings to the Gentile Elect – vv. 11-13

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;<sup>30</sup>

12 That at that time<sup>31</sup> ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh [near] by the blood of Christ.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “**Gentiles in the flesh being called uncircumcision**” – Paul now turns his attention to the things that divide Christian Jews from Christian Gentiles within the congregations. Under the previous visible covenant administration the Jews regarded the Gentiles as second class citizens within God’s visible kingdom on earth. This condescending view was based purely upon “*in the flesh*” distinctions beginning with uncircumcision versus circumcision. However, it went even further than circumcision. Within the former house of public worship there existed a “*middle wall of partition*” (v. 14). See insert entitled “The Middle Wall of Partition).

<sup>31</sup> “**At that time...but now**” – He is speaking to the Gentile believers at Ephesus and referring to the time prior to their quickening or regeneration or when they were in the spiritual state described in Ephesians 2:2-3 and 4:17-19 in contrast to their present quickened state.

<sup>32</sup> “**Made nigh by the blood**” – Again, “*the blood*” refers to the spotless sinless life of Christ offered up in our place as our legal substitute. It is not Christ’s

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The Blessing of Equality in Salvation and Service for Gentiles – vv. 14-21

14 For he is our peace [Jn. 14:27, 16:33; Phil.4:7], who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition<sup>33</sup> between us;

## “Middle Wall of Partition”

With Ephesians 2:10 a transition occurs with “*good works*” being introduced in regard to their relationship with salvation. This relationship of works with God’s salvation is first applied by Paul to the Gentile Christians (Eph. 2:11-12) in comparison to Jewish Christians (Eph. 2:13-22) within the former public Mosaic public house of worship versus the New Covenant public house of worship.

Prior to Moses there were no Jewish versus Gentile distinctions in regard to “*good works*.” The Mosaic ceremonial law first introduced this contrast between Jews and Gentiles in regard to “*good works*.” Under the Mosaic Law the Gentiles were ceremonially typified as “unclean” and unregenerate. Therefore, in all “*good works*” approved by the ceremonial law as “clean” whether in types or in actual service in the House of God where the ceremonial types were administrated, believing circumcised Gentiles were very limited in their participation in public worship. They could not hold any office of Priest in the former house of God. Even though they were full proselyte believers and circumcised, they could not worship in the same congregation with the Jews in the House of God. In fact, there was erected a low wall within the Temple area that prohibited Gentile circumcised believers from entering into the area of Jewish worship and service. This wall of separation was not based upon faith nor circumcision, but upon race and its implications under ceremonial laws. Gentiles were regarded as second class citizens in God’s professing kingdom

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racial identity that saves, but the character of his sinless life offered up unto death as a substitute for sinners that reconciles one to God.

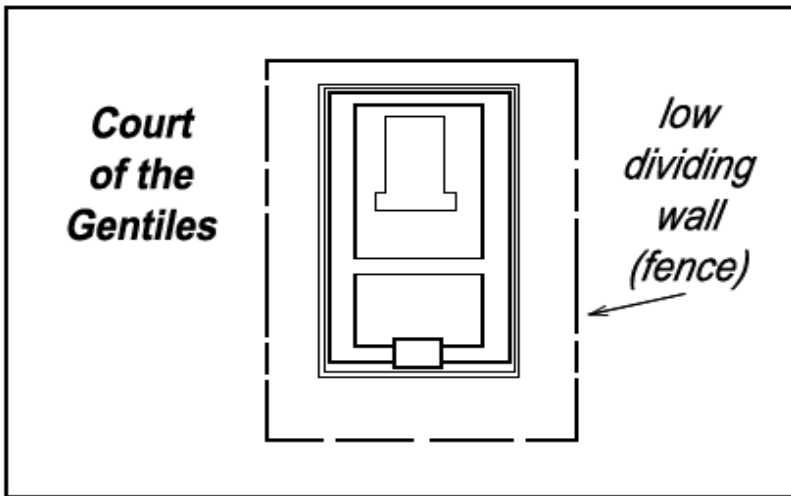
<sup>33</sup> “**Middle wall of partition**” In the previous public house of worship under the Old Covenant *visible administration*, circumcised proselyte Gentiles could not worship equally with Jews within the “*house of God*.” They had a distinct and separated location “*the court of the Gentiles*” which was separated from the court of the Jews by a low dividing wall with a sign that pronounced death upon any Gentile believer advancing into the designated area for Jewish worshippers.

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after Moses prior to the cross. Salvation was never based upon racial distinctions, as there were no Jews prior to Jacob. That is why Abraham is provided as the “*father of all them that believe*” (Rom. 4:1-12). Paul is claiming that the cross of Christ abolished all of the ceremonial distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, and now in regard to “good works” as such are manifestly performed in relationship to the public house of Worship, that Gentile believers are no more second class citizens in God’s kingdom or completely shut out of public worship as one body with Jewish believers.



15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain<sup>34</sup> [two] one new man, so making peace;

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<sup>34</sup> “**Twain**” – The Old Covenant *visible administrative* distinctions between Jews and Gentiles are abolished under the New Covenant *visible administration*. Elsewhere, Paul denies that there is any gender or social distinctions in regard to salvation in Christ. The cross abolished the law covenant and its *visible administrative* distinctions. Prior to Moses, no such visible distinctions were administered within the visible kingdom of God on earth. Abraham was a Gentile, a Syrian by birth and no Israelite existed previous to Jacob’s children. Therefore, under the *visible administration* of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:1) all



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16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body<sup>35</sup> by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them<sup>36</sup> that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.<sup>37</sup>

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such racial distinction are abolished and salvation with public service is as it was prior to the institution of the Mosaic Covenant. That is why Abraham is given by Paul as the pattern or “*father of all them that believe.*” The gospel of Christ preached before the cross never conditioned race, gender or social statute as determinate for salvation. The sacrificial types never made any such distinctions. However, the Mosaic ceremonial law did regard Gentiles as unclean and types of unregenerate mankind. Therefore, all such distinctions carried over into all other ceremonial aspects of the Law including the selecting of those who were ceremonially fit to serve and worship in the public house of God. Paul is merely denying that this external distinction is continued within the New Covenant public House of worship. The only race established by Christ on the cross is a “spiritual” race or a heavenly citizen. This is a clear repudiation of modern day “Messianic Judaism” which attempts to reestablish a racial distinction within Christianity between Jews and Gentiles.

<sup>35</sup> “**In one body**” – This refers to his physical body or Christ “*in his flesh*” (v. 15) that was placed on “*the cross*” (v. 16) which was “*slain*” (v. 16) and is the sole basis for reconciling anyone together in Christ. The congregation is not the means of reconciliation of both to God – that is sacramentalism and another gospel. But it is the gospel of the cross that brings reconciliation or “*peace*” to those near (Jews) and those who are afar off (Gentiles).

<sup>36</sup> “**Preached peace unto you...and to them**” – Again, it is the gospel of the cross that obtains reconciliation and “*peace*” (lit. Greek “to make one”) rather than the congregation. The universal invisible congregation theory is a church salvation doctrine contrary to the gospel of salvation preached before and after the cross (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2).

<sup>37</sup> “**Trinity**” – Although the term “trinity” cannot be found in the Scriptures, the concept it represents is repeatedly found in scriptures. It is found in the covenant

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19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God [Gal. 6:10; 1Tim. 3:15];<sup>38</sup>

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles [1Cor. 12:28] and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone [1Pet. 2:8; 1Cor. 10:4; Rom. 9:33; Mt. 16:18];

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together<sup>39</sup> groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

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of salvation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit described in Ephesians 1:4-13. It is found in this verse where The Father can only be approached through the Person and work of Jesus Christ by means of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is reflected in the Old Covenant Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the Bible repeatedly uses the phrase “*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*” which is an earthly type of the eternal covenant of redemption by the Triune God. Abraham is a type of the Father as he is called “*the father of all them that believe*” (Rom. 4:12; Eph. 3:6-7) and he had only one begotten Son through whom all the elect would come through (Isaac). Thus Isaac is a type of the only begotten Son by the Father who was born miraculously and then offered up in type on Mount Moriah. Jacob is a type of the Holy Spirit as Jacob is the begetter of the twelve sons of Israel a type of God’s elect. Moreover, the Trinity is seen in the command to baptize in the singular name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the Great Commission. In addition, the Trinity is seen in the closing benediction to the book of 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:14).

<sup>38</sup> “**The household of God**” – verse 19 provides three descriptions of Gentile salvation status followed by two descriptions of their congregational status showing they are equal in salvation and in service with saved Jews. The nation of Israel was the visible kingdom of God. Now, the New Testament congregation is the only visible expression of the kingdom of God on earth and therefore, such are the equivalent to being citizens within the visible expression of God’s family on earth. They are to be treated no more as “*strangers*” or “*foreigners*” but fellow citizens and family and co-equal members of the church body.

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22 In whom ye<sup>40</sup> also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> **“The building fitly framed together”** – Salvation is an individual experience between you and God. The Family of God and citizens of His kingdom are populated by new birth by a creative act of God (Eph. 2:1, 10). However, members of his congregation institution is something that is built which has to do with being *“fitly framed together”* or the act of proper constitution according to the pattern for building congregations as outlined in Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; and 1 Cor. 3:5-16). Being *“builded together”* demands they have the same gospel profession, submit to proper baptism and are brought into institution with properly qualified officers and ordinances in conducting worship decently in order, or in keeping with New Testament doctrine and policy.

<sup>40</sup> **“Ye”** – Paul does not say *“we”* because he is referring to the specific congregation at Ephesus which he calls *“an”* holy temple, and *“an”* habitation of God. Paul describes the congregation at Corinth in the very same language as God’s *“house”* (1 Cor. 3:9) that *“ye”* were the *“temple”* of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) and *“ye”* are the *“body of Christ”* as a whole but *“individual members thereof”* (1 Cor. 12:27). He used *“we”* and *“us”* and *“our”* when speaking of the congregation and body of Christ as an institution shared in common with all who were like faith and order with him. Remember, the *“we”* and *“us”* and *“our”* of the Pauline epistles does not refer to post-apostolic Christianity divided by doctrine and denominations but refers only to apostolic Christianity that was united by a common faith and practice.

<sup>41</sup> **“An habitation of God through the Spirit”** – Here is the point of confusion by advocates of the universal invisible congregation theory. They fail to recognize that the individual physical body of the believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), as well as the institutional body of the congregation (1 Cor. 3:16). All of God’s people have the indwelling presence of the Spirit which is inseparable from being *“in the Spirit”* (Rom. 8:8-9) due to being born of the Spirit whether before and after Pentecost (Gal. 4:27). However, only the *“house of God”* is immersed in the Spirit as an institution and has the Spirit of God dwelling in it, which is manifested as being *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim. 3:16). Every promise of the baptism in the Spirit was to a plural *“ye”* of water baptized believers (*“I baptize you in water”*) that John prepared and made ready for the Lord to *“fitly frame”* into a congregational house of God (Acts 1:21-22). It was this fitly framed house of God built before Pentecost and

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## THE CHURCH IS AN INSTITUTION OR ORGANIZATION

Some insist that the congregational body of Christ is **only** a spiritual organism made up of spiritual stones or living persons, but it is not an institution. However, the congregational body of Christ is an organized institution. It has qualified offices (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13). It has qualified ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper). It has disciplinary structure so that members can be "added" (Acts 2:41) and instructed, corrected (Mt. 28:20; Acts 2:42) and if necessary be removed (1 Cor. 5; Mt. 18:15-20). It has specific administrative authority (Mt. 18:17-18; 28:19-20). It has a specific mission statement (Mt. 28:19-20).

Israel was the visible representation of the Kingdom of God on earth as a "*nation*." However, only the Levitical priesthood could administer the ordinances of God within that nation, and only in the designated "*house of God*." The congregational body of Christ now visibly represents the Kingdom of God on earth and in that sense is a "*holy nation*" and "*peculiar people zealous of good works*" (1 Pet. 2:9). The institutional "*house of God*" is the only place where the world can see a "*royal priesthood*" offering up "*acceptable offerings*" unto God (1 Pet. 2:5). Remember, in the apostolic period there were no division of Christian into denominations, as all Christians received immersion in water upon conversion and were "added" unto the congregational body. The congregational body was the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth during the apostolic era. Post-apostolic denominational divisions were predicted (Acts 20:29-30; Rev. 17:4; 18:4; 1 Tim. 4:1) as the apostasy and considered as heretics.

God's Apostle for Manifesting this Gentile Blessing – ch. 3:1-20

## Chapter 3

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,<sup>42</sup>

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*"added unto"* on Pentecost (Acts 2:41) that met together in one place in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1) that was immersed in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The promise of the Spirit refers to much more than the immersion of the new house of God, but to the (1) completion of the Biblical canon; (2) Apostolic signs and wonders; (3) Evangelization of a new people – Gentiles;

<sup>42</sup> **"For you Gentiles"** – The Jewish congregation at Jerusalem would not evangelize the Gentiles. Peter had to be shown the vision three times before he was willing to go to the house of Cornelius, and even then, the first words he said as he entered the door is that it was not lawful for him to enter the house or have fellowship with Gentiles, but God showed him differently. Even then, he

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2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you—ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)<sup>43</sup>

5 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;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body,<sup>44</sup> and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

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took six Jewish brethren with him as eye witnesses, and rightly so, as the Jewish members in the congregation at Jerusalem called him in on the carpet to explain why he did what he did. Paul was saved and called as the apostle to the Gentiles, whereas, Peter, James and John were content to go to the circumcision (Gal. 3:9). Paul was defending equality of saved Gentiles with Jews in both salvation and in service. They were not to be regarded as second class citizens in God's kingdom or second class members in God's congregations.

<sup>43</sup> “**The mystery of Christ**” – Prior to Moses, there was no distinction between Jews and Gentiles and public service (Rom. 4). However, since the time of Moses and the visible administration of the Old Covenant there was no such thing as Gentiles being equal with Jews in the visible administration of the Old Covenant. Gentiles being brought together with Jews on an equal basis in the public house of worship was simply unheard of prior to the Great Commission. The Jewish congregation at Jerusalem ignored Gentiles and did not evangelize Gentiles. Paul was especially chosen and called to be the apostle to the Gentiles and defend their equality in salvation and in service. Something no Jewish Christian would do apart from a specific divine revelation from God as in the case of Peter who obeyed reluctantly (Acts 10).

<sup>44</sup> “**Same body**” – The Jews were glad to allow Gentiles to meet together apart from the Jews, as in the previous house of God where a “*middle wall of partition*” divided them into two separate congregational bodies for worship.

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7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.<sup>45</sup>

### The Mystery of Christ

It was no mystery that God saved Gentiles in the past (all who lived before Jacob were Gentiles; and there were Gentiles saved after Jacob – Nineveh, Ruth, Rahab, etc.) and it was no mystery that God would save a great number of Gentiles in the future (Gen. 12:3; Psa. 22:27; Isa. 42:4; 49:6, 16; 56:3-7; Isa. 60:1-3; Jer. 16:1-3; Jer. 16:19-21; Zec. 2:11; Mal. 1:11).

The gospel was never preached with racial restrictions. Gentiles were always co-equal in regard to gospel salvation. However, what they were not co-equal with Jews in worship in the house of God. The mystery was that Gentiles could serve equally in the same congregational body of worship.

Indeed, even though the Great Commission included Gentiles in both the gospel and receiving baptism and church membership (Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:46; Acts 1:8) the all Jewish church did not administer baptism or send a missionary to any Gentile from Acts 2-Acts 10. Although they did receive former proselyte Jews into the congregational body, they were not treated equally (Acts 6:1-6). Without question, the persecution began by Saul was designed to force the congregation at Jerusalem to extend their missionary endeavors beyond Judaism.

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However, they would not even entertain the idea of bringing Gentiles into the congregation on an equal basis (Acts 11:1-2). This equality in the house of worship was purely a divine revelation committed to Paul to preach and teach. Hence, most of the congregational epistles are written by Paul.

<sup>45</sup> “**The effectual working of His power**” – Paul was not saved in a congregation or by an evangelist. He was saved while on his way to persecute Christians. He was driven by a deep hatred of Christ in his heart. The only explanation for the change of heart in Paul was “*the effectual working of*” God’s power to turn him from a Christ hater to a Christ lover while in the midst of a Christ-hating mission. Paul was not seeking salvation, but the Savior was seeking him and saved him in spite of himself. His salvation was by divine revelation of Christ within his heart (Gal. 1:15-16). Just as it was God who determined the time he was revealed from his mother’s womb without his assistance, it was God who revealed Christ within his heart without his assistance.

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Indeed, Peter had to be shown the vision that demanded equal inclusion of Gentiles three times in Acts 10 and then his very first words upon entering the house of Cornelius were:

*And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.* – Acts 10:28

He was then called upon the carpet by the Jewish members in the congregation at Jerusalem to give an account for baptizing Gentile believers into equal membership (Acts 11:1-17). Only after they heard that God manifested the very sign that accredited all previous public houses of worship as acceptable by God (immersion in the Spirit – Ex. 40:35; 2 Chron. 7:1-3) which occurred “at” the beginning on the day of Pentecost did they stop with their objections. Even after they knew the special calling of Paul, the “pillars” in the Jewish congregation at Jerusalem said they would go unto the “circumcision” while acknowledging Paul’s ministry to the “Gentiles” (Gal. 2:9).

Paul considered it his mission to reveal and defend this co-equal membership of Gentiles with Jews in the congregational body of Christ or the house of public worship.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ [Jn. 1:1-3]:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the congregation the manifold wisdom of God,<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “**Known by the congregation**” The congregational body is the chosen place where God openly manifests this co-equal salvation and service relationship between Jews and Gentiles. The congregational body is a practical working

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11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,<sup>47</sup>

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

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fellowship between all of its members. The congregation is where God reveals His purposes through the preaching of His Word to even angelic visitors in the assemblies.

<sup>47</sup> “**The whole family in heaven and earth**” – The whole family of God “*in heaven*” includes Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Daniel and etc. none of which were in the “*congregation of Christ.*” The congregation of Christ is an institution built upon a New Testament foundation of apostles and prophets. The “*foundation*” is where a building begins and the whole foundation is New Testament in origin. The apostles were set first in the congregation, then secondly the prophets (1 Cor. 12:28). Hence, the “*family of God*” is distinctly different from the “*congregation of God.*” The “*congregation of God*” is the visible institution that administers the “*keys of the kingdom*” within the kingdom of God on earth, made up of professed baptized believing family members in Christ.



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19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

**How God is to be glorified in the Congregation by Christ – ch. 3:21-4:16**

21 Unto him be glory in the congregation by Christ Jesus <sup>48</sup> throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

**Walk worthily – vv. 1-16**

### ***Chapter 4***

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, <sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> “**Unto Him be glory in the congregation by Christ Jesus**” – The congregation is the designated means wherein to glorify God through Christ. Christ is glorified by the very way the congregation is “*fitly framed together*” and by the very way it administers the ordinances, conducts worship and proclaims the truth of God’s Word and by the conduct of its members in the world. Literally the last phrase of this verse reads “unto all generations, from age to age.” The idea is that the glory given him in the congregation at any time in this age will endure for eternity, as it is reflected in the position of the bride in eternity and in the individual rewarding of those in the bride.

<sup>49</sup> “**Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called**” - Again, these letters were written to Pauline congregations of like faith and order, as in the congregation “*which is at Ephesus*” or the “*faithful*.” In the New Testament period you could not be called “*faithful*” if you were not serving God as a water immersed member of a New Testament congregational body of Christ. The Pauline epistles were not written to persons outside of the membership of New Testament congregations nor was it written to Christians divided by doctrine and denominations. The Greek term translated “*worthily*” is taken from the scales that weigh things. A weight was placed on one side of the scales and the thing to be weighed was placed on the other side until both sides were equal or balanced.

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2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit <sup>50</sup> in the bond of peace.

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The riches of Christ are the weight placed on one side of this scale, and the Ephesians are called upon to provide a “*walk*” that balances out these riches provided by Christ. It is true that this is impossible, yet no other goal was worthy to be compared and strived for. With this text there is a clear transition to the “*walk*” or “works” of the congregation member.

<sup>50</sup> “**Unity of the Spirit**” – Paul is concerned with real practical working unity. Therefore, he first lists the attitudes essential for practical unity in verses 2-3. Without these attitudes no practical working unity is possible. Second, he provides a list of truths that are essential for practical unity in verses 4-6 without which any practical working unity is not possible. These essentials form a “*bond*” that actually brings people together in a working unity. The term “*bond*” is taken from the farming community where a string was tied around previously loose stalks of grain in order to actually bind them into visible oneness or unity. This can only be accomplished in a New Testament kind of congregation of like faith and order. This is why “*one body*” stands first in the list of essentials, as that kind of unity is the acid test of any true practical working unity. From the readers perspective this is “*one body*” in number or the one body where their own personal membership resides. That “*one*” in number is also “*one*” in kind since the one where their membership resides and where they work in practical unity with other Christians must be the same in kind as found throughout the New Testament. This is immediately followed by “*one Spirit*” as they were commanded to try the spirits (1 Jn. 4:1) because false doctrines originated with such “*spirits*” (1 Tim. 4:1). So, for the Christian, there can be only “*one Spirit*” in number and one in kind, as it is the Holy Spirit in contrast to other spirits. What follows is “*one hope of your calling.*” In this world there are many different kinds of hopes and many different kinds of calling, but in regard to the hope of the gospel there can only be one gospel in number (as there are other gospels – Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:4) which is one in kind that must be embraced and be professed to accepted into that “*one body.*” No other professed hope would be received as a condition for congregational membership. That profession must consist in acknowledging but “*one Lord.*” There are many lords, as Christ is called “*Lord of lords*” but for the Christian there is only “*one*” Lord

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4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one immersion,<sup>51</sup>

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.<sup>52</sup>

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in number who must be first professed in order to be received into the membership of that “*one body*.”

<sup>51</sup> “**One baptism**”- This profession of one hope based in the Person and work of Jesus Christ is to be manifested in “*one baptism*.” The only kind of baptism commissioned until the end of the world is water baptism (Mt. 28:19-20). At the writing of Ephesus, Pentecost and the house of Cornelius was long gone. Peter’s testimony in Acts 11:15 (“at”) deny that the baptism in the Spirit was repeated in the case of each believer since Pentecost. Although thousands had been saved between Pentecost and the house of Cornelius the nearest reference point he could point to in regard to the membership in the congregation at Jerusalem was “*at the beginning*” or the day of Pentecost. Hence, in Peter’s mind the baptism in the Spirit was not a repetitive act with every saved individual since Pentecost, but was an institutional baptism that accredited the congregation as the new house of God. The repetition at the house of Cornelius authenticated the Gentiles for immersion in water into the membership of the congregation at Jerusalem and that is why the members at the congregation in Jerusalem were upset with this new addition to their membership. Once becoming members of the congregation through water baptism, the next essential for unity is to “*teach them how to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded*” or indoctrinate them into “*the faith*” once delivered to the saints or the apostles doctrine. This is the “*one faith*” essential for maturing the congregational body so they are no longer tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (see verse 14).

<sup>52</sup> “**When He ascended...descended**” - This is likely a reference to Ps. 68:18. Christ is indeed our conquering King. It was the practice of kings in Bible times

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9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>53</sup>

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;<sup>54</sup>

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to parade their captives in a parade of victory when they returned home from battle. It was Christ's enemies, or what held us captive that Christ conquered and led in conquest (Sin, Satan and death).

<sup>53</sup> “**Lower parts of the earth**” into which he descended. It seems to be a contrast between two extremes. The lowest parts are one extreme while heaven is the other extreme. Since His authority “*filleth all in all*” therefore his rule extends to the extremes. Sheol/Hades is always referred to as the extreme contrast from heaven (Psa. 139). Sheol/hades is the realm of the dead (dead spirits and dead bodies) and so death had to be conquered as it is death that holds his people in captivity. However, the primary reason for this reference is that as a conquering king he is giving his congregation gifts that are by design to obtain specific goals with respect to his congregation (“*for the perfecting...for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body.....*” in order that the congregation may obtain “*unity*” so that the congregation is “*no more tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.*”

<sup>54</sup> “**Apostles...prophets....evangelists...pastors....teachers**” – What role do these particular gifts play in stabilizing and maturing the body of Christ? The apostles and prophets provided the oral “*faith once delivered*” in written form. That work is the “*foundation*” upon which the congregation is built making it the “*pillar and ground of the truth.*” Thus they provided the basis for doctrinal unity. The “*evangelists*” were those missionaries that evangelized, baptized and gathered the congregation together. The “*missionaries*” provided the basis for practical unity by forming the congregational body. The “*pastor*” or “*pastor/teacher*” is the one responsible for continuing the third aspect of the Great Commission “*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded*” (Mt. 28:20). The “*pastor....teacher*” provides the continuing leadership to mature the unity of the congregational body. Again, these gifted

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12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: <sup>55</sup>

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith,<sup>56</sup> and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the

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men are designed by Christ to obtain the goals specified in verses 12-16 now in this present time.

<sup>55</sup> **“Edifying of the body of Christ”** – God’s design for these gifted men is to build up the congregational body in *“the faith”* and mature them in unity and love as a cohesive practical working body. The same Greek term *oikodome* translated *“edifying”* is translated *“build”* (Mt. 16:18) and *“build up”* (1 Pet. 2:5). **“For the perfecting”** – or equipping, or furnishing what is needed for them to be built up in the faith. These gifted men and their impact upon the local visible congregation is spelled out in 1 Cor. 3:5-16.

<sup>56</sup> **“Till we come in the unity of the Faith”** - Paul is not speaking of the second coming of Christ. He is speaking of the goal set forth in the very next two verses *“that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”* or the goal to *‘grow up’* in Christ – Christian maturity here and now. *“The faith”* refers to the apostolic doctrine that provides the doctrinal foundations or essentials to protect the congregational body from false teachers and their false doctrines. The purpose of the congregation is *“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Mt. 28:20). Only in the local congregation can that goal be achieved, where all members can work in both a spirit of harmony and in doctrinal unity.

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effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.<sup>57</sup>

### Walk like Christ not like the Lost – ch. 4:17-32

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,<sup>58</sup>

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “**The whole body fitly joined together**” – Paul is defining the goal for the congregational body whether it is found at Ephesus or Corinth or anywhere else. This is the goal that every congregational body can achieve, but is utterly impossible for the so-called universal invisible body of Christ. It is impossible because of the very nature of this so-called body (universally and doctrinally divided). Paul is not speaking about salvation but about progressive sanctification within the congregational membership toward the same doctrinal goals in view of false teachers and false doctrine (v.14). When Paul speaks of salvation it is always in the context of new birth, new creation, spiritual union and justification. The words “**fitly joined together**” have reference to how the local congregation is constituted and its mature operation here and now as the “*temple*” (1 Cor. 3:9-16) of the Holy Spirit in order to meet the internal needs of the members and manifest its ministry in the location it is placed. Every member has a purpose and a gift to be used to edify the other members within the congregation. Even false professing members are used by God within the congregation for the edification of others (1 Cor. 11:18; Jn. 6:70). As a congregation matures in the doctrines and practices of Christ it becomes a more efficient working institution and visible manifestation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> “**Walk not**” – With this verse a transition from the institutional congregation is made to the congregation members individual life within and outside of the congregation in relationship with others – his walk. First, he is not to walk like his former lost self (vv. 17-19), but walk like Christ (vv. 20-21) and how that is done (vv. 22-32). Then he is to walk “*in love*” (5:1-7). Then walk “*in light*” (Eph. 5:8-14) and walk “*circumspectly*” (Eph. 5:15-6:7).

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19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness [unbridled lust], to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off <sup>60</sup> concerning the former conversation [manner of life] the old man [Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9], which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

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<sup>59</sup> “**Darkened....alienated from the life of God through ignorance**” Paul is describing their former unregenerate state and how other lost Gentiles walk. God is light, life and holy. Spiritual death is by nature separation from God. Therefore, the unregenerate condition is a state of separation from light (“darkened”), and separation from life (“alienated from the life of God”) and separation from the holiness of God (“given themselves over unto lasciviousness....all uncleanness”- v. 19). This occurred in the fall of mankind in the garden and this condition of spiritual “death” or separation from God is “passed” down to all mankind (Rom. 5:12) through the male gender by natural generation. That is why Christ was conceived without a human father. This is not a passive separated state but an aggressive separated state (Rom. 8:7).

<sup>60</sup> “**Put off...Put on**” – Those who deny the dual nature of a child of God point out that these terms are found in the past tense completed action and occurred at regeneration. However, these terms are not passive verbs but active verbs demonstrating these are actions by us. Furthermore, they are found in the imperative mode, demonstrating they are no actions performed by God at our regeneration and justification, but actions we are responsible for doing. Moreover, they are aorist tense point actions that demonstrate these are punctiliar actions that occur simultaneously. When we “put off” the old man, at that point of action the new man is “put on.” Furthermore, in verses 25 “putting away” demonstrates these are repeatable punctiliar (point) actions throughout our Christian life on earth. Hence, putting off the old man is not a onetime occurrence at new birth but a continual repeated action throughout our life which proves the dual nature of a child of God wherein “the law of sin” still abides in our flesh (Rom. 7:18) in addition to the new inward man created in

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23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind [Jn. 3:3, 7; 1Pet. 3:23; Titus 3:5; Rom. 12:2];

24 And that ye put on the new man [Col. 3:10], which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

### *Chapter 5*

1 Be ye therefore followers [lit. Greek *mimetai* “mimickers” or “imitators”] of God, as dear children;

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Christ. We “*put on*” the new man and “*put off the old man*” by faith in the promise of God, that the Holy Spirit is able to do what we cannot do, which is to overrule and overpower the indwelling “*law of sin*” (Rom. 8:9-13).

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### Walk in Love – vv. 2-7

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour [fragrance].

3 But fornication, [lit. Gk. *pornea* – all illicit/illegal sexual attitudes and actions – Lev. 18:6-24] and all uncleanness, [lit. Gk. *akatharsia* – moral impurity] or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, [lit. Gr. *akatharsia* – immoral lusts] nor foolish talking, nor jesting, [lit. Gk. *eutrapelia*, insults spoken under the pretense of humor] which are not convenient: [lit. Gk. *aneko* – fitting or proper] but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, [lit. Gk.  *pornos* – male who practices illicit sex – Lev. 18:6-24] nor unclean person, [lit. Gk. *akathartos* – a person characterized by immoral, impure life] nor covetous man, who is an idolater,<sup>61</sup> hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them [1Thess. 5:22; Rev. 18:4].

### Walk in Light – vv. 8-14

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light [Matt. 5:14-15]:

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<sup>61</sup> “**Covetous man, who is an idolater**” – Idolatry is substituting something other than the True God as your supreme object of affection and devotion. Anything that replaces God as the supreme focus of your attention and time is your God. Those who are characteristically covetous are devoted to satisfying their own self-interests as their chief devotion.

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9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) [Gal. 5:22-23]

10 Proving [lit. Gk *dokimazo* - verifying, trying by examination, scrutinizing] what is acceptable unto the Lord.<sup>62</sup>

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

### Walk Circumspectly or wisely – vv. 15-19

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly [with care, caution], not as fools, but as wise,<sup>63</sup>

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> “**Acceptable unto the Lord**” – Not any kind of service (Heb. 12:28), or any kind of worship (1 Pet. 2:5) is acceptable to God. Acceptable service and acceptable worship is that which is in keeping with God’s revealed will. That is why “*proving all things*” is commanded by God in order that we may serve and worship God acceptably.

<sup>63</sup> “**Walk circumspectly**” – The term translated “circumspectly” means “carefully” or “with care”. This is in keeping with the command for “*proving all things*” and “*understanding the will of the Lord.*” Anyone or any religious institution that does not speak “*according to this word*” (Isa. 8:20) is to be regarded as without light or in the state of ignorance.

<sup>64</sup> “**Redeeming the time**” - Present tense salvation, or progressive sanctification, is the salvation of our daily life for the glory of God. We redeem the time by

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17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; <sup>65</sup>

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; [2Cor.4:15]

### Walk in Submission – 5:21-6:7

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God [Phil. 2:3]. <sup>66</sup>

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making that time count for the glory of God. This is done by submitting to the Holy Spirit's leadership and power to live out that time (v. 18). We do that by setting our affections on things above (Col. 3:2) and by bringing every thought into subjection to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5) as revealed in His Word (Eph. 5:17). We do that by living in submission to the authorities that God has established over our lives (5:19-6:3). This is how we "*save*" our daily lives for the glory of God, and in forms of reward in heaven above.

<sup>65</sup> "**Be not drunk**" - This is a command not a suggestion, as it is found in the imperative mode in the Greek Text. The comparison to intoxication is instructive because an intoxicated person's thinking, speech and walk are all under the influence of alcohol when intoxicated. Whenever we are not thinking, speaking and walking under the influence of the Spirit of God we are walking "*after the flesh*" and sinning before God. This is not speaking about spiritual gifts, but the spirit of submission to God in our practical daily walk, so that we manifest the fruit of the Spirit in submission to the revealed will of God. The Bible never forbids drinking of wine, but only drinking it to excess. The typical wine used by every day Jews was low in alcohol, and it was necessary for health as food and water were not refrigerated, and wine killed harmful bacteria and germs.

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22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> **"Submitting yourselves"** - Ephesians 5:22-32 addresses an aspect of present tense salvation, or the salvation of the daily life of a believer. Mutual submission to others begins this section (v. 21), but moves into the analogy of the husband and wife relationship in regard to positions of authority, and submission to that authority. Spiritual union is not the subject of this section, rather spiritual submission to authority for the sanctification of the congregational body in the service of Christ (v. 26). The woman has her own physical head attached to her shoulders and so the husband is called her "*head*" only in metaphorical sense of "authority" rather than any kind of physical union of the husband's head transplanted upon the physical body of the woman. Likewise, Christ is "*head*" of the congregation in the same sense. He is not speaking of any kind of spiritual union, but the practical position of Christ's "authority" over the congregation, in the present tense, setting apart (sanctify it) and maintaining its purity in faith and practice by application of the Word of God to its doctrines and actions. Marriage is designed to be a working relationship where authority and submission provide a practical working unity. Marriage was instituted to be a type of Christ and His congregation (v. 30). However, not only was Eve derived from the body of Adam, but so were the rest of Adam's larger family. Eve was not the Adamic family, and neither are the congregation and the family of God one and the same.

<sup>67</sup> **"Submit"** In every society where social order is maintained without anarchy, there must always be some kind of chain of command. This is particularly true of governments, businesses and in the home. God has established a chain of command within human society. He has established governments over societies (Rom. 13:1-5) to protect the innocent and punish the wicked. He established husbands over wives and parents over children (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4 for the nurture and well being of the home in order to be without chaos and confusion. This command to "*submit*" is not without careful qualifications. It is placed within the restrictions of "*in the Lord*" or in keeping with the framework of the principles of Scripture and how Christ "*loved*" the congregation. This is not a command to submit to a mentally and physically abusive husband. This order established between the man and woman is based upon the order God established in the Garden of Eden, rather than any cultural basis (1 Tim. 2:13-15; 1 Cor. 11:5-8; Eph. 5:31-32) and in keeping with God's Word (1 Cor. 14:34-38). Ultimately this is submission to God, as it is God, rather than the husband

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23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the congregation: and he is the saviour of the body [congregational body of baptized believers].<sup>68</sup>

24 Therefore as the congregation is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the congregation, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,<sup>69</sup>

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who has issued this command. Moreover, the greater responsibility lies upon the husband to sacrificially submit himself for her best interests, as Christ died for the congregation. The wife cannot expect her children to submit to her if she is in rebellion against her husband, as the basis for both commands are God's Word and not human traditions or cultural laws. More significantly, God designed the woman to be submissive to her husband to represent the submissive nature of the congregation to Christ (Eph. 5:24-25,30-32).

<sup>68</sup> **“Savior of the body”** – Paul commonly uses what theologians call *the language of accommodation*. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in direct connection with the congregation at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-30. The *“flock”* in Acts 20:28 is the very same *“flock”* in Acts 20:29 which is the kind of congregation that false teachers can enter into and lead members out of. That is impossible for the so-called universal invisible body of Christ. It is also the kind of congregation that the Holy Spirit places qualified men as *“overseers”* over *“ALL the flock”* (Acts 20:17,28). This kind of congregation is said to have been purchased by his own blood (Acts 20:28). These congregations had been founded by Paul who knew the leadership and members on a personal intimate level (Acts 20:32-35). He addresses the assembly according to *the language of accommodation* or language that is in keeping with their profession and demeanor. New Testament congregations required a profession of faith prior to being received by baptism into membership.

<sup>69</sup> **“Sanctify”** – The congregation and the metaphor of “the body” is primarily found in the context of sanctification and never in the context of regeneration or justification because it is an institution for public service in relationship to

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27 That he might present it to himself a glorious congregation, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish [2Cor. 11:2].<sup>70</sup>

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Christ's authority represented metaphorically by the term "*head*." He is presently preparing the congregation for a glorious position in heaven to rule with him over the new heavens and earth. Upon that new earth there are other "*saved*" (Rev. 21:24) who rule with Christ over the earth, but who are under the rule of the Bride with Christ. There are different positions of rule or authority in heaven (Rev. 21:25 "*kings*" plural) on the new earth, as well as in the New Jerusalem. Only those within the progressively sanctified bride on earth will be in the glorified bride in heaven. All the saved, who now exist outside His metaphorical bride in the new heavens and earth. All the saved who now exist inside the metaphorical bride here and now, will also exist inside the metaphorical bride in the new heavens and earth. The saved existing in the metaphorical "*Great Whore*" or "*her harlots*" now (Rev. 18:4), do not exist in the metaphorical bride now (Rev. 21:16-17), and they will not exist in the metaphorical bride then (Rev. 21:24).

<sup>70</sup> "**Might present it to himself**" – Individual believers are now metaphorically married or brought into spiritual union with Christ and manifesting metaphorical children of that union or "*fruit*" of that marriage (Rom. 7:1-6). However, the present visible local congregational body of Christ is metaphorically characterized as a "*chaste virgin*" yet to be presented (2 Cor. 11:2). This metaphor of a "chaste virgin" is in regard to doctrinal purity and faithfulness (2 Cor. 11:2) that can be "corrupted" by false doctrine and practices (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Her future presentation depends upon being progressively sanctified by the word of God. This kind of "*chaste virgin*" can now be "*corrupted*" or become metaphorical "*harlots*" (Rev. 17:5) and such metaphorical "*harlots*" do contain true children of God (Rev. 18:4) due to embracing serious false doctrines (2 Cor. 11:4) and practices. When the institutional congregational body of Christ is presented to Christ in Revelation 19:6-7 it is because "*she hath made herself ready*" in maintaining this faithful "*chaste*" condition which is the "righteousnesses" (lit. Greek is plural in Rev. 19:7) of the saints rather than the singular imputed righteousness of Christ. Those "*saved*", but outside of the institutional bride of Christ will live outside the New Jerusalem on the new earth (Rev. 21:24) after the final judgment (Rev. 20) and after the creation of a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1-2). To be in the metaphorical bride here and now

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28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the congregation:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.<sup>71</sup>

31 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.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the congregation.<sup>72</sup>

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(Rev. 22:16-17) is to be inside the metaphorical city bride then (Rev. 21). To be outside the metaphorical bride now is to be outside the metaphorical bride then (Rev. 21:24).

<sup>71</sup> **“Members of his body”** The contextual allusion is to Genesis 2:21-24 and the creation of Eve from the body of Adam. From Adam’s body not only did God bring forth his wife, but all of his children. His wife metaphorically represents his congregation. Adam’s children metaphorically represent all the elect outside of His congregation. Adam’s wife is not his children and his children are not his wife. The congregation of God and the family of God are not one and the same. Abel, Seth, Abraham, David, etc., were all members in God’s family, but were not members in God’s congregational body as the *“foundation”* or beginning point of His congregational body consists only of New Testament materials (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20). In this context, he is referring only to the congregation and its relationship with Christ. The institution of marriage was designed to represent the special relationship between Christ and His congregation as an institution.

<sup>72</sup> **“Concerning Christ and the congregation”** – Marriage was instituted by God in the garden of Eden between one man and one woman (not Adam and Steve or Madam and Eve) not only in order to provide a nurturing and stable atmosphere to raise children and replenish the earth, but to present to the world the loving and submissive relationship of the congregation to Christ. The perversion of marriage perverts the intended design of marriage or the relationship between Christ and the congregation, His bride. Therefore, marriage

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33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

### *Chapter 6*

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) [Ex. 20:12]

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:<sup>73</sup> but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord [Ps. 127:3-5].

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;<sup>74</sup>

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defined any other way, for example between two men or two women or outside the covenant of marriage is not marriage in the eyes of God, but an immoral relationship (see Lev. 18).

<sup>73</sup> **Provoke not**” – The authority of the father figure is designed for the well being of a child in order to nurture and guide them in the admonition of the Lord. It is not designed to frustrate them by being too rigid and overbearing or too demanding. But chastening must be mixed with good portions of love and administered according to understanding of their capabilities to motivate them to obedience rather than to motivate them merely from fear of punishment.

<sup>74</sup> **“Doing the will of God from the heart”** – Your motive for doing a good job should be to honor God by your work ethic.



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7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing [let up from] threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

### Stand in His Power – vv. 10-20

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.<sup>75</sup>

11 Put on the whole armour of God,<sup>76</sup> that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [deceitful methods] of the devil.

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<sup>75</sup> “**Strong in the Lord**” – in Ephesians 5:16 the command to “*walk circumspectly*” or “wisely” and “cautiously” is begun by exhorting them to be “*filled with the Spirit*” and it is climaxed in Ephesians 5:10-18 by exhorting them to make their “*stand*” (v. 17) in God’s strength instead of their own strength, because that is the only strength able to overcome the power of the indwelling “*law of sin*” (Rom. 7:18-25) and the external spiritual powers of darkness. The power of God is metaphorically represented to us in the armor of the Roman soldier. Paul had a Roman guard assigned to him all the time he was on his journey to Rome and during both imprisonments in Rome. The Roman soldier depended upon that armor for protection from the weapons of his enemies.

<sup>76</sup> “**The whole amour of God**” – It is not sufficient to use simply parts of the armor, but a person is only safe from Satan’s attack when the “*whole*” armor is put on. Some believe prayer joined with feelings instead of truth is sufficient to guide them and keep them from error – it is not! Some think being evangelistic and preaching the gospel is all that is necessary and that “doctrine” (teachings of Scripture) is not important. They are deceived already and will be further deceived! Many have as their final authority their own feelings or sense of spiritual discernment. The charismatic movement is characteristically based upon personal feelings and experiences as final authority for truth rather than the Word of God. Such have already been taken captive by Satan to do his will.

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12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.<sup>77</sup>

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day,<sup>78</sup> and having done all, to stand.

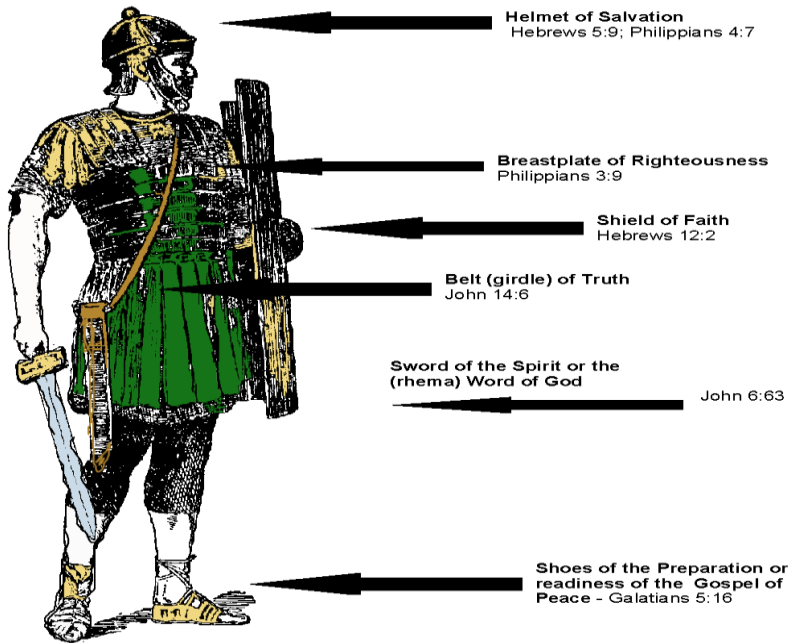
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<sup>77</sup> “**Of this world....in high places**” seems to be a reference to the human rulers in our governments in this world and to the spiritual hierarchy among the angels of Satan (v. 11 “the Devil”). Daniel 10 reveals the rise of human rulers and governments in direct connection with a demonic order of angels under Satan. Although we do not ultimately “**war against flesh and blood**” as they are but tools in the hands of spiritual powers (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1) under the Devil (v. 11), but those “**flesh and blood**” carnal powers “**of this world**” do war against us. Jesus warned that our greatest enemies will be of our own human family (Mt. 10:35).

<sup>78</sup> “**The Evil Day**” – This is the day of temptation and trial. It is any day that it occurs.

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## THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,<sup>79</sup> and having on the breastplate of righteousness;<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> “Girt about with truth” – *The "girdle" seems sometimes to have been a cincture of iron or steel, and designed to keep every part of the armor in its place, and to gird the soldier on every side.* – Albert Barnes. We must begin with truth, not personal or majority opinions, or traditions. Truth is what puts everything in place and gives the child of God the right perspective to life, beliefs and practice. False doctrine is a mixture of truth and error and the only way to escape its deception is to know the full truth. The question is often asked, “*what is truth?*” (Jn. 18:38). The answer to that question has originated the history of human philosophy. However, the Biblical answer is that truth is everything that harmonizes with the nature and will of God as revealed in the

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15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;<sup>81</sup>

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

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scriptures. Jesus said “*I am the truth*” (Jn. 14:6a) and “*thy word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17).

<sup>80</sup> “**Breastplate of righteousness**” – The breastplate covered the vital parts (heart, lungs, liver, etc.). This is not your righteousness, as your righteousness is full of holes. This is the perfect sinless righteousness of Jesus Christ or his works performed in his own body that forms the whole basis of your justification received by faith. There are no holes in this righteousness, and it is the only righteousness that you can stand on in the day of evil. I am not sinless. I am a work in progress. However, my ultimate justification does not depend on me or anything I can do, but depends wholly upon the satisfaction of all the laws demands and penalty by the righteous life of Jesus Christ who lived for me and died in my place.

<sup>81</sup> “**The preparation of the gospel**” – He is telling them they must always remain in readiness to share the gospel. That readiness includes personal holiness, as well as sufficient understanding of the gospel, and willingness to share it with others. The shoes of the Roman soldier had spikes in the soles that were at an angle so that when he planted his feet and something pushed against him, his shoes would simply be rooted more deeply in the ground beneath him. The shoes were the foundation of his whole person in any battle. Ultimately, our own gospel experience, as verified and in keeping with God’s Word is the final resource to defend our own spiritual status. The gospel does not come to God’s elect merely “**in word only**” but in addition to that or “**but also in the Spirit, and in power and in much assurance**” (1 Thes. 1:4-5). In the “**day of evil**” when doubts attack our mind, it is that transforming experience of our conversion that we can draw from to battle such doubts. We can remember how our attitude toward sin changed even though we were not made sinless. Also, we can remember that our salvation is wholly based upon what Christ provided for our ultimate salvation – his works – and “**not our works of righteousness which we have done**” (Tit. 3:5). That experience is rooted in the teachings of God’s Word.

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17 And take the helmet of salvation,<sup>82</sup> and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:<sup>83</sup>

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> **“Helmet of Salvation”** - The Roman helmet was to protect the mind from injury. True salvation comes *“with much assurance”* (1 Thes. 1:5). It is this *“assurance”* of salvation that is the object of attack. When believers doubt their salvation it renders them inactive. Doubt about one’s salvation renders them inactive. Paul wants their minds secure in the assurance of their salvation. Doubts invade our minds when we are either disobedient (1 Pet. 1:10) or ignorant of God’s Word.

<sup>83</sup> **“The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God”** – The double-edged sword was the only offensive weapon in the soldier’s armor. The Spirit of God never leads or teaches anything contradictory to the written Word of God because He is the ultimate author of the written Word (2 Pet. 1:20-22) and He is not the *“author of confusion”* (1 Cor. 14:33). Many are casualties *“in the evil day”* because of their ignorance and/or misunderstanding of God’s Word. The only interpretation of God’s Word that is true to His Word, is the interpretation that harmonizes with the immediate and overall context of Scripture. Every word, every phrase, every text, every paragraph and every chapter has an immediate grammatical and historical context that it always fits harmoniously with. The right interpretation always fits the Biblical context. If an interpretation does not fit it is because it originates with the imaginations of the flesh and/or with demons (1 Tim. 4:1b; 1 Jn. 4:1). The Charismatic movement usurps the Word of God by personal experiences and feelings as their final authority for doctrine and for interpreting Scripture.

<sup>84</sup> **“In the Spirit”** – Prayer has only two possible sources. It either originates *“after the flesh”* or *“in the Spirit.”* This has absolutely nothing to do with praying in tongues or what are really ecstatic utterances today. It simply means you are to pray, preach, walk (live) *“in the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:25) and that is precisely how these pieces of armor are *“put on”* by yielding or submitting to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, we are to *“pray without ceasing”* which means we are to live in a state of conscious surrender to God and his presence. Paul uses three terms to describe the different kinds of prayer. The term

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19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,<sup>85</sup>

20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

### Salutations – vv. 21-24

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

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translated “*prayer*” is derived from the Persian court and describes a bodily condition more than an action that conveys the conscious presence of the King. Prayer is consciousness of God’s presence and power over your life in the immediate present or now. The term “*supplications*” translates a Greek term that refers to seeking what is necessary for self and/or others. A third term found in Philippians 4:6 is translated “*requests*” and that is exactly what it means. We are commanded to “*watch*” or be on guard “*with all perseverance*.” This means we are never to let down our guard but always be in a state of dependency and prayer. We are commanded not only to persevere in this prayerful state of prayer for ourselves, but for “*all the saints*.”

<sup>85</sup> “**That I may open my mouth boldly**” – You have no right to complain about the inadequacy of the preaching and teaching of your Pastor and/or missionary if you are not praying for them. The larger the congregation and prayers the greater the power will be manifested in the pulpit. Don’t complain, but pray, as the adequacy in the pulpit is largely the responsibility of the prayers of the congregation(s). Many times his servants cannot speak “*as I ought to speak*” (v. 20) because the forces of evil are so opposed to the truth they are attempting to proclaim. Pray for your pastor or speaker both publicly before he preaches/teaches and silently while he preaches or teaches if you want to be fed better and see better results.

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22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. *To the Ephesians written from Rome, by Tychicus.*<sup>86</sup>



Ruins of Ancient Ephesus

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<sup>86</sup> “**Tychicus**” – is the actual person whom Paul dictated the letter unto, and who carried it to the Ephesians (2 Tim. 4:20). He was no doubt one of the members of the congregation at Ephesus whom the congregation sent with Paul as did many other congregations. For example, “**Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus**” - Acts 20:4. We know that Trophimus was an Ephesian (Acts 21:29) and he is mentioned second with Tychicus. Tychicus was used by Paul to write Ephesians (Eph. 6:21, 24; 2 Tim. 4:12) and Colossians (Col. 4:7; 4:18). Therefore, such members of these congregations served as better ambassadors for Paul to these congregations.

## The Biblical Teaching on the Body of Christ

*Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular* – 1 Cor. 12:27

**O**f all the metaphors used for the congregation there is none more abused and misunderstood than the metaphor of the human body as applied to the congregational body of Christ.

Are we to understand that when the New Testament calls the congregation “*the body of Christ*” that it is the literal physical flesh and blood body of Jesus Christ, or the metaphorical (representative) body of Christ? When Jesus says “*I am the door*” are we to understand He is a literal wooden door or is He a metaphorical door to heaven? The failure to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical characterizes the sacramental error of this metaphor, while the failure to properly understand and apply the metaphor has produced confusion and false doctrines concerning the congregational body of Christ.

The terms “*body of Christ*” have but two clear applications in the New Testament; (1) the literal physical body of Christ; and (2) the figurative/metaphorical or *representative* body of Christ.

It is the latter use that is the subject of debate in regard to the essential nature of the congregational body of Christ. The argument rages over its membership. Does its membership include all saints in all ages, or all saints between Pentecost and the rapture, or just all saints within the context of a local congregational body?



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### A. Understanding the Metaphor

The key to understanding the use and right application of a metaphor is to understand what a metaphor is and how a metaphor can and cannot be used. What will a metaphor permit?

E.W. Bullinger in his book *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* defines a metaphor and then defines it by comparing it to a simile:

Met'-a-phor, Greek *metaphor*, a transference, or carrying over or across. From *meta*, beyond or over, and *pherein*, to carry. We may call the figure "Representation" or "Transference." Hence, while a Simile gently states that one thing is *like* or *resembles* another, the Metaphor boldly and warmly declares that one thing IS the other. While a Simile says, "All flesh is AS grass" (1 Pet. i. 24), the Metaphor carries the figure across at once, and says, "All flesh IS grass" (Isa. Xi. 6).....We have recourse to Metaphor when we say of a picture, "This is my father" or "This is my mother." The verb "is" means in this case represents; there may not be the least resemblance! The verb "is" always has this meaning and no other when used as a metaphor, No other verb will do.....the verbs "is," "are," "were," etc. pp. 735, 736

So simile uses terms such as "*like*" and "*as*" whereas the metaphor uses state of being verbs such as "*am*" or "*is*" and "*are*." The simile conveys resemblance whereas the metaphor conveys **representation**.

Hence, in I Corinthians 12:27, the term **represent** could be put in the place of the state of being verb "*are*" and you would have the proper sense intended:

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*Now ye represent the body of Christ and members in particular* – 1 Cor. 12:27

However, Bullinger goes on to say,

Let it then be clearly understood that a Metaphor is confined to a distinct affirmation that one thing is another thing, owing to some association or connection in the uses or effects of anything expressed or understood. The two nouns themselves must both be mentioned, and are always to be taken in their absolutely literal sense, or else no one can tell what they mean. The figure lies wholly in the verb, or copula....For example, "All flesh is grass." Here "flesh" is to be taken literally as the subject spoken of, and "grass" is to be taken equally literally as that which represents "flesh." All the figure lies in the verb "*is.*" - Pp. 735, 736

In other words, the concepts or characteristics being transferred must find a literal basis in the noun following the verb "*is..are...am...were....etc.*" or else one is abusing the metaphor. For example, "*Ye are the body of Christ*" is a clear use of a metaphor. In order to understand what Paul means both nouns "*ye*" and "*the body of Christ*" must first be understood in their most literal sense. Paul is saying that "*ye*" or the church at Corinth "*are the body of Christ*" or "*REPRESENTS the body of Christ.*" The representation or transference is found in the literal characteristics found in the literal "*body of Christ.*"

So one should ask himself, "what are the inherent characteristics that can be found in the literal body of Christ which can be transferred to – '*ye*' - or the congregation at Corinth so that the congregation represents those literal characteristics?" For example, the literal body of Christ is not *invisible* and so it is not possible for this metaphor to transfer or convey that concept.

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Neither is the literal body of Christ *universal* and spread out all over the world, and so again, it cannot properly be used to convey such an idea. What can a literal body convey? It can convey or transfer the concepts of visibility, order, unity, locality, cooperation, etc. Various parts of the literal body, such as the “*head*” can be used to convey “authority” or “perception” etc.

Now, we come to the issue, can the literal body of Christ convey a plurality of “bodies”? Can a Biblical writer use the term “bodies” in the plural as a metaphor of “*the body of Christ*.” The answer is no. The reason is because the plural concept is foreign and contrary to the inherent characteristics found in the literal body of Christ. He never possessed more than one physical body. However, each individual church can be properly represented as a singular “body of Christ” as is the case with the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27) and the pronoun used by Paul is “*ye*” not “*we*.”<sup>87</sup>

The same is true for the Biblical use of the term “*temple*.” We never read “temples” plural because the literal basis for the metaphorical use of “*temple*” has reference to God’s temple in Jerusalem, which never exceeded the singular number. However, each individual physical body of the saint can be properly represented as “*the temple*” of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) just as each congregation can be properly represented as “*the temple*” of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) or “*the body*” of Christ and with the pronouns “*ye*” or “*you*” rather than “*we*” or “*us*.”

What about the argument that if each body of Christ has for its “head” Jesus Christ, then that would require one head being attached to thousands of bodies. We have shown already that the plural is not a possible use of the metaphor. However, for the moment, assuming we did find the plural, but only one singular “*head*” that argument is invalid unless you literalize what is

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<sup>87</sup> Paul was a member of the congregation at Antioch

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intended to be a metaphor. That argument is based strictly upon literalizing of the metaphor. In other words, the force of the argument is found only in denying that either “*bodies*” or “*head*” are to be understood metaphorically. The error of this argument is clearly seen in the fact that Christ is said to be “*the head*” of “*every man*” (1 Cor. 11:3). Hence, the proper use of the metaphor is applied only to each man, just as to each congregational body of Christ. However, for the sake of argument, supposing the plural “men” were used with the singular “*head*” (which it is not), then of course if one literalized this and denied the metaphorical connotation it would convey a singular head upon billions of physical bodies. However, when the metaphor is understood correctly, “*head*” simply conveys “authority” by Christ over every man.

Furthermore, the metaphor “*head*” is never used in scripture to convey “spiritual union” but always “authority.” Indeed, Paul says that Christ is the “*head*” over “*all things*” to the church, just as he is head over the church (Eph. 1:23). If we understood “*head*” to mean “spiritual union” then Paul is teaching pantheism or saying Christ is in “spiritual union” with his creation and therefore the Creator and His creation are one and that is pantheism. However, natural creation has been defiled by sin and needs redemption (Rom. 8:22-26) and therefore Christ is not in spiritual union with a corrupted universe. Paul is merely saying Christ is the final authority “*over all things*” including His church.

Moreover, when the metaphor “*head*” is used with the congregational body, or in reference to the husband being “head” over the wife, or Christ being “head” over every man, or the Father being “head” over Christ, the object is never without its own head. For example, the congregational body has members that fill the role of “*the head*” or positions of authority over the congregational body:

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*And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* – 1 Cor. 12:21

*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...* - Acts 20:28

The wife has a literal physical head attached to her body. The man has a literal physical head attached to his body. Christ has a literal physical head attached to his body. Therefore, the term “*head*” is never used as metaphor for physical or spiritual union by attachment to the body, or in connection with a headless body, but only as a metaphor for “authority” over a complete body with its head.

Finally, although there are metaphors such as “*wind*” and “*invisible*” that express invisibility, and there are terms such as “*whole world*” “*heaven and earth*” that express universality. However, such terms are never once used to describe the congregation or used as a metaphor for the congregation. Every single term and metaphor used in Scripture for the congregation is by nature without the ability to convey either universality or invisibility. Every single one! These facts should be regarded as quite strange if the true nature of the congregation was invisible and universal! However, if the true nature of the congregation is local and visible then these things are very supportive facts.

### **B. Two Historical context Facts**

There are two historical and contextual facts that cannot be successfully denied.

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The first contextual and historical fact is that in all those epistles that deal with the metaphorical “*body of Christ*” the contextual “*we*” has reference to the historical readers of these epistles. Without exception, all of the readers are members of congregations that are like faith and order with each other. Hence, each body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27) is “*one body*” in number as well as one in kind. It is the “*one*” where the reader’s membership resides. Therefore, the contextual and historical “*we*” does not refer to post-apostolic Christians found within or without diverse denominations which are neither “*one*” in number nor “*one*” in kind.

The second indisputable fact is that in Romans 12:4 and in 1 Corinthians 12:12 the literal physical human body first introduces the use of the metaphorical body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13-26). Significantly, in Romans 12:4 the same historical and contextual “*we*” that is used in connection with the literal and physical human body is also used with congregational body of Christ.

*For as **we** have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:- Rom. 12:4*

The readers (“*we*”) all share in common one kind of human body wherein there are many members or body parts. How does each reader understand and apply this text? He applies it to the “*one*” body he possesses which is both “*one body*” in number (his own body) and “*one body*” in kind (the same kind that all the readers share in common with each other). He does not understand or apply such a statement to refer to “*one body*” that is universal and invisible.

Likewise, when Paul makes the transition from the physical to the metaphorical the same understanding applies:

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*So **we**, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* – Rom. 12:5

The historical readers (“*we*”) all share in common one kind of metaphorical congregation body wherein “*every one*” within that one body in number and one in kind are “*members one of another.*” How does each reader understand and apply this text? He applies it the very same way as he does the preceding verse. He applies it to the “*one*” body where his membership resides which is “*one*” in number as well as “*one*” in kind. Indeed, this is true to the historical context of the audience Paul addressed in the first century.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that in I Corinthians chapter five and chapter ten where the metaphorical “*body of Christ*” is used in the Lord’s Supper the contextual “*we*” is used when Paul is teaching the abstract truth common to all of his readers, but when Paul shifts to a specific application, he drops “*we*” and uses “*ye*” or “*you*” (in I Cor. 5:7-10 “*we*” and “*us*” versus in I Cor. 5:1-6, 11-13 “*ye*” or “*you*”; I Cor. 10:16-17 “*we*” versus I Cor. 10:19-21 “*ye*”).

The historical and contextual “*we*” of the New Testament epistles always refer to the readers who are members in congregations which are like faith and order with each other.

These two indisputable historical facts are completely ignored by universal invisible church advocates. By ignoring these factors, all practical application to the congregations reading the letter is also destroyed.

### C. One Body

Ephesians 4:4 says there is only “*one body*.” What is that “*one*” body? Many believe Paul is referring to a universal invisible body of Christ made up of all saints in all ages or at least all saints scattered all over the physical earth in all denominations. However, in the immediate context there is a practical application that Paul has in mind. In Ephesians 3:21, Paul tells the Ephesians that glory to God is to be performed in the congregation by Jesus Christ, and Ephesians 4:1-16 explains how God is glorified in the congregation by Jesus Christ.

First, there is our responsibility to glorify God due to the blessings that God has bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:1).

Second, in order for God to be glorified in the Congregation by Christ Jesus there must be a spirit or attitude of unity between the members of that body (Eph. 2:3). Third, this unity is designed to be a visible practical expression of unity as the words “*bond of unity*” conveys the idea of a bundle of wheat bound together by a cord (v. 3). This visible expression is then conveyed by the metaphor of “*one body*” (v. 4). Remember, the rules that govern the use of a metaphor restrict it to those characteristics found in the literal concept. Those bound together in a metaphorical “*body*” are members first united in a common attitude, as well as a common bond of essential truths in a practical working unity. This is what a New Testament congregation is designed to be. It is a visible expression of members working together in unity. The “*one body*” is the New Testament congregation body that the reader of the epistle identifies with. It is not only one in number but one in kind. It is the same kind mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:27 where it is specifically applied to the congregation at Corinth. In fact, this is



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the only kind of congregation body where it is possible that such unity can be visibly expressed in keeping with this context.

Third, for such unity to be obtained and sustained, not only must there be an attitude of unity among its members, but there must be some doctrines that bind it together as well (vv. 4-6). These are essentials for continued unity or function within any congregational body.

Fourth, the Lord has provided gifted men to the congregation as an institution to sustain this kind of unity (vv. 7-11). Apostles and prophets provided the foundation of truth – the oral and written Word of God. The evangelist first evangelized, baptized and then organized this body with the preaching and teaching of the Word. The Pastor/teacher became the leader in this body to mature it and equip it and stabilize it so that it is not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (vv. 12-14). Such unity comes with teaching, equipping and maturing the members to work together in love and unity so that every member is brought to practical working maturity (vv. 15-16). That is the only rational purpose if practical unity is the goal the congregation. The “*one body*” in this context is that body where the reader of the epistle resides and is being taught to work harmoniously with the other members who actually share these common characteristics. Indeed, no congregation can be formed or continue to exist without such shared characteristics.

Significantly, this “*one body*” is also found in context with “*one baptism*.” Water baptism is the only baptism promised age long continuance (Mt. 28:19-20). The book of Ephesians was written long after the baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost. Water baptism is always in conjunction with the local congregation body of Christ (Ac. 2:41-42). The entire sevenfold oneness of Ephesians 4:4-6 is involved in building New Testament congregations. The “*one baptism*” is the one that is administered by the “*one Spirit*” through

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human instrumentality (1 Cor. 3:4-9) into “*one body*” upon profession of the “*one faith*” in “*one Lord*” in keeping with “*one hope*” that was provided by “*one God and Father of us all*”. Which “*body*” is this? It is the numerical **one** where the reader of this epistle resides as a member. It is the **one** that is united by these sevenfold truths. It is the **one** where practical working unity among all of its members is possible and actual (1 Cor. 12:25-26). It is the **one** that is same in kind as “*the body of Christ*” at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27).

### D. Compassionate Body

*...but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. – 1 Cor. 12:25b-26 (emphasis mine)*

The above passage has no practical or possible application to any other kind of “*body of Christ*” other than the local visible kind. How can “*all*” its members rejoice or suffer with “*one*” member that is suffering or rejoicing if its members are scattered all over the face of the earth?

However, this was not only possible, but actually occurred between all the members in the local visible congregation body at Jerusalem:

*And all that believed were together, and had all things common. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. – Ac. 2:44-45 (emphasis mine)*

*And the multitude of them that believed were of **one heart and of one soul**: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had **all things common**. - Ac. 4:32 (emphasis mine)*

This was true of the congregation at Rome (Rom. 15:14). So this is not only possible for New Testament congregations, but has been attained by such. However, this has never occurred between the members of the so-called universal invisible body of Christ and neither is it possible due to the very nature of that kind of body. Moreover, by applying to the impossible, it robs the real congregational body of Christ practical instruction which that kind of congregational body of Christ may put into practice.

### **E. Organized Working Body**

*From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted which **every joint** supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. - Eph. 4:16 (emphasis mine)*

This description can and does fit many local visible congregation bodies now, and in the New Testament times, but it never has fit the so-called universal invisible congregation body. There have never been harmonious efforts between all of its members.

However, Paul praised the congregation at Thessalonica for their joint efforts for Christ one toward another in the local congregation body:

*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of **every one of you all toward each other** aboundeth – (2 Thes. 1:3) (emphasis mine)*

Paul encouraged the divided congregation at Corinth toward this same kind of unity (1 Cor. 1:10-11).

*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10)*

The doctrine of the universal invisible body of Christ has been the source of division and confusion but never unity.

### **E. Purged Body**

*Know ye that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. **Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.** – 1 Cor. 5:6,7 (emphasis mine)*

Preparation for the Lord's Supper is the subject discussed here in lieu of a publicly unqualified member to participate in the Lord's Supper (vv. 1-4). We know it is preparation for the Lord's Supper that is under discussion because the only "*feast*" kept by Christians where Christ "*is*" sacrificed "for us" as "*our passover*" with use of "*unleavened bread*" is the Lord's Supper. Paul later informs them that when the Lord's Supper is improperly observed

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it ceased being the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 12:20). Obviously, there was an impropriety being addressed in this chapter in regard to eating with such a brother (v. 11).

Just as Paul later tells them “*ye are* [represent] *the body of Christ*” so he tells them here “*ye are* [represent] *unleavened*” bread. That is, the unleavened bread used in the Lord's Supper not only represents the literal body of Christ, but it also represents the congregation as the representative body of Christ. There can be no question that the bread represents the congregation of Christ in the Supper, as Paul explicitly tells them this in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

Notice that the congregation at Corinth is represented by “*the whole lump*” and that when one of its members is purged out it becomes a “*new*” lump. Just as the removal of only one member can make it a “*new*” lump, so also the refusal to remove such a member can “*leaven the whole lump.*”

The only possible kind of congregation body represented by the unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper is the local visible congregation body. How can only “*one*” member leaven the “*whole*” universal invisible congregation body? How can such a congregation body purge out one of its members so as to be a “*new*” lump? How can such a universal invisible congregation body receive back such a person (2 Cor. 2:6)?

This can only make sense if the body of Christ is a metaphorical representation of the local congregation body, such as the one at Corinth.

Some stumble at this because of the use of the plural pronoun “*we*” in such passages as 1 Cor. 10:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. However, the answer is quite simple. Whenever Paul is using the metaphor abstractly or generically he uses the plural pronoun “*we*”

but whenever he makes a concrete application of this metaphor he always says “*ye*” and never “*we*.” Why? **As a general rule, all believers during the apostolic era were baptized members of such local congregations.** Therefore when speaking of this metaphor abstractly he could say “*we*” as it applied to all members of this kind of congregation body. But when applying this abstract teaching to a specific congregation he could never say “*we*” as he was not a member of that particular congregation body. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 he speaks of it abstractly and uses the plural pronoun “*we*” but in I Corinthians 10:20-21 where he applies it to the congregation at Corinth he drops “*we*” and uses “*ye*.” Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 12:13-26, he speaks of the body metaphor abstractly and uses “*we*,” but when it comes to applying it concretely in 1 Corinthians 12:27, he drops “*we*” and inserts “*ye*.”

### F. The Abstract Body

*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the congregation; and he is the Savior of the body.* – Eph. 5:23 (emphasis mine)

The generic and institutional uses of nouns are subclasses of the abstract use of nouns in contrast to the concrete use of nouns.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> What is the difference between abstract and concrete use of nouns? It is the difference between conveying a person, place or thing to the mind by conceptual instruction versus conveying it by experiential interaction through seeing, hearing, feeling, touching or smelling it with your own five senses. Abstract nouns are the common and normal means used by all teachers and writers for addressing a subject (person, place or thing) from a classroom perspective. There are several subclasses of the abstract use of nouns (generic, institutional, symbolic, distributive, etc.). Paul’s prison epistles were designed to be instructive to the readers about certain subjects, in such a way that the instruction would be applied to each congregation and individual reading his letters. The abstract use of nouns is a common tool used by Paul in all of his writings.

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### 1. *The Generic Use*

The generic use of a noun is when the noun is used in the singular with the definite article (the) but includes each and every individual of that kind or class (a noun singular in number referring to the plural)<sup>89</sup> For instance, notice in the text above that “*the husband*” and “*the wife*” are used generically. No particular husband or wife is being addressed, but rather, it includes all who fit those descriptions within their own individual relationship with each other. If the reader is “a” husband or “a” wife, it applies concretely to each as readers. No one would ever rationalize, that Paul must be referring to some new kind of universal, invisible husband, or wife, just because no specific husband, or wife, is identified. However, this is exactly the kind of rationalization used by those who embrace the universal invisible congregation theory.

Notice that Paul says “*even as*” the husband and the wife so is Christ and the Congregation. The contextual theme is submission to authority in the sphere of sanctification. The husband is the head over the wife. This does not mean that the torso of the wife has no literal physical head upon her and that the literal physical head of the husband is somehow transplanted upon her or organically united to her. No, the term “*head*” simply refers to authority. The context is simply talking about the position of authority in the sphere of sanctification. There is no spiritual organic union between the “*head*” of the husband and the torso of the wife. Likewise, there is no spiritual organic union between Christ and the torso of the congregation. Christ is in the position of authority over His congregation. Congregation membership has to do with sanctification not salvation. In salvation there is spiritual union between Christ and the individual believer (obtained by regeneration and justification) but the metaphor of the body is

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never used for that. The metaphor of a “*body*” infers unity among the members under the authority of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul tells them that the “*head*” of “*the woman*” is “*the man*” just as the “*head*” of every man is Christ. Again, Paul is not referring to a change in the physical anatomy of the woman or some kind of organic union between the physical head of Christ and the torso of the man. No physical head is being united to, nor transplanted upon the woman or the man. Neither is Paul implying that the physical head of Christ is somehow transplanted upon billions of male bodies. However, this is exactly the rationale used by those who embrace the universal invisible congregation theory when we say that Christ is “*the head*” of each of his congregations. They ignore that it is a metaphor for authority but literalize it and say that makes Christ a polygamist, or that it creates a monstrosity of many physical bodies all sharing one physical head. This is not only a failure to understand simple metaphors but a clear demonstration of abuse of metaphors.

Christ is the authority over every man just as Christ is the authority over every one of his congregations even as the husband is the authority over his own wife.

It is failure to understand simple metaphors used with the abstract nouns (generic, institutional, distributive, etc.) which results in misinterpretation of such passages as Ephesians 1:22-23:

*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the congregation, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*

Notice that Christ is “*the head*” not only to “*the congregation*” but also “*over all things.*” Universal invisible advocates interpret



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“*the head*” to be spiritual union between Christ and the congregation. However, this would teach pantheism as Christ is also said to be “*the head*” over “*all things*” as well.<sup>90</sup> If **spiritual organic union** is what Paul intends by “*the head*” then this would teach that Christ is in spiritual union with “*all things*” thus making Christ and creation to be one and that is **pantheism**. This is what happens when simple metaphors are abused and misused.

The metaphor of “*the head*” simply means **authority** and when the term **authority** is substituted for “*the head*” it makes perfect sense:

*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the authority over **all things** to the congregation, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.* (Emphasis mine)

He is the final authority over the congregation as well as over all things. Some still stumble at the second phrase “*Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all*”. The congregation understood in the generic or institutional sense, has reference to each and every one of His congregations, each of which are a metaphorical “*body*” of Christ. Christ is the final authority over all his congregations, as explicitly demonstrated in Revelation 2-3 where He addresses them as the final authority. They go about doing the work of the ministry in their own locality, just as Christ went about doing the work of the ministry when he was in his own physical body while on earth.

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<sup>90</sup> Much of these thoughts were borrowed from Charles L. Hunt’s excellent book, “*The Body of Christ: Separating Myth from Metaphor*” published by Grace Baptist Congregation Printing Outreach, Florence, KY in 2006

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What does it mean “*the fullness of him that filleth all and all*”? It refers to the authority found in His person and the extent of that authority. In regard to His Person the “*fullness*” (Gr. pleroma) of authority resides in Him because he is God in nature. The Gnostic used the term pleroma to characterize the complete attributes or *aeons* that made God to be God. They denied Christ was the pleroma but consisted as only one aeon. Paul is repudiating the limited view of Christ by the Gnostics and claiming he is the “fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). The extent of his authority (“*filleth all in all*”) is over all other beings and positions of authority (Eph. 1:22a). It extends over all things in this current world and the world to come. It extends to all things “*in heavenly places*” and on earth (Eph. 1:22). It extends over the congregational body of Christ (Eph. 1:23). It is expressed through the congregational body of Christ within the kingdom of God on earth. This is made clear in Matthew 18:17 in the words, “*tell it to the congregation*” in connection with the keys of the kingdom in verse 18. This is also made clear in Matthew 28:17-20 in the giving of the Great Commission. Thus the authority of Christ “*filleth all in all*” extends over all his creation, now and in the future and over all beings and positions of authority both in heaven and on earth. This authority is explicitly revealed “to the body of Christ” and in the congregational body of Christ by the preaching and teaching of the Word and commission given the congregational body of Christ (Mt. 18:17-18; 28:19-20).

Some still object to the generic use of “*the congregation*” in these passages because they never find plural **bodies** of Christ used in Scripture. They reason, if “*the congregation*” is used generically in such passages as Ephesians 1:22-23, then we should read of plural “bodies” of Christ, just as we read of plural “*congregations*” of Christ. However, this is a failure again to understand the restrictive use of metaphors. Remember, the metaphor “*body of Christ*” can only transfer concepts that characterize the literal

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physical body of Christ. The literal physical body of Christ does not have a plurality of **bodies** or **heads**, and therefore such language as “*bodies of Christ*” or “*Christ is the heads*” violates the limitations of a metaphor. However, the generic sense grammatically provides a way for this metaphor to be applied to each congregation without violating the proper rules that govern the use of a metaphor. Each congregation is a body of Christ with members in particular, just as Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 12:27.<sup>91</sup>

### 2. *The Institutional Use*

Another abstract use of “*the church*” or the church “*body*” closely related to the *generic* use of nouns is the *institutional* use of nouns. The only difference is that the *institutional* sense is somewhat broader than the *generic* sense due to its institutional application. The term “institute” refers to the act of founding, establishing, or starting something inclusive of its original founding characteristics and organizational structure or principles that promote a designed purpose or mission. The institutional sense encompasses all of its founding characteristics as an institution without demanding that every particular is true of each concrete case, but every particular is confined to that kind.

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<sup>91</sup> There is no definite article (the) in the Greek text in 1 Cor. 12:27. Literally it reads “Now ye are **a** body of Christ and members in particular.” The same is true in Ephesians 2:20-21 “*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.*” The congregation at Corinth is equally called “a” temple of God in I Cor. 3:16 as there is no definite article in the Greek text. The same is true in 1 Cor. 3:9 where the congregation at Corinth is “a” husbandry and “a” building of God.

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For example, we speak of the institution of marriage. Marriage was instituted personally by God in the Garden of Eden in direct connection with the creation of Eve from the side of Adam and personally brought to Adam by God with a stated objective or principles for their lasting union. All of these things are true of the original institution of marriage, however, not all of these particulars in the institution of marriage are true of succeeding marriages between men and women. For example, God did not take a rib from my body and create my wife, nor did he personally bring me my wife, nor was our marriage performed personally by God in the Garden of Eden. However, all of these things are true in the original institution of marriage and are the true historical heritage and basis for my own personal marriage.

Furthermore, God designed and instituted marriage to be representative of the relationship between Christ and His metaphorical bride. However, no concrete example of marriage represents that intent perfectly, although all marriages represent it more or less.

Likewise, God sent an unimmersed man to institute baptism as part of his ministry to make ready a people prepared for Christ to personally institute or form the congregational body of baptized believers. However, all who baptized after John were not unimmersed believers (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30) and neither is authority to administer baptism given in the Great Commission to unimmersed believers (Acts 2:41). So not every characteristic in the original institution of baptism is repeated or reflected in its following concrete administrations. Yet, every concrete case of baptism is based upon and has for its heritage all the characteristics of the original institution of baptism.

Likewise, it is with the institution of the congregational body of water immersed believers. Christ personally instituted and pastured the first congregation of immersed believers while on earth when

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he called out believers already immersed by John to assemble around him in a habitual manner (Jn. 1:35-53; Acts 1:21-22). In the institution of the congregational body of water immersed believers, he chose twelve members and ordained them as apostles setting them as the “*first*” gifted officers in His congregation (1 Cor. 12:28). Furthermore, he did not institute the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper until three and half years after.

However, in the concrete constitution of congregations throughout the New Testament, Jesus did not return to earth each time and personally institute them, nor command them to choose twelve of their members and ordain them as apostles in each congregation. Neither did such concrete congregations wait three and half years to partake of the Lord’s Supper. However, all of these things are true of every concrete case as an institutional origin and are the heritage in each case. Every concrete case that is organized after the pattern commanded by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 has that origin as its heritage.

When the term “church” is used in the institutional sense, it is comprehensive of all that characterizes its origin as an institution without demanding every particular is true with each concrete case. For example, “*the church*” considered as an institution was endowed with certain gifted men (Eph. 4:11) some of which made up its institutional “*foundation*” (Eph. 2:20). That does not mean that every concrete form of that institution has all of those gifted men within its own individual membership. It does mean they are part of that institutional origin and design. In regard to each concrete case, God gave “*some*” apostles and “*some*” prophets and “*some*” this and “*some*” that. However, all of these gifted men were given in the context of the church institution (1 Cor. 12:28). None of them are found outside concrete congregations of immersed believers. Some concrete cases receive more than

others, but all share them as gifts pertinent to that institution, and thus institutional gifts.

For example, as an institution the “*gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Mt. 16:18), but that is not true in regard to each individual church. What it does mean is that the congregation of Christ as an institution will have concrete congregations existing in every generation until Christ returns.

Teachers and writers frequently use nouns abstractly where they address the mind directly and attempt to describe, characterize or convey something by way of concept.

The apostle Paul was a teacher par excellence. When he wrote, he instructed his readers by the use of abstract teaching conveying to them concepts about marriage, about the body of Christ, about the home, etc. Some of these abstract uses are generic, institutional, distributive, collective, etc.

### **G. Baptized Body**

*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* – 1 Cor. 12:13

The above text is the most singularly used text by universal invisible congregation advocates to support their doctrine. However, will the overall context support their application of this text?

First, we will examine the overall context of the letter and then the specific and immediate context in which this text is found.

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Paul begins this letter by dealing with a specific issue that had divided the congregation at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10) into party divisions. This issue was the administrator of water baptism (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Because they were so divided over the administrators of water baptism, Paul thanked God that he had not baptized many of them as he did not want to be responsible for such division (1 Cor. 1:14-16). Paul went on to demonstrate that they had their priorities confused, as it is the gospel rather than water baptism that is most significant (1 Cor. 1:15-31). However, fearing that they would further divide over the particular preacher responsible for bringing them the gospel he went on to show that there was no basis for the preacher to brag or boast, but it was the Spirit of God where the power of the gospel resides (1 Cor. 2). In chapter three he directly deals with the division over the human instruments used by God the Holy Spirit in building the congregation at Corinth through preaching the gospel and baptizing them. In verses 1-4 he condemns them as “*carnal*” rather than “*spiritual*” due to making such distinctions and dividing over such human instruments. In verses 5-9 he directly deals with the basis for their divisions. First, he asks them this question:

*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?* – v. 5

Then he proceeds to give them this answer:

*but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.* – vv. 5-

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Paul makes it clear that these administrators of baptism all work under the leadership of one boss – God the Holy Spirit. Then, he proceeds to deal a death blow to their division over the various human administrators of water baptism by stating such administrators are all “*one*”, because they work together as “*one*,” with God the Holy Spirit:

*Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers **together with God**: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* – vv. 8-9 (emphasis mine)

Paul immediately proceeds to illustrate this principle by the fact that he was the master builder used by God to lay the foundation for the congregation at Corinth in verse 10.

Therefore under the leadership of the Holy Spirit these men were used by God to evangelize, baptize and form them into “*the temple of God*” at Corinth (v. 16).

Thus excluding the human instruments Paul tells them “*Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building...Ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*” (vv. 9,16) and later he will tell them “*Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 12:13).

What is his point and what is his solution to their party division over the particular administrator of their water baptism? It was God the Holy Spirit that brought them to faith in the gospel, and it was God the Holy Spirit that led them to receive water baptism and it was God the Holy Spirit that sent the ministers to them and the ministry together with God the Holy Spirit acted as one because they were under the direct leadership of the Spirit of God. This



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truth ends all bickering and divisions over particular human instruments used by God in their salvation and baptism. What was true of the congregation at Corinth is true of all New Testament congregations and their individual members, For under the leadership of One Spirit were we all water baptized into one kind of body, regardless of our earthly race or class distinctions and were made to partake of His indwelling presence that characterize all His true congregations as temples of the Holy Spirit, houses of God and the pillar and ground of the truth.

Now, let's look at the immediate context in which 1 Corinthians 12:13 is found. Again, we have a problem over division of spiritual gifts. They are ignorant concerning spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1). Previous to their salvation they were under the leadership of demonic spirits in their idolatrous worship services:

*Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.* – 1 Cor. 12:2  
(emphasis mine)

It is in direct contrast to this leadership of demonic spirits in idolatrous worship services that Paul proceeds to illustrate the difference between then and now. Significantly, the word used to make this contrasting parallel is the preposition “**by**” which is the translation of the Greek preposition **en** in verse 3:

*Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking **by** the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but **by** the Holy Ghost.* – v. 3 (emphasis mine)

When they were under the leadership of demonic spirits they could say Jesus was accursed and they could not truthfully say Jesus is Lord, but now in contrast, “**by**” or **under the leadership of**

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The Holy Spirit they cannot say Jesus is accursed and they can say Jesus is Lord. Hence, Paul establishes what he means by the word “*by*” or the Greek preposition **en** at the very beginning of this context. He means **under the leadership of**, or **by direction of**, or **by means of**, the Holy Spirit.

Consider the above in light of John 4:1-2. In John 4:1 the apostle says that Jesus baptized and made more disciples than John. However, in John 4:2 it is clarified that Jesus Himself never baptized anyone, but that His disciples administered such baptisms. That is, these baptisms were administered under the leadership, direction and authority of Jesus Christ. They are attributed to Him (v. 1) but actually administered by those under his leadership (v. 2). Jesus promised the congregation that He would send “*another Comforter*” or the Holy Spirit to them (Jn. 16:13) who would “*lead them*” into all truth. Like the first Comforter, the second Comforter would “*lead them*” in regard to the administration of baptism (1 Corinthians 3:8-9) and building congregations. Hence, just as the administration of water baptism was attributed to the first Comforter (John 4:1) but actually administered under his leadership by His disciples (Jn. 4:2) so likewise water baptism is directly attributed to the second Comforter (1 Cor. 12:13) but is actually administered under His leadership by His ministers (1 Cor. 3:8-9).

Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 3:1-16 established how the congregation was built as the temple of the Spirit of God. It was built by the “*master builder*” Paul and then built up by others but all under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. They worked together with the Holy Spirit as “*one*” in building this congregation as the “*temple of God.*” Hence, the congregation at Corinth was formed under the leadership, or “*by one Spirit*” whereby they were all water baptized into one body, one temple, one husbandry, one

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building, by that same Spirit. The emphasis on another Comforter is leadership.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12 Paul introduces the physical human body first as a simile (“*as*”) and then as a metaphor (“*is*”) for the congregation, just as he did in Romans 12:4:

*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 Cor. 12:12

*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:* – Rom. 12:4

Notice first of all that it is the physical human body that is first introduced in both passages. Notice the word “*as*” in both passages – “*For as the body is one*” and “*For as we have many members in one body*”. Second, notice that he does not use plural bodies when speaking of the human body but rather the generic sense “*the body*” (1 Cor. 12:12) and “*one body*” (Rom. 12:4) but with the plural pronoun “*we*” (Rom. 12:4). Now, does that mean Paul was trying to teach that “*we*” all share **one physical human body in common with each other** or that “*we*” all share **one common kind of physical human body with each other**? Obviously, he is using the generic sense with the plural pronoun “*we*”. Likewise he transfers this same generic use with the plural pronoun directly over to the metaphorical application to the congregation as the body of Christ in Romans 12:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13, as he explicitly says “*so also is Christ.*” That is, just as New Testament believers all shared in common one kind of physical human body with many members, they also shared in common one kind of metaphorical congregation body with many members as all of them had, under the leadership of The Holy Spirit, been water baptized into such a body, regardless of ethnic and class

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distinctions, and thereby made to partake of the special presence of the Holy Spirit, manifested in unity, in spiritual gifts and doctrinal and practical truth.

In the New Testament era all believers that Paul wrote to were members of New Testament congregations that were like faith and order with each other. This is the undeniable historical context of “*we*.” Hence, Paul could say “*we*” when addressing what they all had in common. However, when Paul comes to applying this generic truth to the particular congregation at Corinth he drops the “*we*” and says “*ye*” (1 Cor. 12:27) because he was not a member of the congregation at Corinth, but his membership was in the congregation at Antioch from whence he was sent out (Ac. 13:1-4).

This interpretation is the only interpretation that provides a practical solution to the division in the congregation at Corinth, or the division that might occur within any true congregation of Christ. This interpretation equally applies to division over spiritual gifts. It is under the leadership of the Spirit that gifts are to be exercised. Think about this. What does the Universal Invisible congregation interpretation of this text provide in the way of any practical solution for division within this congregation at Corinth or any other congregation????? Can the universal invisible congregation interpretation provide any kind of practical solution for division among its members? Name any time in history that such an interpretation effected unity among all Christians living upon earth, as described in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26? No, the universal invisible congregation theory has never been a source for unity, but just the reverse. It has been the doctrinal source for increasing division and disunity.

In closing, let it be noted that the historic Baptist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 among Baptists before 1680 was unanimous

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that this text referred to water baptism and the membership in the local congregation.

### H. Authorized Body

*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the congregation, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.* - Eph. 1:22-23

Those who interpret the metaphorical “*head*” and “*body*” relationship between Christ and the congregation to be an organic union in which Christ is the physical head and the congregation to be the physical body have a tremendous problem with this text.

Paul uses the metaphor “*head*” to establish the authority of Christ “*over all things.*” Hence, Christ is “*the head*” over all things as much as He is the “head” over the congregation which is His **metaphorical** “*body.*” If the **metaphor** of “*head*” infers organic union with the congregation body then it equally infers organic union with Christ and “*all things,*” as He is equally the “*head*” over both. However, that would teach **pantheism** making Christ spiritually united with “*all things.*”

Although spiritual union is a Biblical concept that is found in the doctrines of regeneration and justification, it is not inferred or implied in the “*head*” and “*body*” **metaphors**. Remember, the proper use of **metaphors** can only convey characteristics that are actually found in the relationship between the literal “*head*” and “*body.*” In the literal physical relationship between the “*head*” and “*body*” both are mutually dependent upon each other for life. If you cut off the literal “*head*” from the literal “*body*” both mutually die as one cannot be sustained without the other. To apply these

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metaphors to spiritual union would teach that Jesus Christ is as much dependent upon the body for spiritual life as the body is dependent upon Christ for spiritual life. The Bible does not teach such a thing.

Spiritual union between Christ and believers may be **metaphorically** expressed by the vine and branch metaphor. If the branches are severed from the vine, only the branches die, as the vine is sustained by its own inherent and separate life principle.

The **metaphors** of “*head*” and “*body*” merely convey the idea of final authority, direction, and leadership by Christ and submission to that leadership by the congregation. In every context where the **metaphors** “*head*” and “*body*” are found the subject is progressive sanctification not salvation.

What Ephesians 1:22-23 actually teaches is that Christ possesses final authority over “*all things.*” On planet earth His authority is visibly manifested in and through the congregation. The New Testament congregation is the visible expression of the Kingdom (rule) of God on earth and possesses the “*keys of the kingdom*” (Mt. 18:17-18) which symbolizes Christ’s authority. Jesus expresses this authority in the congregation when he said:

*Tell it to the congregation... Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. – Mt. 18:17, 18*  
(emphasis mine)

When authorizing the congregation to carry out the Great Commission Jesus prefaced it by saying “*all power is given me in heaven and in earth.*” On planet earth His authority is manifested in and through the congregation, as His temple.

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*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? – 1 Cor. 3:16 (emphasis mine)*

*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular – 1 Cor. 12:27 (emphasis mine)*

In the preceding context of Ephesians 1:22-23 Paul has just declared that God has set Christ above all principalities in heavenly places. The extent of His authority not only reaches in this world but the world to come. The present manifestation of that authority in “*this world*” is in His institutional congregation which is His metaphorical body:

*And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us—ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the congregation, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. – Eph. 1:19-23*

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## **EIGHT COMMON SENSE REASONS**

*Why*

*The Universal Invisible Congregation theory  
Is a False Doctrine*

### **1. It's theory contradicts its practice**

This doctrine is commonly preached and taught to be the Biblical basis for UNIFYING God's people in actual practice. However, in reality, even though it is common that several congregations embracing this doctrine are to be found in almost every small city throughout this country, and yet not once, has this theory ever been able to bring such congregations together as one congregation body/denomination even though they exist sometimes only blocks or a few miles apart. It simply does not work.

Surely if it were Biblical and if it were true, then somewhere at some time, it would achieve practical unity at least between the congregations embracing that theory, which only exist within walking distance from each other in the same cities????? In truth and in reality, it is a false doctrine that promotes only division not unity.

### **2. It promotes division and confusion rather than unity**

Without this doctrine there would have been no basis for the excommunicated Reformers (Luther, Calvin, etc.) to respectfully call themselves congregations of Christ. They would have remained simply excommunicated Roman Catholics or have had to come over to the dreaded and hated Anabaptists. This doctrine gave them a way to separate from Rome **and from each other** and has been the basis for countless numbers of such separations until this very day. Indeed, it is reported that there are now over 37,000 different Christian denominations in the world and five new ones are formed each week. This doctrine is the ONLY basis used for justifying the existence of each new one and thus creating further division and confusion. The character



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of this doctrine is seen in its only fruit – further division and disunity within Christendom. Its fruit manifests it to be a false doctrine.

### **3. It's advocates cannot agree on its membership**

Its advocates cannot agree among themselves who is included in this kind of congregation. *Dispensational* Universal Invisible advocates deny that all the saints living before Pentecost are in this congregation. Amazingly the distinguishing factor according to this theory is that all saints after Pentecost to the Rapture are “in Christ” and those previous to Pentecost are not “in Christ” and therefore the very gospel is attacked, demanding there is another salvation OUTSIDE of Christ.

*Non-dispensational* universal invisible advocates include all the elect in all ages but then contradict themselves by interpreting I Corinthians 12:13 as “*Spirit baptism*” which they also demand is the means to enter into their kind of congregation, when in fact, the baptism in the Spirit had no previous existence before the day of Pentecost. They have the problem of explaining how those saints living before Pentecost could enter into this kind of congregation one way and those after Pentecost another way???? One false doctrine can only lead and demand more false doctrines.

### **4. It includes what God commands local congregations to exclude**

New Testament congregations are commanded to separate from any “brother” who walks disorderly (2 Thes. 3:6) or who lives in openly known sin (I Cor. 5:11) and have no fellowship with such (2 Thes. 3:14). New Testament congregations are commanded to mark and avoid heretics (Rom. 16:17). However, what many refer to as the so-called “true” congregation embraces the very ones that New Testament Congregations are commanded to separate, mark and avoid. Yet, the advocates of the universal invisible congregation theory claim that the local congregation is the visible expression of it!!

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New Testament congregations don't receive into their membership unimmersed persons. However, the so-called "true" congregation receives unimmersed, sprinkled, poured or immersed persons into its membership. Yet its advocates claim that local congregations are the visible expression of the universal invisible congregation!

This theory makes God the author of confusion. According to this theory what God demands for membership in *the visible expression* (local congregation) is *not expressed* in the membership requirements of the universal invisible congregation. Only a false doctrine would demand such interpretations.

### **5. It can't be found in Congregation History before the Reformation**

If the so-called Universal Invisible Congregation is Biblical, then, why can't it be found prior to the Reformation Period????? Why is the very first recorded discussion on the nature of the congregation just a few hundred years after the Apostles completely silent about this doctrine? Nearly 900 preachers from all over the known world convened to discuss the true nature of the congregation and the idea of a universal invisible congregation never surfaced among them! It was the council of Nicaea in 425 A.D. consisting of over 400 Donatist Anabaptists and over 400 congregations that ultimately became the Roman Catholic Congregation.

Augustine led the debate for the Catholic and tried to introduce a new concept called the Universal VISIBLE congregation while the Donatists rejected it and accused him of teaching two different kinds of congregations, one that was local and visible and another that was universal and visible. In the Reformation the Anabaptist accused Luther of the very same thing when he introduced the "Universal INVISIBLE congregation" theory. If this theory is Biblical then why didn't those closest to the time of the New Testament teach it? Why did the Donatists accuse Augustine of teaching TWO KINDS of congregations if there were already two kinds of congregations (one visible another

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invisible)?????? Why? The answer is simple. It is because it is a false doctrine invented by the Reformers 1500 years after the writing of the New Testament.

### **6. It perverts the historical Biblical context**

It must be remembered that during the New Testament period, all congregations were like faith and order with one another and jointly referred to as “*the congregations of Christ.*” The contextual “*we*” found in New Testament epistles were united in the same faith and practice within the same kind of congregations. Therefore, it is a perversion of the historical and Biblical context to define or interpret the contextual “*we*” in these epistles as Christians divided into contradicting denominations. This is especially true since the contextual “*we*” found in these epistles are explicitly commanded to avoid, have no fellowship with, but place under discipline such brethren who establish another kind of faith and order or conflicting and competing denominations (2 Thes. 3:6,14; I Cor. 5:6-13; Rom. 16:17).

Therefore, in the context of the body of Christ and the congregations of Christ, the contextual “*we*” at the very minimum refers to Christians who were like faith and order existing in the same kind of congregations or what today we would call the same “denomination” of congregations. Yet, the universal invisible congregation advocates rip the pronoun “*we*” out of its historical context and make it apply to a post-New Testament era of professed Christians existing within conflicting denominations as well as inclusive of those who have no kind of congregation affiliation whatsoever. The truth is that the contextual “*we*” refer to all Christians who are members of the same kind of congregation, holding the same faith and order. The so-called universal invisible congregation theory is simply Satan’s tool to justify those who have departed from the faith.

### **7. It robs the New Testament Congregations of any abstract instruction**

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It is common for a Pastor to make the statement, “This morning I will be preaching on the congregation and its ordinances.” He didn’t say what particular congregation or what particular ordinances but it is a common abstract statement that is commonly understood to mean the kind of congregation and ordinances practiced by that very Pastor and congregation. Most admit that the epistles written by the apostle Paul were circular letters intended to be passed from congregation to congregation (Col. 4:16) for common edification of all the congregations since he was imprisoned and unable to return and build up each congregation. His letters are full of abstract language for teaching about “*the servant*” and “*the wife*” and “*the husband*” and “*the laborer*” and “*the old man*” and “*the new man*” and “*the body*” and “*the congregation*” and the list goes on. Such is common abstract language intended to instruct the particular person or congregation that reads it.

Yet, every passage where this same abstract use of language occurs, it is robbed from New Testament congregations and applied to something that cannot possibly make any kind of application of *practical* unity between its membership or *practical* assembling of its membership. Instead it justifies practical division and separation.

### **8. It promotes irresponsibility and disobedience to God’s Word**

The Great Commission is about making “disciples” and that very term necessarily includes discipline in New Testament faith and practice. The local visible congregation is placed in authority over its membership for instructive, corrective and if necessary purgative discipline (Mt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5; 2 Thes. 3:6). However, the doctrine of the Universal invisible congregation completely invalidates any kind of congregational discipline whether it is instructive, corrective or purgative. The disciplined person simply tells the congregation, “*I belong to the TRUE congregation and I can worship God upon the hill or at my home or go to another congregation of “my” choice.*” Such a person will leave and will either join some congregation that promotes their sin or they will meet in their home and start a new denomination to promote their sins. Yet, they will leave and justify their departure on the boast they belong

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to the “TRUE” Congregation that requires no accountability to anyone and in reality promotes disobedience to Christ. This doctrine is the safe haven for all kinds of apostasy under the guise of the “true” congregation of Christ.

### CONCLUSION

In reality the theory of a universal invisible congregation is the doctrinal justification of the Great Harlot of Revelation 17-18. She is the inclusion of all denominational confusion and division. God calls upon His people to “*come out of her my people and be not a partaker with her...*”