

The Body of Christ

Introduction

What is the Body of Christ? Is it the same thing as the Church? Perhaps this very simple definition will help to explain it. The Body of Christ consists of believers in all denominations from every area and race of the world who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Our Study

The Christian Church, which is the Body of Christ, was born on Pentecost, fifty days after Christ's resurrection. That was the day the Holy Spirit was given to the followers of Jesus.

The Birth of the Church

The Scripture: Acts 2:1-5

"When the day of Pentecost came, they (probably about 500 of Jesus' disciples) were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven."

1. Briefly describe the Holy Spirit's coming to the believers. _____

The Scripture: Acts 2:6, 12, 13

"When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language....Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'"

2. How did the people who heard react? _____

Peter explained that the day's happening was a fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had prophesied many centuries before when he said the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all people alike, whether they were rich or poor, male or female, young or old.

The Scripture: Acts 2:37, 38

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

3. What did Peter tell people to do? _____

The Church Grows

The Scripture: Acts 2:41

"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

4. How many were baptized that day? _____

This is the simple account of the beginning of the Christian Church. The Bible tells us *"the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

The Scripture: Acts 2:43

"Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles."

5. What characterized the Early Church? _____

Although you might think everyone would be excited and pleased about what God was doing, this was not the case.

The Church Spreads

The Scripture: Acts 8:1

"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."

6. How did the Church spread to Judea and Samaria? _____

Through persecution and later evangelism, the followers of Jesus became His witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth just as Jesus had prophesied. Everywhere Christians went, they took along their living vibrant faith. The Church grew until it encompassed the entire world.

The Bible teaches us that the Christian life cannot be lived in a vacuum. As planned by the Lord, it is to be lived in the company and close fellowship with other Christians.

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

7. To what does Paul compare Christians? _____

8. What is an individual Christian? _____

9. How did we become one body? _____

Our Relationship with Others

In this wonderful section on the Body of Christ, Paul explains our relationship to one another.

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:20, 22-26

"As it is, there are many parts, but one body....Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its part should have equal concern for each other."

10. What three conclusions do we come to from this section? _____

Discussion Question: Why do you think there are so many divisions in the Church today?

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

11. What kinds of differences are there in the Body? _____

12. The manifestations of the Spirit are given for what? _____

The Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13

"It was He (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

13. Why did Christ create the different positions in the Church? _____

14. For what purpose? _____

The Scripture: Ephesians 4:15, 16

"Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

15. Who is our Head? _____

16. What do we receive from Him? _____

17. How is this accomplished? _____

Growing Together

The Early Church seems to have understood this idea of fellowship better than we do.

The Scripture: Acts 2:42, 44-47

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer....All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together...praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

18. List some of the things the early believers did that expressed their unity and fellowship: _____

19. What was the result? _____

It isn't always easy to live together with other Christians in harmony and love, but the Bible tells us it's possible. In his letter to the Romans, Paul gives us some helpful tips.

The Scripture: Romans 15:1, 2, 5-7

"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up....May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

20. Summarize his main ideas in these verses. _____

21. Why should we do these things? _____

Personal Question: Can you truthfully say you do all these things?

Let us do our best to live in peace harmony, and fellowship with our fellow Christians, so the whole world will see us as one body - the Body of Christ.

The Answers

1. Individual answers
2. When they heard the disciples speaking in their own languages they were perplexed; some thought the disciples were drunk.
3. To repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins
4. 3,000
5. Wonders and miraculous signs
6. The Church was persecuted and the believers scattered.
7. A body
8. A part of the body
9. We were baptized by the Holy Spirit into it.
10. There are many parts but only one body/We all need one another/There should be no division in the Body.
11. Different gifts, different kinds of service, different kinds of working
12. The common good
13. To prepare God's people for works of service
14. So that the Body of Christ may be built up and we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature
15. Christ
16. We are joined and held together until the whole Body grows and builds itself up in love.
17. As each part does its work
18. Fellowshiped, broke bread, held everything in common, sold goods and gave to those in need, ate together, praised God, prayed together
19. The Lord added to their number daily.
20. The strong should bear with the feelings of the weak; we should try to please others, not ourselves, to build them up; to have a spirit of unity; to accept one another.
21. In order to bring praise to God.

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