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**Are We Building Barriers that Christ Has Broken Down?**

**Ephesians 2:14-22**

*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

When the apostle Paul was staying in the gentile city of Antioch, the gospel had grown a group of Christians there. The apostle Peter, a Jewish Christian who was not from that country, came also to Antioch. He was enjoying the fellowship with the gentile Christians until some other Jews came from their home country and saw Peter in fellowship with the gentiles. When that occurred, Peter withdrew and separated himself from the gentile Christians because he was afraid of what the Jewish Christians might do. What is important is to see how the apostle Paul, also a Jewish Christian, reacted. It is found in Galatians 2:11*—"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.”*

Why did Paul react this way? Look again in Ephesians 2 and you will see the answer.

*Vs 14: “He Himself is our peace, who has made both one,*

*and has broken down the middle wall of*

*separation”*

*Vs 15: “create in Himself one new man from the two, thus*

*making peace”*

*Vs 16: “He might reconcile them both to God in one body*

*through the cross”*

*Vs 19: “you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but*

*fellow citizens with the saints and members of the*

*household of God”*

*Vs 21: “in whom the whole building, being fitted together,*

*grows into a holy temple in the Lord”*

*Vs 22: “in whom you also are being built together for a*

*dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*

Peter was allowing his own background and national history to become a barrier to fellowship with Christians from a different culture. He had forgotten the prayer Jesus made on the night He was betrayed. Here is the important part: John 17:20-26: “*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

Paul was so bothered by Peter’s behavior that he speaks about artificial barriers several more times in the book of Galatians. We should read each one of these and burn them into our minds and hearts.

Galatians 3:26-29: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Galatians 4:6, 7: *“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*

Galatians 6:13-15: *“For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. 14But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”*

In many of his letters, you will find the apostle Paul making the same statements and preaching the same theme. Here are some examples:

Philippians 2:1-4: *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

**Colossians 3:9-15** —*“Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”*

These passages are also critical in understanding the idea that we who are Christians are to be united. Ephesians 4:1-6; Romans 10:12, 13; I Corinthians 12:12-14, 20, 21

No one can deny the statement of David in Psalm 133:1 *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

What are the barriers to unity? Here are a few things along with the scriptural answer to that barrier.

1. Language—What is the mind of God with respect to language barriers?
2. Read the book of Acts chapter 2 to see that God did not consider language a barrier to unity.
3. Let us also look in the book of Revelation to see what God has before His throne. Revelation 7:9, 10.
4. Culture—What is the attitude of the apostle with respect to cultural barriers?
   1. I Corinthians 9:19-22
   2. Philippians 3:4-8
5. Our personal preferences in politics, food, music, recreation, cars, houses, neighborhoods, etc.—What does the scripture teach me when I say “I like or I don’t like” and I use that as a barrier between me and my brother?
   1. Philippians 2:4
   2. Galatians 2:20
6. Our determination to hold on to denominational traditions rather than holding on to the Christ who is the One Lord, who brings us the One Faith, who is our One Savior, Redeemer, Mediator, High Priest, Sacrifice, Head and Foundation.
   1. **Matthew 15:3**—*He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”*
   2. **Mark 7:9**—*He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”*
   3. **Colossians 2:8-10**—*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

*“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross.”* (Ephesians 2:14-16)

How do we show this? I Corinthians 11:23-26 makes is plain. *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. 27Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

When we neglect participation in the communion or we partake in a spirit of division between ourselves and another Christian who has different personal opinions than our own, we are making a serious error against the Christ who died to bring us all into one body. Pray that we all might be one in Christ Jesus.

One: The Number of Unity – The Power of Unity

John 17:20-26

Jesus Prays:

* For all who believe in Jesus through the work of the preaching of the apostles.
* How many people is this today? 33% of the people in the world claim Christianity. This is 2.42 billion people. In 117 of 194 countries, the majority of the citizens in the country claim to be Christian.

Jesus prays for these believers “that they all may be one.” This is a plain statement that Jesus wanted unity among those who claimed to follow Him. He even explains the nature of this unity. He says the nature of the unity He wants is that people who name His name are one in the Father and the Son and that people who say they are Christians would have unity like the Father and the Son.

What is the reality regarding unity among those who say they are Christians? In 2001, there were 33,830 different denominations. Here is the number of people in largest of these groups: 1.3 billion Catholics, 937 million Protestants, 273 million Eastern Orthodox, 110 million Anglican (Church of England or Episcopal Church), and 80 million Oriental Orthodox. The rest are scattered throughout very small groups. Clearly, that is not the unity that Jesus wanted.

Why did Jesus want such a high level of unity? What is the goal of unity? Jesus explains it to us plainly. His first reason is “that the world may believe that God sent Him” (vss. 21,23). The problem is that when people see all the division in a faith that is supposed to be from God, they say to themselves, “something is wrong with this stuff.”

His second reason is “that the world may know that you have loved them as You have loved me” (vs 23). Jesus plainly states that the ability of the world to believe that the Father loved the people of the world the same way the Father loves the Son is bound up in the unity demonstrated by those who confess the name of Jesus. The less unity among professing Christians, the less the world is willing to believe the love for them described in John 3:16 is real.

So, we have to ask, “Is this level of Unity Possible?” The answer must be, YES, since Jesus prayed for it. The great question is *how* can this unity be achieved? The answer is found in the number of unity. Most people are not taught this in school arithmetic anymore, but another name for the number one (1) is “Unity.”

The New Testament has a great many “ones.” Let’s start with Ephesians 4:1-6: “one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, one Father who is above all, through us and in us all.”

Here are other *ones* in the New Testament. Pay attention to the common theme expressed in them all:

One Seed - Galatians 3:16 - Christ

One Redeemer - Revelation 5:9 - Christ

One Savior - Titus 1:4 - Christ

One Mediator - 1 Timothy 2:5 - Christ

One High Priest - Hebrews 4:14 - Christ

One Sacrifice - Hebrews 10:12 - Christ

One Covenant - Matthew 26:28 - Of Christ’s blood

One Lawgiver - James 4:14 - Christ

One Gospel - Galatians 1:6-12 - Given by Christ

One Way - Matthew 7:14 - Christ

One Name - Acts 11:26 - Christian

One Foundation - 1 Corinthians 3:11 - Christ

One Head - Colossians 1:18 - Christ

Can you see that Christ is the center of Unity? When we bring in others to be the head of the church, when we bring in our own denominational names, when we claim someone else is the foundation of the church, when we claim others can be mediators, when we claim others can save us, when we say there are other ways to be saved, when we claim other sacrifices, other redeemers, other lawgivers, other high priests, other gospels, or let other books and human traditions replace the inspired word of God, it is easy to see why people today say Christians are NOT in unity.

Why do we have all the division? Here are the basic reasons:

* *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.* *2And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.* (2 Peter 2:1,2)
* *But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (Galatians 1:11,12)
* *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*. (1 Corinthians 1:10)
* *Each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Corinthians 1:12,13)
* *You are still carnal (not spiritual, but of the flesh). For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 4For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?*

(1 Corinthians 3:3,4)

What is our function with respect to unity in our local congregation?

* To have unity in what is taught in the word of God.
* To have the love of Christ for each other.
* To have unity as Christ and the Father have unity and to have love for Them the way they love us.

In this passage we are studying, what does Jesus tell us happens if we become one?

* We behold the glory of Christ. (vs 24)
* We will be filled with the Love that the Father had for Jesus. (vs 26)
* Jesus will be in us. (vs 26)

What do I need to do?

* As one sanctified by truth, I will be determined to teach truth and not my opinion, not my likes or any human tradition.
* I will teach the truth in love and seek unity with all who love Jesus.

One: The Number of Unity-There Is One Body

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

As we journey through this study of Christ’s prayer for unity among all who confess His name, we come to the first element of unity listed in Ephesians 4. There is “one body.” What is the significance of this? What is the “one body”?

We know that when Jesus came to earth the first time He was given a physical body. Philippians 2:5-8 teaches us this, “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” Hebrews 10:8-10 tells us plainly the reason that Jesus was given a body. “*Previously saying,* ‘*Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’(which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* The writer explains that the death of Christ on the cross removed the first covenant and its system of sacrifices and replaced it with a new covenant having the death of Christ on the cross to sanctify those who believe in Him “once for all.”

Christ, having fulfilled the purpose of the body He was given, took it away from the earth to the heavenly realm. His physical body cannot be the “one body” Paul the apostle is referencing in Ephesians 4. So, what is the “one body”?

Consider that Christ wants a physical presence by which He can be seen on the earth. He did not design His kingdom with the idea that He as king would have no physical presence and be invisible on the earth. Our first clue is found in Romans 12:4, 5. *“For as we have many members in* ***one body****, but all the members do not have the same function, so* ***we, being many, are one body in Christ****, and individually members of one another.”* The writer of this passage is plain in stating that as Christians we “**are one body** in Christ.” WE, the collection of believers, are to be the ONE BODY. Paul makes this idea abundantly plain in his letter to the Colossians. *“And He is the head of* ***the body****,* ***the church****, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”* Colossians 1:18. He also states, *“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of* ***His body, which is the church****,”* (Colossians 1:24) There is no missing this fundamental teaching that on the earth THE CHURCH IS THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST. To further strengthen this idea Paul also says in Colossians 3:15 “A*nd let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in* ***one body.****”*

With all seriousness, let us openly declare that we have no doubt that the intent of Christ is to have all who believe in Him to be part of one church which is His body. We fully understand that in today’s climate, with the abundant denominational divisions that exist, this is a radical idea. We are not suggesting that every Christian in a city belong to the same congregation or meet at the same place. We are plainly stating that the idea presented in the New Testament is the church is to be ONE in UNITY as it is to be the ONE BODY OF CHRIST. Certainly, this doesn’t mean we all sing the same songs, have the same music style, dress the same, conduct our meetings in the same order, use the same language, or study the same topics at each meeting. It does mean that the intent of Christ is to have those who believe in Him united in one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, one Savior, one Redeemer, one lawgiver, one mediator, one foundation, one head, one covenant, one high priest, one sacrifice, one name, and one gospel. All of these are plainly stated in the New Testament, and if we would have these and these alone, we would be well on the road to the unity that Christ prayed for. We would be presenting a unified message, and in this unity we could win the world.

We can hear skeptics declaring that with all the diversity of human kind, this kind of unity cannot be the intent in the idea of one body, one church. Let’s just explore what is written, remembering that all scripture is given by inspiration of God with the intent that we will be completely equipped for His work.

**1 Corinthians 10:16, 17**—*“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ.* ***For we, though many, are one bread and one body****; for we all partake of that one bread.”*

**1 Corinthians 12:12-14** *“For as* ***the body is one*** *and has many members, but* ***all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*** *For by one Spirit* ***we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free*** *— and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.”*

**1 Corinthians 12:25** *– “that* ***there should be no schism in the body****, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”*

**Ephesians 1:22,23 —***"And He (the Father) put all things under His (the Son) feet, and gave Him (Jesus) to be head over all things* ***to the church, which is His body****, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

**Ephesians 2:14-16** —*“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that* ***He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross****, thereby putting to death the enmity.”*

**Ephesians 5:30** *“For* ***we are members of His body****, of His flesh and of His bones.”*

**Galatians 3:26-29** *— “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female;* ***for you are all one in Christ Jesus****. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

We cannot speak for others, but here are important things we understand we need to accept and do.

* We accept that Christ did not intend for those who confess His name to be divided into nearly 34,000 denominations, but that He intended for us all to be part of ONE BODY, ONE Church.
* We understand that this unity must be accomplished on the number of Unity, ONE, and to achieve this, we must accept, teach and live by the ONE’s in the New Testament of Christ.
* we must pray for this unity and reach out in love to all who confess the name of Christ and call them to this unity.

We sincerely ask that you accept the will of Christ and talk with the leaders of the church you attend and ask them to consider becoming part of the effort to bring true unity among those who confess the name of Jesus.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and* ***one Spirit****, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

As Paul continues with his list of “ones,” you may notice that he builds upon the previous “one” with the next. In the previous study, we looked at the unity of the body and how the Lord desires His church to be singular in doctrine, in practice, and in mission. Division among the body of Christ is detrimental to our personal growth with Jesus and the overall growth of the church. The inability to *“let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:5) contributes to this division. The lack of this Godly attitude leaves a void within the body of Christ where once the Spirit of God dwelled.

Most of us have probably seen pictures of the mansions in the hills of Hollywood or have driven past the Dominion and seen homes that take away our breath. More often than not, we wonder to ourselves: *who lives there?* *It must be such-and-such actor. It must be a doctor or a lawyer or a member of the Spurs NBA team.* As members of the body of Christ, we must ask the same question of the body: *who lives there?* This is what we believe Paul had in mind when he followed up “one body” with “one Spirit” (Eph 4:4). Since the body of Christ is the only aspect of our study where imperfect people represent a perfect God, there is great chance people could misrepresent His body. When you think about it, Christ never gets wrong being Mediator, Lawgiver, or High Priest. But unless His one body is home to His one Spirit, we run the risk of separating Christ’s Spirit from His body.

In ancient Israel, God’s instructed Moses to *“make an ark of acacia wood”* (Ex 25:10). It was to be overlaid in gold and equipped on its top with two cherubim which acted as God’s mercy seat. The ark was then set in the tabernacle of meeting in a place called the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place. Notice: one God, one tabernacle. It was there that God would *“meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of Testimony…”* (vs 22). This ark acted as God’s place of dwelling among the people of Israel. God’s presence was with the people of Israel where-ever they went. As long as Israel complied with the commandments and the will of God, they were blessed. Later, Solomon built a permanent temple in Jerusalem. Again, notice: one God, one temple.

Fast forward to the time of Ezekiel’s ministry. In Ezekiel chapter 37, he and God are standing at the foot of a valley of dry and brittle bones. God tells Ezekiel to speak to the bones and command them to put themselves back together. And they do! However, there is no breath of life in them. So God tells Ezekiel to speak breath into them, and the people who were once dead, stand on their feet and live! God explains to Ezekiel, *“Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live…”* (vss. 13,14a). This would have been mind blowing for Ezekiel. The same Being who parted the Red Sea, who swallowed up Korah and the rest of the rebels, who allowed Israel to defeat Jericho with just the shout of their voices, who made the sun stand in its place for 24 hours, THAT Spirit would live INSIDE people?! YES! The prophet Joel later prophesied: *“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh”* (2:28).

The prophesies of God’s Spirit being poured out and into people came to fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. After the Holy Spirit of God is poured out on the Twelve, Peter instructs the crowd of believers to, *“Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (vs 38). Therefore, it is upon our baptism that we receive the Spirit of God and are given entrance into Christ’s body. Paul further confirms this in 1 Corinthians 12:13 when he says, *“For by one Spirit we were baptized into one body.”* Remember one God, one temple.

God’s singular Spirit dwelling within the body of Christ gives the body life. He is the agent from whom all blessings flow. He activates us and animates us. He convicts us of sin and enlightens us. He comforts us and guides us. He makes intercession for us and reveals wisdom to us. He gives us courage and boldness. He gives us fruit to bear and acts as the guarantee of our redemption. He grieves with us and grieves because of us. He rejoices when we rejoice and hurts when we hurt. He is God operating in our lives. And since He is one within Himself (and in complete union with the rest of the Godhead), He wants unity from the body. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 says, *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.”*

We, as the body of Christ, act as God’s temple united together by the one Spirit of God. And we are like the mansions in the Hollywood Hills: big, bold, and beautiful. We are set on a hill for all the world to see, to be admired. When the Spirit of God dwells within His body, all the lights are on and Someone’s home. Because we have a tenant. The best tenant! And when people see the church, there should be no wonder, no question, who lives within the body of Christ: one Spirit.

Questions to Consider

* Why is so important that others see the body of Christ being led by one Spirit?
* How is the Spirit of God convicting me to bring unity to the body?
* In what aspect of my life can I do a better job at being one with the Spirit?

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Hope of Your Calling

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in* ***one hope of your calling****; 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

A common theme among people all over the world today is the idea of “HOPE.” You will hear people who are desperate say, “This is hopeless.” Others will be talking about hope the way the old song from the movie *Damn Yankees* says it. “You gotta have hope, mustn’t sit around and mope. Nothing half as bad as it may appear, wait until next year and hope.” Another part of the song says it this way, “We’ve got hope. We don’t sit around and mope. Not a solitary sob do we heed, mister cause we have hope.” Dale Carnegie said, “Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who kept trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.” George Weinberg said “Hope never abandons you, you abandon it.”

Oftentimes, the pursuit of a common goal, or “hope,” leads to competition and strife. We see two teams battle each other at the end of a season for a championship trophy. We listen to two people debate for an office in government. We laugh at the romantic comedy where two guys try to court the same woman with the hope that the other will yield. Some people wait hours and sometimes days in hope to be the first in line for the latest iPhone or the best seats at a Fiesta parade. The reason for this competition and strife is simple: there is only one prize. But that is not the case with the crown of life!

As Paul leads us down the road of unity, our next ***one*** is “one hope of your calling.” Here is the progression thus far: Christ possessing one body while on earth left a physical representation on earth after His ascension which is appropriately named the body of Christ (the church); the same way the body is kept alive through the spirit God gives it, the body of Christ is kept alive by the one Spirit whom gives it life; and that Spirit gives us the one hope of our calling – eternal life. This is a hope not just for one of us, but for all of us. In Ephesians 4:30, Paul says, *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* Earlier in Ephesians 1:14, he says the Holy Spirit *“is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession…”* So, the Holy Spirit is not only the seal, or mark, of our redemption but the guarantee, or down payment, of our inheritance of eternal life. It is this future perfection that gives us the one hope of our calling. Paul, when speaking of how creation itself groans because of its desire to be perfected once again, says, *“Not only that, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope”* (Rom 8:23,24a). There it is: one hope, the hope of redemption.

There are many places we can go in Scripture to find examples of someone in great suffering who continues to possess a hope in God’s promises; however, we believe Job to be the greatest of these examples. Job was a wealthy man of great importance among those in his community. But in one fateful day, he loses it all. One day, Job is informed that all of his oxen, donkeys, sheep, and camels are either stolen by neighboring enemies or consumed by fire and that the servants tending those animals are killed except for three. To make matters even worse, Job is later informed that all ten of his children, seven sons and three daughters, die when a wind blows over the house they were eating in. But his suffering doesn’t end there. Job is then inflicted with painful boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. He even has to endure his wife telling him to, *“curse God and die”* (2:9)! So how does Job respond to this suffering? Job 1:20,21 tells us of his amazing response: *“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshipped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’”* Later in chapter 2 verse 10, we see more of his amazing attitude through suffering: *“Shall we accept good from God, and shall we not accept the adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”* Did you hear that? “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” Astonishing! Even after all this tragedy, all this adversity, all this heartache and heartbreak, Job did not sin against the Lord.

Why not, you might ask? Because Job lived with a single hope.

*“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* (Job 19:25-27)

David, a great king of Israel and a man with God’s heart says this: Psalm 31:24— *“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord.”*

In Psalm 33:20-22 David says, *“Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in You.”*

A famous passage from Isaiah 40:31 shows the attitude of those who trust and hope in the Lord. *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

The prophet Micah in Micah 7:7 says this, *“But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.”* This is exactly the way we should have HOPE.

Imagine the absolute worse day you have ever experienced in your life… Really. Think about it. While we may not have gone through exactly what Job went through, it is certain that we all have experienced times of great suffering when the only feeling we seem to feel is pain. But like Job, we must live with one hope knowing that no matter how bad it gets in this life, no matter the circumstance or situation, there is always the hope of an eternal life with God the Father and His glorified Son. Paul confirms this, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18).

Have you ever thought to yourself: *you know what, I deserve this?* Perhaps we worked hard for a degree and we finally land that perfect job. Perhaps it’s a cheat meal after a hard workout at the gym. Perhaps it’s a long awaited vacation you saved for. *I deserve this,* you say*.* But this is absolutely not so with eternal life. Paul says that there is no amount of suffering that would make us worthy of the glories of eternal life. If we lived every single day of our life, from the time of our birth to the time of our death, in constant excruciating pain, even *that* wouldn’t make us worthy of one second in the presence of an almighty God. Paul tells us plainly, *“that at that time you 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* (Ephesians 2:12,13). Paul also shows us that what we go through is vital for our hope. *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Corinthians 4:17). Light affliction? But for a moment? Yes. Because those things are *“working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”*

The constant theme in the writings of the New Testament to Christians is that our hope is in the resurrection from the dead through Jesus Christ. Hear the Word of the Lord.

**I Corinthians 15:12-14** —*“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.”*

**I Corinthians 15:20-27** *— “But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”*

**Philippians 3:7-14 —***“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already* *attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

**I Timothy 1:1** — *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,”*

**Titus 3:5-7** —*“He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

**I Peter 1:3,4** — *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”*

This is the *“one hope of our calling.”* But the most wonderful thing about this one hope is that it isn’t given to the smartest or the strongest or the most skilled. We don’t have to battle another team or debate another person for it. it is given to anyone who is placed into the one body of Christ by the one Spirit of Christ. Considering the following verse from Paul as our conclusion:

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on the Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* ( 2 Timothy 4:8)

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Lord

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5* ***one Lord****, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

The American patriots who founded this nation had a dim view of anyone who claimed to be a lord. From the beginning it was decided that we would have no royalty, no lords. The actual attitude among those who accomplished the American revolution was that they would rather die standing on their feet than be forced to serve on their knees. Our current governmental systems are based on the idea that our rulers are supposed to be servants of the people, “public” servants. We have a hard time with those who want to be authoritarian and today, we do not have a true understanding of the idea of someone being a “Lord.” What is interesting is that those who founded this country did have a good understanding of what is meant to have Jesus as their Lord. Our nation needs to return to that understanding.

We get a chance to peek in the window of the home of Cornelius who was hosting Peter with the intent of learning from Peter how to serve God. This story is told in Acts 10. In verse thirty-six (36) we find Peter declaring to Cornelius that God originally sent *“the word to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ-He is LORD OF ALL.”* This bold statement shows how seriously the church took the idea of the Lordship of Jesus considering that Peter is making it to an officer in Roman army whose absolute conviction was that Caesar was the Lord of all. Peter is violating the Roman political authority in naming Jesus as “Lord of all.” In that day and time, Peter could have been arrested and put to death for claiming there was an authority above Caesar.

How is the word “lord” used in the New Testament? It is used for people in authority, but this word “Lord” is used for Jesus in all the books of the New Testament except for I, III John. Every time it used for Jesus, it used to acknowledge Him as deity, as God. The title “Lord” as given to the Savior in its full significance rests upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and is realized only in the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Consider when Peter is preaching the first gospel sermon of hope in Jesus Christ that Peter emphasizes the resurrection by declaring that the grave could not hold Jesus and that this fact declares to the hearers, *“God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ* (Acts 2:36)*.”* Paul the apostle regularly shows the Lordship of Jesus being tied to His resurrection from the dead. In Romans 10:9 Paul declares, “*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”* Later in Romans 14:9 Paul states, *“For to this end Christ died and rose and live again, that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*” Finally, Paul ties the Lordship of Jesus to the testimony of the Holy Spirit when he states, *“No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”* (I Corinthians 12:3)

* It is important to look at the actual definition of the word “Lord” and what is the intent of this title. First, “Lord” signifies “having power or authority.” Jesus clearly claims this when He states to the apostles *“all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Me.”* (Matthew 28:18).
* The word “Lord” also signifies one who possesses “supreme authority.” In Mark 3:15 Jesus shows this authority by giving to the apostles *“power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.”* In John 10:17,18 Jesus declares this authority when He says, *“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”* As we saw earlier, Peter makes this declaration about Jesus, “*He is Lord of all*.” The ultimate declaration of Jesus being the One with supreme authority is found in Revelation 19:16 *“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. “*
* This word, Lord, signifies one to whom service is due under any circumstances. Luke 9:57-62 tells this story: *Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God. "And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. "But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* Luke 14:26-33 show how serious Jesus is in expecting our service under any circumstances. *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”* Significantly, Luke uses the word “Lord” for Jesus about 80 times.
* Lord also means “emperor or king.” Matthew 2:2 records that when the wise men came to Jerusalem looking for the baby Jesus they asked *“where is He who is born king of the Jews.”*

Paul tells Timothy, *“However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”* (1 Timothy 1:16-17) He also tells Timothy *“that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords”* (1 Timothy 6:14-15).

* “Lord” in the Hebrew language means Jehovah God. John emphasizes this in his gospel when he uses the name of God, “I Am” with respect to Jesus about 60 times. In John 8:58 John records Jesus as saying, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."*
* Finally, the word Lord carries the meaning of someone being “the head.” This is clearly stated about Jesus in Colossians 1:18 when Paul says, *“He is the Head of the body the church.”*

It is plain from all these scriptures that the “One Lord” that Paul the apostle is talking about is Jesus Christ. He indeed is Lord of all and Lord of lords. The question we have to answer is how does having “one Lord” bring about unity? This is simple isn’t it? With only one Lord for us to answer to and be responsible to, we never have divided authority. We never have two voices telling us what to do and being faced with those voices telling us different things. We have one set of standards for the church and for our lives.

What then is our response? We can surrender and stop fighting the authority of our Lord. We can obey. Hebrews 5:9 declares that Christ *“is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him.”* What a shame it would be to be told by Christ on the day of judgment that we are left out of the heavenly realm because we did not obey Him. Recognize this. We can have all the unity teachings, but if we don’t live in the righteousness, holiness and the love Jesus tells us to have, we have missed the whole point of the “unity of Spirit in the bond of peace.” Philippians 2:9-11 sums it all up—"*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

May we all fully appreciate this “One Lord” in our quest for unity among those who confess the name of Jesus.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Faith

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord,* ***one faith****, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Ask people today the question, “What is your faith?’ and you likely will receive a multitude of answers. The response may be atheist, Sikh, Buddhist, Bahai, Hindu, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Mormon, and thousands of other options. Ask people who say they believe in Jesus and you can get as many as 35,000 different answers. Another answer people will give you is that “faith” is a personal issue and their relationship with God is their own business. The response Paul the apostle would give to all these statements is basically this: There is only one response that is correct, and you and I do not get to decide which one it is. God calls us to have the ONE FAITH He designed and specifies it for us who want to have the eternal life He offers us. Thus, the objective of this message is to discern what the plainly stated will of God is with respect to the idea that there is “ONE FAITH.”

As we have seen, Paul purposefully builds upon the previous “one” in Ephesians 4 while methodically progressing his way through the Godhead. In the same way the Godhead works separately yet together, each verse of this passage serves its own purpose, yet relies on the other verses to be complete in its meaning. In the last lesson, we looked at how Jesus assumes every role and accepts all responsibility of one who is to be *“King of kings and Lord of lords”* (1 Timothy 6:15). His death on the cross allows Him the privilege of such a position. Since Jesus is Lord, He owns the exclusive right to have the first and last word in everything, including the facts, teachings, and standards in which we believe, more commonly referred to as *the faith.* Thus, we have the seamless transition from *one Lord* to *one faith*.

The struggle to accept *one faith* can be easily eliminated if one will consider this: if anything takes the focus away from Jesus, it cannot be a part of the faith. In Colossians 1:18b, Paul makes an open declaration *“that in all things He may have the preeminence.”* Consider this verse also - *“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2). Notice that in these two verses, Jesus has the preeminence. He is the focus. So, if the source of salvation for any given belief is someone or something other than Jesus, then it cannot be a part of that ***one faith*** since His preeminence is robbed away from Him and given to someone else. Looking deeper into our Hebrews passage, we also see that Jesus authored and finished the faith in which we believe, meaning if anything is added to, taken away from, or changed concerning that faith, it cannot be from Him. Why? Because in those cases, the author of the faith is no longer Jesus. This again takes away His preeminence; furthermore, whoever adds to, takes away from, or changes anything concerning the faith actually usurps Jesus’ role as finisher of the faith by implying that He made an error in the very faith which He authored. Can you imagine someone going up to a famous author and saying, “Excuse me. I know you wrote this book, but you got it wrong. Here’s what you really meant to say.”? Not in a million years! Paul understood this. When addressing false teaching that had made its way through the churches in Galatia, he says: “*6I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. 11But I make know to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12For I neither received it from man nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*(Galatians 1:6-12) Paul was certain that what he received from Jesus by direct revelation was ***exactly***what Jesus wanted him to preach. And he was also certain that if he, or anyone else, taught anything other than what Jesus had told him to preach, he or they should be accursed since that teaching would not have come from the author and finisher of the faith.

Let us use an example in math. Pretend that you are a first grader and you come upon three math problems with the answers. You see: 1 + 1 = 0; 1 + 1 = 2; 1 + 1 = 3. Before you work out the answer, you ask yourself: can they all be wrong? The answer to this is yes. They absolutely *can be* all wrong. (In this example, they are not.) However, as you work out the answers, you quickly realize something very important. While the chance that they may all be wrong exists, it is an impossibility that they can all be right. There is only ONE answer for 1 + 1…2. The same way there is only *one faith*.

We believe that God has plainly revealed the “one faith” in the scriptures, that is the “Bible.” It is stated in this way: 2 Timothy 3:14-17*—"14But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* Notice that Paul directly says that the scriptures “are able to make us wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Paul repeats this in Romans 10:17*—"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Our confidence in the idea that the scriptures plainly reveal the “one faith” is bolstered by the statement of Jesus in John 14:6—"*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* Notice that He says that He is “the way” and not “a way.” Notice also, that no one goes to the Father except through Him. There are not many ways to get to heaven. **There is only one way: through Jesus**. When speaking of Jesus, Peter says, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). If you believe that the source of salvation is Jesus, then you have your faith in the right Person and have half the equation correct.

The current thinking among people today is that God provides many different paths to redemption so that each person can find the one that appeals to them. Another twist on this thinking is that God provided one way for the Jews to be saved and another way for the Gentiles to be saved. Notice that both of these ideas have God accommodating mankind rather than mankind being in submission to the one Lord. What do the scripture say about this? Let us recall that the title of this message states there is “one faith” and our text plainly states there is “one faith.” There is more. Jude 3 has a succinct statement we should heed. “*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” Jude is plain, we have a common salvation and we are to contend for THE FAITH which was once for all delivered to the saints. Paul the apostle addresses the idea of there being different ways for people to be saved as well. In Galatians 3:26-28 we find this: “*26For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Notice that Paul has only one plan for all whether Jew or Greek, “*believe in Christ and be baptized into Christ*.” This matches exactly what Jesus says in Mark 16:16, *“He that believes and is baptized will be saved.”* Paul says to the Ephesians, this: Ephesians 2:14-16—*"14For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”* Christ brought those who want salvation into one body through the cross. There is no hint here of different ways for people to be saved.” He repeats this in Colossians 3:10-11, *“10and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*” Three separate times Paul makes it plain that God brought all men together into one faith and made no distinction between us in doing so.

Here is a final note to the idea that the gospel was changed when the gentiles were brought into salvation. This idea being spread is that Jews to accept Christ needed to be baptized, but that when the gospel was spread to the gentiles, they did not need to be baptized because the gospel message was changed. This whole idea of the gospel being changed is debunked by Paul the apostle in the Galatian passage mentioned earlier. Let us review it again to be sure we are not missing the point. Galatians 1:6-9*—"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”* The scriptural evidence is plain in the story of the spread of the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile as revealed in the book Acts of the Apostles. You will find that the same message was given to all. Believe in Christ and be immersed into Him thus by faith sharing in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. See Acts 2, Jews, and Acts 10, Gentiles.

Jesus, being the true source of faith, tells us some important things. John 3:36, *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* The one faith involves **believing in the Son** and **in believing the Son**. John 6:29, *“Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."* The fundamental idea here is that the “ONE FAITH” is bound up in Jesus. God also made this declaration when the glory of Jesus Christ was revealed to Peter, James and John. Jesus is seen in His glory while talking with the prophets Moses and Elijah. Peter is really impressed and makes a statement suggesting that equal honor be given to Jesus and the two prophets. Immediately God removes Moses and Elijah and makes this statement: *“This is my beloved Son in who I am well pleased. Here ye Him.”* Matthew 17:1-5

Having established that there is only ONE FAITH found in Jesus as the source and content, it now remains to see what this faith is about. Again, the scriptures are definite with regard to this. Let us let the scriptures speak. This is clearly stated by the New Testament writers. Here are just a few of their teachings to us.

**Romans 1:16,17**—"*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith*.”

**I Corinthians 15:1-4*—"****Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. 3For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”*

**Galatians 2:16-20***—"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. 17But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! 18For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

**Ephesians 4:11-15** *—"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —”*

**Colossians 2:11-13**—"*In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”*

**Colossians 3:1-4**—"*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”*

**I Peter 1:3-9** *—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.”*

What is the summary of all of these? The “ONE FAITH” is our confidence that salvation is through faith in Christ. We trust in Him to have paid for our sins. We believe He is alive by His resurrection from the dead. We live the way He wants us to live. Our faith must be expressed this way. We trust in the person of Jesus and we have confidence in His promises to us. Because we trust Him, we obey Him, believing He will not disappoint us. Make sure you get the “obey” part. Many people are teaching that believing in Christ means we simply believe that He is the savior and that He will deliver us without any action on our part. This is not the case. Our obedience earns us nothing, but we do not have real faith without obedience to Christ. We do what He says because we believe He will keep His promise to redeem us.

Hebrews 11:1 sums up the function of our faith in Jesus Christ. *“Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.”* NLT

Here are verses showing obedience to Christ is an essential part of the “One Faith.” Acts 5:32, Romans 1:5, Romans 2:8, Romans 6:16, Romans 16:26, II Corinthians 9:13, II Corinthians 10:5,6, Galatians 3:1, II Thessalonians 1:8, Hebrews 5:8,9, I Peter 3:1, I Peter 4:17

We must take every precaution to make certain that what we believe is what Jesus actually says. This is why it is so important to *“test all things; hold fast what is good”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If what we believe maintains Jesus’ honor and glory, then we can hold on to that belief as truth. However, if Jesus’ honor and glory are not preserved, then that belief should be discarded, since Jesus should have the preeminence in all things we believe. But believing the facts of our faith is not actually faith until we put into practice those things contained within the faith. Because the faith requires obedience, and obedience requires action.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Baptism

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5one Lord, one faith,* ***one baptism;*** *6one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

One of the biggest arguments among Christians today is whether or not one needs to be baptized in order to be saved. Some say that baptism is unnecessary and that it is “an outward sign of inward grace.” Most people who think this way will tell you to repeat something called a “sinner’s prayer” or simply “accept Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior.” The only problem with these statements and this way of thinking is that none of it is found anywhere in Scripture. Other arguments exist about infant baptism, the method of baptism, or even who can perform the baptism. In all of these cases above, we must humbly put aside all ego, all preconceived notions, and simply let the word of God speak for itself.

As we continue through verse five, it is astonishing to see the level of continuity found in Scripture. Paul does not miss a single beat building upon the previous *one*. So far we have “one Lord” – that’s Jesus, “one faith” – that’s the faith which Jesus authored and in which we believe, and now, “one baptism” – that’s the response of obedience to the faith. Any good student of Scripture should already see where Paul’s mind is – the Great Commission! In the Great Commission in Mark 16:16, Jesus states, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* In this one verse, we see that source of Paul’s thought: Jesus, being Lord, states that belief and baptism are necessary for salvation. Thus, we see the connection to Paul’s *one Lord, one faith, one baptism.* But this is not the only place we see faith and baptism working together toward a person’s salvation. Consider the following passages:

* Acts 2:37-41; Acts 8:12,13; Acts 8:35-38; Acts 16:27-33; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:1-5
* Galatians 3:26,27
* \*Ephesians 5:25-27 – implied baptism
* Colossians 2:11-13
* \*Hebrews 10:19-23 – implied baptism
* 1 Peter 3:21

It is imperative to note that having faith in Jesus always preceded the baptism of a repentant person wishing to receive forgiveness of sins; however, faith alone does not save. Hear what James says – *“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”* (2:24). To be fair, baptism alone does not save either. That is why faith and baptism must work hand-in-hand. Neither can be separate from the other. Looking back at our previous *ones*, I ask: Can you separate the body of Christ from His Spirit? Can you separate the Spirit from the hope He gives? Can you separate the Holy Spirit from Jesus? Can you separate the Lord from the faith which He authored and left us to believe? The answer to these questions is a resounding “No.” Each one of these truths needs the previous to build upon. So if all of these truths cannot operate separate of each other, how is it that *one faith* and *one baptism* can all-of-a-sudden be separate? They can’t!

Still, one of the biggest misconceptions among those who believe in faith alone as the means of salvation is that they consider baptism to be a work. They’ll say something like, “Well, Paul says in Ephesians 2:8,9 that we are saved through faith and not by works, and since baptism is something you do (a work), it cannot save you. Faith saves you.” In saying this, they miss a very important point about baptism: its purpose.

On the day of Pentecost, the apostles are given the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This outpouring gave these men the miraculous power to speak in new languages, heal the sick, and perform wonders. However, Peter does not use this opportunity to show off his new abilities. He immediately starts to preach to the crowd that has gathered around this amazing event. After his first sermon, the believers in Acts 2:37 cry out to the apostles, *“Men and brethren, what do we do?”* (We know that they are believers since this verse tells us that “they were cut to the heart.” Besides, a nonbeliever would never ask how to respond to the gospel.) Peter answers them, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (vs38). We will examine this verse further.

What – “*Repent…be baptized*” – Both are commands right in line with what Jesus Great Commission commanded in Luke 24:47: “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached everywhere in His name beginning at Jerusalem”.

Who – “*Every one of you*” – Notice that the apostles told everyone to be baptize and not only those who wanted to show an “outward sign of inward grace,” but the everyone is also anyone who can believe in Jesus, repent of sin, and respond to that by being baptized.

How – “*In the name of Jesus Christ*” – Again this is right in line with Jesus’ Great Commission – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Baptism in the name of the Godhead is the same as baptism into the name of Jesus Christ since “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9).

Why – “*For the remission of sins*” – This cannot mean anything other than the forgiveness of sins, or as Paul says concerning his own baptism, “the washing away of your sins” (Acts 22:16).

Result – “*You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” – The reception of the Holy Spirit certainly is a gift since He acts as our seal until the day of redemption (Eph 4:30) and the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph 1:14).

When – We know from Acts 2:41 that the crowd’s response was immediate – “*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*” There was no test or class or waiting period. Baptism was the immediate response.

Where – Anywhere there is a big enough body of water to be immersed. When Jesus gets baptized by John the Baptist, Matthew 3:16 says Jesus “*came up from the water.*” In Acts 8:38,39, we see both Phillip and an Ethiopian man go “down into the water” and come “up out of the water.”

So how does this all fit into Paul saying there is only one baptism? Simple. There is only one baptism that remits sins. The baptism that Jesus ordains is the only baptism that forgives us of sin. In Scripture, we see several different baptisms: the baptism of Moses (1 Cor 10:1-11), the baptism of John (John 1:24-28); the baptism of suffering (Mark 10:35-40); the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-12); the baptism for the dead (1 Cor 15:29); and the baptism of fire (Mark 3:10-12); however, none of these washes away anyone’s sin. In Hebrews 6:1,2, the writer to the Hebrews lists six things which he calls “elementary principles of Christ.” One of these things is “the doctrine of baptisms. The writer makes the point to say that we should move on from such rudimentary teaching as faith and baptism. He is by no means saying they are unimportant but that, as Christians, we should be passed the point where we need explanations of such foundational teaching. Yet, we spend countless hours debating whether or not baptism is essential for salvation when baptism into the name of Jesus Christ was taught and practiced without question in the early church. There should be no debate whether or not baptism is essential for salvation. It is!

We will conclude the lesson with this…

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance which means it was a person’s pledge of repenting of their sins. So, did it have to done by the hearers of John’s preaching? Absolutely. Consider this passage in Luke 7:29,30: *“And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.”* Notice that the Pharisees and lawyers rejected God’s will by not being baptized by John. That is why even Jesus was baptized by John. Had He not been baptized, then Jesus would have rejected the Father’s will and would not have been able to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). So, the final question is this: if the baptism of John unto repentance was directed by the will of God, how much more the baptism into the name of His only begotten Son for the forgives of sins?

One: The Number of Unity – There Is One Baptism

Ephesians 4:1-6

*“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith****, one baptism****; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

Christian baptism is one of the most plainly stated doctrines as to for whom, how, and purpose in the New Testament. Yet it is also one of the most debated doctrines with respect to the same three issues: for whom, how, and purpose. Our determination in this study will be to show clearly what the scripture says. This needs to be done since Paul is declaring that “one baptism” is part of the plan for unity among all believers.

Let us begin by reading a passage in Hebrews 6:1-3 that make this study essential regarding the “one baptism.” Here is the text: “*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3And this we will do if God permits.*”

We plainly see these ideas stated.

* We are to leave the elementary principles of Christ and go on to perfection
* We are not to be constantly having to discuss these elementary principles
* The elementary principles are:

1. Repentance from dead works.
2. Faith toward God.
3. The doctrine of baptisms.
4. The laying on of hands.
5. The resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal judgment.

Our concern in this lesson is the number three on the list, “the doctrine of baptisms.” Notice that this phrase is plural, i.e. there is more than one baptism included in the doctrine of baptisms. Do we have a contradiction here when Paul says there is “one baptism?” The answer is, there is no contradiction even though several baptisms are mentioned in scripture, because there is only one baptism that is relevant to us in the issue of unity. What we will do is look at all the “baptisms” in scripture and see which one is clearly taught as the “one baptism.”

Here are the baptisms revealed in scripture.

* The baptism of Moses
* The washing of the priests before entry into the tabernacle or temple
* The baptism of John the Baptist
* The baptism of suffering
* The baptism of the Holy Spirit
* The baptism for the dead
* The baptism of fire
* The baptism into Christ for the remission of sins

**The baptism of Moses: I Corinthians 10:1-11**

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3all ate the same spiritual food, 4and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

Paul the apostle describes an event in the passage of Israel from Egypt on its journey to the promised land. To escape Egypt, the people of Israel had to cross the Red Sea. They did this by walking the dry seabed beneath two walls of water and covered by the cloud of God to protect them. Paul says in this action that they were baptized into Moses. The point of Paul telling us this story is that the Moses was to give people the commandments of God by which to live. However, the result was that the people did not follow the teachings Moses gave them and they lusted after evil things, some became idolaters, some became involved in sexual immorality and some were simply big complainers. What happened next is that many of them died under the judgment of God. The warning Paul gives is that this story is written for our admonition that we should not let the same thing happen to us in our life. We need to remain strong in our Christian life walk.

As we were not involved in that circumstance, the “baptism into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” is NOT the “one baptism.”

**The Washing of the Priests: Exodus 30:18-21**

*18Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. 19For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: 20When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: 21So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.*

This laver of brass (bronze) was forty-five feet around and fifteen feet across. Basically, it was swimming pool that the priests used to wash themselves before entry into the temple. This was a requirement for the Levitical priesthood and does not apply to Christians. The washing in the Laver of Brass is NOT the “one baptism.”

**The Baptism of John the Baptist (Baptizer): John 1:24-28**

*“24Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." 28These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.”*

**Matthew 3:11-12**

*11I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

**Matthew 3:13-17**

*13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" 15But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. 16When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

We notice in these passages that John declares he needed to be baptized by Jesus and that Jesus had other baptisms to perform after John was finished. With John’s acknowledgment that his baptism was not one that came from the authority of Christ, we are confident that the baptism of John is NOT the “one baptism.” This is further confirmed when Paul found disciples that had received only the baptism of John. Here is what Paul says to these disciples and their response to what they heard. Acts 19:4,5—4*Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."  5When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Clearly Paul the apostle is saying to these disciples that John’s baptism is NOT the “one baptism” because they had to be baptized again in the name of the Lord Jesus.

**The Baptism of Suffering: Mark 10:35-40**

*35Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." 36And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 37They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." 38But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; 40but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."*

Two of the disciples of Jesus wanted to secure a place of honor for themselves in the kingdom of Jesus. They are still thinking of the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Israel. Jesus asked them if they were able to drink of the cup He would drink and to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized. They declare that they were able without even asking any questions. The reality is that they indeed shared in the suffering that was coming on Jesus as did all the apostles. Not all of the disciples of Jesus are killed for the faith, so this “baptism of suffering” that is inflicted on Jesus by the hands of the Romans, is the not the “one baptism” mentioned in by Paul in Ephesians 4.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: Acts 1:4-8**

*And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

John had mentioned that Jesus was going to baptize with the Holy Spirit (See Matthew 3:11). John does not know who will actually receive baptism with the Holy Spirit, so he simply says to the crowd “you.”

This passage in Acts shows us the first people who would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and the event is recorded in Acts 2:1-4. *“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* From this passage, we can see what happens when a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit. There is a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind. Divided tongues of fire sit on the recipients. All are able to speak in languages they that not learned.” The languages are named for us in Acts 2:6-12: *“because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs — we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." 12So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"”*

This baptism does not occur again in the story of the church until Acts 10:44-46: *“44While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.”*

These two passages in Acts coupled with I Corinthians 12:12-14 *(“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14For in fact the body is not one member but many.”)* are used by many to declare that baptism with the Holy Spirit is the “one baptism” Paul is referencing in Ephesians 4. We know for sure that baptism with the Holy Spirit is NOT the one baptism. Here is why.

The signs of the baptism with the Holy Spirit are NOT in evidence in any other case than the cases of the Apostles and the family of Cornelius. We know for a fact the baptism with the Holy Spirit was the result of the promise Jesus made specifically to the apostles that they should wait in Jerusalem and that while there Jesus would give them power. The baptism with the Holy Spirit on the family of Cornelius was done to show that Gentiles were eligible to be redeemed into the family of Christ without having to accept the law given by Moses. See Acts 11.

We have other evidence as well. In Acts 8, Philip the evangelist is teaching the Ethiopian Eunuch about Jesus. As they go along the way, the Eunuch sees water and asks Philip what was keeping him from being baptized. Philip told him he could be baptized if he believed. He confessed he did and was baptized in the water. See Acts 8:26-39. There is no evidence that the Eunuch received special powers that would follow from being baptized with the Holy Spirit, and indeed we are specifically told the Eunuch was baptized in water. If the Eunuch was to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, why did Philip teach him about water baptism?

Now let us go back to the conversion of Cornelius and his family. We have shown that the family of Cornelius did receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and this was recognized by Peter and those who were with him. However, when Peter observes that these people had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, what does he say and do. Acts 10:46-48: *“Then Peter answered, 47"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”* Oops! Cornelius and his family have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, yet Peter specifically **commands** them to be **baptized with water**. If baptism with the Holy Spirit was the “one baptism,” then Peter got this all wrong.

In both of these examples, baptism with the Holy Spirit is NOT the “one baptism” Paul is referencing in Ephesians 4.

What about I Corinthians 12:12-14? Pay attention to details. Paul does not say that everyone is baptized “with the Holy Spirit,” but rather that everyone in Christ is baptized “by” the Holy Spirit. It is really critical that we understand that we men are simply visible beings showing what is happening in the spiritual realm. We contend that when people are water baptized into Christ, the actual person of the Godhead accomplishing this is the Holy Spirit, and that we the baptizers are simply the physical hands doing the physical work, and that in the spiritual realm, the Holy Spirit is the baptizer.

What is important to know is that every group who claims that every Christian is baptized “with the Holy Spirit” also teaches people that water baptism is an important act to do. They give reasons not given in the scripture, but they clearly claim Christians should be water baptized. Why? If baptism with the Holy Spirit is the “one baptism,” why is there still a need for water baptism in the name of Jesus? Peter says so. (Acts 10:46-48) Thus, it is clear again that baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the “one baptism.”

**The baptism for the dead: I Corinthians 15:29**

*Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?*

Paul the apostle makes this comment when he is talking about the resurrection from the dead. His whole point in I Corinthians 15 is to give us confidence that we hope in the resurrection from the dead because Christ is raised from the dead. In giving this assurance, Paul references a group that believes that could help the dead have this assurance by being baptized for them. This is not possible for us to do for dead relatives or any dead person, because to be baptized truly, they must be able to confess the name of Jesus. This practice done by the modern day Mormons and other sects is NOT the “one baptism.”

**The baptism of fire: Matthew 3:10-12**

*“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry****. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*** *12His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

This quote is from John the Baptist in a sermon he preached at the place where he was baptizing. John plainly says that the Messiah would baptize in the Holy Spirit and with fire. There are lot of people who literally pray for Jesus to baptize them with fire. In all humility, let us say that is the worse thing that can happen to you. You can see from the references John makes to fire in the passage that being baptized with fire is not a good thing. Look at these. Verse 10 *“every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”* Verse 12 *“He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

Jesus is very plain about this Himself when He says what John said, *“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”* (Matthew 7:19)In Mark 9 Jesus says it is better to enter into life maimed than to remain whole in your flesh and be sent to hell. If you want to know that Jesus is serious about this, look at Revelation 20:15—"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” To put it in terms you cannot misunderstand, the baptism of fire is NOT the “one baptism.”

**The Baptism into Christ for the Remission of Sins:**

**Matthew 28:18-20**

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

These are that last recorded words of Jesus to the apostles in the gospel of Matthew. They occur after His resurrection from the dead and right before His ascension into heaven. These verses are known as **The Great Commission.** Effectively, this is the command of Jesus to the apostles to go and win the world. What do we notice from these verses:

* Jesus claims **all** authority in heaven and earth is given unto Him and he gives this command based on that claim. Remember we have seen in an earlier study that Jesus is the one Lord.
* He gives the apostles these instructions:

1. Go make disciples of all the nations
2. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
3. Teach them to observe all things I have commanded you (Notice this would include what Jesus has just commanded, i.e. go make disciples and baptize them.)

* Jesus will be with them always, even to the end of the age.

The immediate question that arises - is the baptism that Jesus commands the apostles to accomplish the baptism with the Holy Spirit? The answer is clearly, NO, the apostles were never given authority to baptize with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit baptism was a direct function of the Holy Spirit and man had/has no part in doing it.

We have a parallel passage in Mark 16:14-16 in which Mark gives an alternate form of the Great Commission. *“14Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* What do we see that Jesus said to do in these verses?

* Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.
* He who believes and is baptized will be saved.
* He who does not believe will be condemned.

Some who oppose baptism as the “one baptism” will say, “See, he didn’t say he who does not believe and is not baptized will not be saved.” The answer is, so what? The scripture says that if you do not believe you are already condemned. John 3:18: *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*

How did the apostles understand their responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission? The first opportunity they are given to preach the gospel tells us the answer. In Acts 2, we have already seen that the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This event brought together a large crowd and Peter was given the opportunity to preach to them that Jesus is the Christ as evidenced by His resurrection from the dead. Here is the story from the moment that Peter makes the conclusion of his sermon. Acts 2:36-41: *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."41Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”*

What are the plainly stated facts in this story?

* Peter declares that God had made Jesus Lord and Christ.
* Those hearing that they were guilty of crucifying Jesus were cut to the heart.
* They ask what they should do.
* Peter declares that they should repent and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.
* Peter declares that if they do this they will also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (From the lesson on the One Spirit, we know this is NOT the baptism with the Holy Spirit but the indwelling in our hearts of the Holy Spirit.)
* He did more testifying and exhorts them to “be saved from this perverse generation.”
* The people respond by gladly receiving his words and were baptized.
* About 3000 were added to the fellowship that day.

You have to be purposely determined to deny the evidence that on this day, that the apostles did what Jesus told them to do in the Great Commission, that the baptism was for the remission of sins, and the 3000 were not added to the number of Christians until AFTER they were baptized, in order to deny that baptism into Christ by the authority of His name is the “ONE BAPTISM.”

What do we see as the followers of Jesus continued the plan of making disciples? Let us follow the trail.

* **A great many priests**: Acts 6:7--“*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were* **obedient to the faith.***”* What action would these priests have taken that would make them “obedient to the faith?” From Matthew 28:18-20 we know they would have received baptism in the name of Jesus.
* **Samaritans and Simon:** Acts 8:12,13*—"****But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized****. 13****Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized,*** *he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.”* Notice how this matches exactly what Jesus said in Mark 16:16 *“He that believes and is baptized will be saved.”*
* **The Ethiopian Eunuch**: Acts 8:35-38—*"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture,* ***preached Jesus to him****. 36Now as they went down the road, they came to some water.* ***And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may.*** *"And he answered and said,* ***"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”*** Again, the Eunuch believes, Philip baptizes him.
* **Saul of Tarsus who becomes Paul the apostle**: Acts 9:5,6, 17,18: *“5And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." 6So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "****Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do****."* Acts 9:17-18: *“17And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and* ***he arose and was baptized.”***  In Acts 22:6-16, Saul, now Paul the apostle, is telling the story of his conversion. The thing we want to notice is that Saul being baptized as recorded in Acts 9:18 resulted from him being told by Ananias that he needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord. We actually see from this passage that Paul was baptized in faith. Acts 22:16 records what Ananias told Paul: *And now why are you waiting?* ***Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”***
* **Cornelius and his family become Christians**: Acts 10:44-48*—"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45and those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"* ***48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*** *Then they asked him to stay a few days.”*
* **Lydia, in the city of Philippi**: Acts 16:14,15*—"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God.* ***The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15And when she and her household were baptized****, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.”* We see again the pattern, the gospel is preached, Lydia believed and was baptized.
* **The Philippian Jailor**: Acts 16:27-33—*"And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31So they said****, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved****, you and your household." 32****Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house****. 33And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.* ***And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”*** This passage is a favorite of those who want to deny that the “one baptism” is part of the presentation of how people are supposed to respond to the preaching of the Gospel. The deniers like to use only verses 30 and 31 that record the Jailor’s question about being saved and Paul’s initial response to him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that Jailor when he asks his question knows nothing about Jesus. He is actually asking how his life can be saved. Paul uses the question as the “door opener” to introduce the Jailor to Jesus Christ. The text plainly tells us that Paul had more to say for it says, “**they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house**.” What was the result of that teaching? “**Immediately he and all his family were baptized.**” Pay attention, Mark 16:16 again.
* **Paul teaching the Corinthians**: Acts 18:8 *—"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household.* ***And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”***  Can we not plainly see the Great Commission given by the ONE LORD Jesus Christ in Matthew 28 and Mark 16 is being carried out under His authority by those who were given the commission?
* **Ephesian disciples who knew only the baptism of John**: Acts 19:1-5*—"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4Then Paul said,* ***"John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."5When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”***

Please observe the consistent pattern shown here as in all the examples. People were taught to believe and be baptized in the name of Jesus and by His authority.

If we know only what is revealed in all these conversion stories, if our hearts and minds are open to the plain revelation of the scriptures, we will understand without a doubt the “one baptism” is baptism into Christ by one who believes that Jesus is the Lord. What is amazing is that people who insist baptism is not part of the response to the gospel and teach people to say a “sinner’s prayer’ to receive Christ **have not a single example of anyone in scripture being told to say such a prayer.**

What is more impressive are the passages that tell us the purposes of Christian baptism. Here is the list. Let us look at them all.

* **Acts 22:16** *—“And now, why are you waiting, Arise and be baptized and* ***wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord****.*”

**Stated purpose:** to wash away sins.

* **Romans 6:1-6**—"*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?* ***3Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*** 5*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with****, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”***

**Stated purpose:** To share in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus. We are crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised to walk in new life so that we are no longer slaves of sin.

* **Galatians 3:26,27***—"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27For* ***as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ****.”*

**Stated purpose:** To be clothed with Christ. Notice that baptism is again connected to faith. Observe the plain statement as to how many people have put of Christ*—“as many of you as were baptized into Christ.”*

* **Colossians 2:11-13***—"****In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13And you, being dead in our trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,”***

**Stated Purpose:** **\***Circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, **\***buried with Christ in baptism and \*raised with Him through faith in the working of God, and \*being made alive with Christ are forgiven of all our trespasses.It is critical to observe that Paul the apostle who wrote this plainly states that baptism is “faith in the working of God.” This is a critical idea. No purpose of baptism found in any verse can be accomplished by man. All can only be accomplished by God. Mark 16:16 again.

* **I Peter 3:21***—"****There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism*** *(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*

**Stated purpose:** Baptism saves us, not because we are taking a bath, but to show we have a good conscience toward God. It saves us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do you see it again, faith (answer of good conscience) being part of our baptism?

There are four passages in the New Testament that clearly are discussing the purpose of baptism but do not use the word “baptism” or the word “baptize.” Here they are.

* **Ephesians 5:25-27***—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26that* ***He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word****, 27that* ***He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”*** When did this happen? Colossians 2:11-13

**Stated purpose:** To sanctify and cleanse the church, to present the church to Himself so that the church will be holy and without blemish. What is interesting here is that in this passage Paul is affirming the place of baptism in man’s redemption after the famous Ephesians 2:8,9 used by people to deny baptism is part of the process. People also miss that just before verses 8,9 in chapter 2, Paul says, *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,* ***5even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6and raised us up together****, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:4-7)*.* When were we made alive and raised with Him? Romans 6:3-6, Colossians 2:11-13

**What we should notice is that baptism is by grace through faith and not of ourselves.**

* **Titus 3:5***—"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5****not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,*** *6whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7that* ***having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life****.”*

**Stated purpose:** Remember how Paul teaches that we are saved by grace through faith and not of ourselves? Notice what Paul is telling Titus when we receive the “washing of regeneration.” **We are saved by his mercy though the washing of regeneration and not by our own works of righteousness, that having been justified by his grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life**. Plainly Paul the apostle is telling us that baptism is not a work of man, but the place where God is working according to His mercy and grace.

* **Hebrews 10:19-23***—"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22let us draw near* ***with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience******and our bodies washed with pure water****. 23Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”*

**Stated purpose:** The writer of Hebrews is showing how our high priest, Jesus Christ, makes us as priests to be able to be in the Holiest place by the blood of Jesus. The writer is contrasting how priests under the law of Moses had to be sprinkled the blood of a sacrifice and had to wash in the laver of brass to enter into the holy temple. **Christ enables us to enter the true temple by sprinkling us with His blood and washing us when we come to Him with a true heart in full assurance of faith.**

* **Revelation 1:5,6** *—"To Him who loved us and* ***washed us from our sins in His own blood****, 6and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

**Stated purpose:** **Baptism is the place where Christ is washing us from our sins** in His own blood.

Having shown that the “one baptism” is baptism in the authority of Jesus, there are still two other issues that people dwell on that bring division in the church when God wanted unity. These are who can be baptized and how are people baptized. Let us take each of these in turn.

**Who can be baptized?**

This plainly is explained by Jesus in His great commission. In Mark 16:16 Jesus says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” In the story of the Eunuch in Acts 8:35-38, the Eunuch after being taught about Jesus, asked what was needed to be baptized. The evangelist, Philip, tells him *“if you believe with all your heart, you may.”* Upon his confession that he believed in Jesus, Philip baptized him. Acts 2:38 says that baptism is for the remission of sins and must be accompanied by repentance. Infants and young children have no sin to be remitted and have no idea what it means to be repentant. Thus, they are not eligible for Christian baptism. This is not a problem for little children as Jesus states that the “kingdom of God belongs to them.”(Matthew 19:14). In summary, only those who have faith in Jesus Christ and who can repent of sin may be baptized into Christ. **Believer’s baptism is the “one baptism.”**

**How are people to be baptized?**

Current denominational thinking is that a person may be baptized by sprinkling water on the candidate, pouring water on them or by immersing them. Here is the scriptural reality. In the New Testament, the words for sprinkling or pouring water on someone are NEVER used for baptism. The only word used for baptism is the word that means immersion. Here are examples.

Hebrew 9:19 contains the word “sprinkled.” Here is the Greek dictionary with the word for “sprinkled:”

rhantizo (hran-tid'-zo); from a derivative of rhaino (to sprinkle); to render besprinkled, i.e. asperse (ceremonially or figuratively): (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.). **This word is NEVER used for Christian baptism.**

Acts 2:18 contains the word “pour.” Here is the Greek dictionary with the word for “pour:”

NT:1632 ekcheo (ek-kheh'-o); or (by variation) ekchuno (ek-khoo'-no); from NT:1537; and cheo (to pour); to pour forth; figuratively, to bestow: (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.). **This word is NEVER used for Christian baptism.**

Acts 2:38 contains the word for “baptism.” Here is the Greek dictionary with the word for “baptism:”

NT:907 baptizo (bap-tid'-zo); from a derivative of NT:911; to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism: (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006, 2010 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.). **This word is ALWAYS used for baptism**.

Those who deny immersion as the stated way to perform baptism are doing so to suit their own theology and are not truthfully representing what the Word of God says. Christ’s command of baptism by immersion is the “one baptism.”

**In summary of all we have studied here, Water baptism by immersion for believers in the authority of Jesus is the “one baptism”** **in Ephesians 4:1-6.** Accept it. Teach it. Obey the command of Jesus to make disciples and baptize them in His authority being sure that they believe in Him.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One God and Father of all

Ephesians 4:1-6

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6****one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

Throughout our study, we have been focused on the number which brings about unity: one. However, the number seven in Scripture has great meaning also. Seven usually represents perfection or the completion of something. We hear of the “seven Spirits of God” in Isaiah chapter two. Jesus makes seven utterances from the cross. John, the gospel writer, documents only seven miracles that Jesus performs during His ministry. Still, we see the seven churches in Revelation, along with the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls of God’s wrath and judgment. Is it a coincidence that this is the seventh *one* we will see? We think not. Because this *one* serves as the pinnacle of Paul’s entire thought. Because this *one* completes the theme of unity in our passage.

Up to this point, Paul has shown us the Holy Spirit’s work within the body of Christ and within the individual Christian. He has shown us the access to Jesus’ lordship through faith and baptism. He now turns our focus to the final Person of the Godhead: *one God and Father of all.*

In the context of Paul’s writing, the concept of a single god acting as supreme being over all things was a very foreign concept to accept, especially in Ephesus. Ephesus was still highly influenced by Greek culture (which boasted the sovereignty of twelve gods) and served as the epicenter of worship for a goddess named Artemis. Paganism ran rampant throughout the city at the time of Paul’s writing. There was a god for literally everything: the sea, the sky, the dead, the living, love, beauty, harvest, wisdom, etc. In Acts 17, we see that the Greeks were so rooted in paganism that they even built an altar in Athens with the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” in case they may have overlooked one (vs23).

The Egyptians were no different, and there is no doubt that pagan practices had infiltrated into the nation of Israel after spending about 400 years in Egypt. In fact, the people of Israel make a golden calf to worship in less than forty days while Moses is away on top of Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:1-6)! This is why the very first of the Ten Commandments God gives to Moses is – *“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me”* (Exodus 20:1,2). However, even though God had proved His power and might over the false gods of Egypt, Israel would continually be plagued with the worship of other gods.

In Isaiah 45:5a, God openly declares, *“I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me.”* Moses echoes the same thing when teaching Israel the Old Law: *“To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him”* (Deuteronomy 4:35). *“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one”* (6:4)! These are important declarations because they confirm God as a standalone Deity. This automatically puts Him in a superior position among all things because His omnipotence allows Him to be omniscient AND omnipresent. (This means that because God is all-powerful, He is also all-knowing and all-present.) God alone is limitless in power, infinite in wisdom, and uncontainable by time and space. None of the gods of the ancient world could claim that (not that they could) since even Zeus, the so-called god of gods, needed secondary gods to control what he couldn’t.

Paul spent a great deal of his time convincing his audience of the singularity and superiority of God. This is what Paul addresses while on a trip through Athens: *“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things”* (Acts 17:24,25). Further along in his ministry, Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, *“For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”* Notice, however, in this verse, Paul also speaks of God as being the Father. This is right in line with the thought of our main text.

As we continue through verse six, Paul not only speaks of the ruling nature of God, but he also speaks of the nurturing nature of God as Father. This should bring us all a sense of joy knowing that an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present God wants to be in a relationship with us. However, that sometimes is not the case. In an age when about 40% of all marriages end in divorce, and in a time when more and more couples are living together out of wedlock, the idea of a father figure is either completely lost or even looked as a negative thing. Some have been abused by their fathers. Some have been abandoned. So when some hear that God wants to be their Father, the immediate thought can be, “Nope. He’s just going to let me down.” But He won’t because He is *“the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort”* (2 Corinthians 1:3). Think about what all-merciful and all-comforting means!

God is the exact opposite of every bad father the world has seen. His love is endless, and it doesn’t go away. Romans 8:38,39 – *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Does that get you excited? If not, think about it this way: since the Father is all-powerful, He can grant us exactly what we need at exactly the right time. Since the Father is all-knowing, He understands our deepest hurts and insecurities and will comfort us appropriately. Since the Father is all-present, He can never leave us nor can we leave Him. Imagine a daddy who is *always* willing to listen, *always* willing to help, *always* willing to spend time with you. That’s the Father!

He wanted a relationship with us so bad that He was willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son so that He could adopt us as children. Consider these verses in Galatians 4:1-6:

*“Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave by a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*

In Romans 8:14-17, Paul says, *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*

Notice in the passage directly above that only those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. This is an important thing to understand. I am certain we have all heard someone say, “We are all children of God.” As much as it pains us to say this, this is just not correct. We are all creations of God, but we are not all children. In order to be a child (or heir), we must be led by the Spirit of God which means we must first possess the Spirit of God. Well, how do we receive the Spirit of God? As we saw in our last lesson, *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 2:38). It is only when we are baptized into the name of Jesus Christ that we are adopted into the body of Christ as sons.

Now, we finally reach the summit of Paul’s thought from Ephesians 4:4-6. We’ve scaled up the Godhead, starting from the Spirit in verse four going through Jesus in verse five in order to peak at the Father in verse six. We’ve seen how each Person of the Godhead acts independently of each other yet in complete harmony with the other. Seven points, through three Persons, to reach the number of our unity: one. And Paul, as if to almost say, “what goes up must come down,” doesn’t just end at the pinnacle, that is the Father, but allows us to pass through the Godhead once more in descending perfection: *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all.”* The Father, reigning from heaven, is above all. The Son, by means of His death, works through all. And the Spirit, dwelling within, is in us all.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One God and Father of all

Ephesians 4:1-6

Part 2

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6****one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

How many gods are there is a question that has answers like “no gods” believed by atheists and Buddhists to as many as 333,000,000 as declared by the Hindus. The idea of “One God” is the idea presented by and defended by the holy scriptures. The Bible openly discusses these ideas and is very blunt about the ideas of “no god” and “many gods.” Let us look at what the Word of God says.

The atheist declares plainly that there is no God. Arguments against God are many things like “you can’t see him” or “why do we have all the evil?” Most of the arguments against God are based on man’s determination to be his own god. The simplest and most profound argument for the existence of God is found in Romans 1:18-20—"*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”*

Consider the diversity of life and how it manages to procreate. Atheists that believe in evolution would have you believe that in the case of human beings that two distinct genders having organs that facilitate making a child together, with each having compatible DNA just happened to arrive on the scene at the same time and same place and understood how to mate to make a new child. Mathematically, the chance of this happening is zero, and if you really believe the evolutionary fairy tale, as the song says, “I have some ocean front property in Arizona and if you buy that I’ll throw the Golden Gate in free.”

Another obvious evidence of God’s existence comes from this. Suppose you find a children’s story book on the street. It is a collector’s edition with a beautiful cover. Inside, the printing is masterfully done and the story is really touching. Throughout the book are beautiful color illustrations and pictures. As you look at the book with all its complexity, it never enters your mind to claim that this book “just happened.” In fact, you would find that to be an absurd idea. Now consider the human body and realize that how it is formed is based on a very complex design in DNA. Millions of pieces of information are woven together to produce the human body with all its organs and essential components. The DNA design in our bodies is infinitely more complex that the most beautiful children’s book. DNA is literally our life’s physical story. Somebody had to write the DNA story in the first place and set it in motion to be able to replicate itself in a way that produces copies that are similar but with each new version, the story is unique. Now consider the 1000’s of animal species that have been on the earth with the recognition that each one has its own DNA story. There is no way this all have just happened. *“God’s attributes are shown in the things that He made.”*

The Psalmist David makes it plain how God views those who deny His existence. Psalm 53:1-3 states *“The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; There is none who does good. 2God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. 3Every one of them has turned aside; They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.”* David has it correct. The more men deny God, the more corrupt they become. The really sad thing is that the story of God’s creation extends to our planet, our solar system and beyond. All was designed to sustain man. Yet men deny the existence of a creator.

The other fallacy of mankind is that man can make his own gods. In the ten commandments given to Israel by God at Mount Sinai it is recognized plainly that idolatry is an invention of the human mind. In Exodus 20:1-6 we find this*—"And God spoke all these words, saying: 2"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3"You shall have no other gods before Me. 4"You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”* God fully exposes the truth that idolatry is from man’s own creativity *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”* God is very harsh about the idea of man creating his own gods and literally laughs at humans for doing this. Isaiah 44:6 God pronounces "*Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God*.” He follows this with a description of the creation of a “god” by man. Isaiah 44:13-20*—"The craftsman stretches out his rule, He marks one out with chalk; He fashions it with a plane, He marks it out with the compass, And makes it like the figure of a man, According to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. 14He cuts down cedars for himself, And takes the cypress and the oak; He secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. 15Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. 16He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire." 17And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" 18They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, And their hearts, so that they cannot understand. 19And no one considers in his heart, Nor is there knowledge nor understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire, Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals; I have roasted meat and eaten it; And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" 20He feeds on ashes; A deceived heart has turned him aside; And he cannot deliver his soul, Nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*

The Lord God Jehovah is actually laughing at the foolishness of men. “Imagine this,” God says. “Here is fellow who cuts some firewood, and he uses some of it to warm himself and some of it to cook his food. Then he takes the rest and carves an idol he declares to be a God. Then he falls down and worships the thing he created. He seems to have forgotten that this “god” came from a piece of wood used to cook his food. He actually expects it to help him and says to it ‘deliver me, for you are my god.’ He can’t even admit that he is lying to himself.”

What is very sad is that people who claim they are Christians literally create images of Jesus, Mary and others and fall down before them and worship them. NO AMOUNT OF DENIAL CAN CHANGE THE FACT THAT IF I FALL DOWN BEFORE AN IMAGE AND VENERATE IT, I AM COMMITTING IDOLATRY. The plain Christian teaching given by John the apostle in I John 5:20,21 “*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*” This caution takes a very real turn when we realize that the book of Revelation describes a time when a partnership of political and religious power will create an idol that all are called upon to worship. Participants in this new religion will be required to take upon themselves a special mark that acknowledges they are all in. This mark is called the “mark of the beast.” These events are described in Revelation 13 and 14. If you accept this mark and worship this image, you have given up any hope of salvation. It will be the ultimate denial of the work of the Holy Spirit to bring you into the family of Christ. We call on you to heed this warning. Christians are to have NOTHING to do with any idol or image and should never bow down before one. NEVER. Flee from any plan that promotes any image as something to worship.

The statement Paul makes in the Ephesian letter, he has stated other times. Here are some.

**Romans 3:30** *—“since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”*

**I Corinthians 8:4-6** *—"Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”*

**I Timothy 2:5** *—"*For *there is one* God *and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”*

We also see a significant shift in how God wants us to have a relationship with Him. In the Old Testament, God is called our Father only in Isaiah Jeremiah and Malachi. Here is a passage from Isaiah 64:8 that is included in the old hymn, “Have Thine Own Way.” “*But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand*.” In Jeremiah 3:19, God gives a prophecy now fulfilled in which He says, *“You shall call me, ‘My Father,’ and not turn away from Me.”* Malachi asks a very pointed question *“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?”* (Malachi 2:10).

How does this change as we move to the New Covenant? We are taught that God is our Father in every part of the New Testament except III John. Jesus starts right away in His sermon of the mount when He says “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* (Matthew 5:16).” He teaches us to pray, “*Our Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 6:9).” He tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the “*promise from the Father*. (Acts 1:4).” In II Corinthians 6:17, 18 Paul the apostle has God saying this to us: *“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. 18'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty."* This passage is important because it is very pointed in saying we are not God’s children unless we are determined to live in righteousness. The world promotes the idea that “We are all God’s children.” We are NOT all God’s children. We are all God’s creation, but we must be born again in Christ to be adopted into the family of God to be His children. God wants us to be His Children and He wants to be Our Father. We need to come to Jesus and let that happen.

In summary. Atheists—No god. Wrong. Idolaters-Many gods. Wrong.

Christians-One God and Father who is above all, through all and in us all. CORRECT.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Seed

Ephesians 4:1-3

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, 3 bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

God did not create man without knowledge of how man was going to behave. Having made us with free will, He planned and prepared for our redemption even before He created the universe in which we live.

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* – (2 Timothy 1:7-10)

*Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;**But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior.* – (Titus 1:1-3 KJV)

How was God going to accomplish this provision of eternal life to sinful men? Paul says in Romans 16:25,26 that it was a mystery that was revealed in Jesus Christ: *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith.* Pay attention to the fact that Paul says that God gave clues shared with all nations by the prophetic scripture. Why did God take this approach and not just openly tell the details of His plan? 1 Corinthians 2:7,8 gives us the crucial detail: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”* Paul is declaring that if the world really knew what God was accomplishing in Jesus Christ, they would not have crucified Him.

This brings us to the question of what are the prophecies that God used to give us messages that concealed His ultimate plan, but that also gave us hope. Let us start at the beginning.

When God made Adam and Eve, He made them in innocence. Neither had any sin and God limited the law they had to follow that would cause them to sin. Remember that “for *where there is no law there is no transgression”* (Romans 4:15), and that *“sin is the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:3).

Here are the rules that God gave to Adam and Eve:

* *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”* (Genesis 2:15)
* *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* (Genesis 2:16)
* *God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it.”* (Genesis 1:28)
* *“Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* (Genesis 1:28)
* *“And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.”* Genesis 1:29

Here is the summary: Take care of the garden, have a vegetarian diet, eat from whatever plant you want except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, have dominion over all the animals on the earth, procreate and fill the earth. Pay attention to the fact that the diet they were given to eat included the Tree of Life. This is a phenomenal gift, for it would have guaranteed they would not die. This set of rules was not complicated and should have been easy to keep.

What happened? Satan caught Eve in his tricks. He lied about God and played up to Eve using the basics of all temptation: the fruit of the tree of knowledge was beautiful – the lust of the eye; the fruit of the tree of life was edible and tasted good – the lust of the flesh; the fruit of tree of knowledge will make you like God – the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The lie Satan told Eve was that if she ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she would not die. The devil convinced Eve this threat was an empty threat from God. The result, Eve eats and Adam eats with her. God immediately cuts them off from the tree of life and their flesh begins to die. Because they had sinned, they were in spiritual death. They also brought death upon all of their offspring. Romans 5:12 says, *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men.”*

How does this all relate to the idea that God had planned for man’s redemption when man sinned? When God confronted Adam and Eve, here is what He told the serpent who was with them: “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel"* (Gen 3:15).Here God declares that there will be a battle between Satan and his seed verses the seed of woman. The seed of woman would bruise the head of Satan and Satan would only bruise His heal. Notice the idea of seed for the seed of woman being singular – “He.” This is the first of the mystery prophecies. It also says that in some way, a man descendant from Eve would come forth by the seed of woman. Man would be left out of this birth process.

We can trace how God gives clues to this mystery. Long after the flood of cleansing, Abraham, called the friend of God, is made a partner in the process. Look at Genesis 22:16-18: “*By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."* God made this promise to Abraham because Abraham, in faith, offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham trusted that even if Isaac died, God would somehow raise him back to life since He had promised him that Isaac would be the source of this special people who would come from him. Significantly, God was NOT interested in having Isaac die at all, but in determining if Abraham trusted God to obey Him. Abraham passed the test, and God made that promise that in *“Abraham’s seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.”*

As we follow the story, we find that when Isaac is an adult, God makes the same promise to him, this is, if Isaac would obey Him: *“And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 26:4). The path continues. We see Isaac’s son Jacob leave home because of conflict with his brother Esau. On his way to the country of origin for the family of Abraham, God gives Jacob this promise: *“I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you"* (Genesis 28:13-15). It is evident from God’s conversation that the mystery Paul describes as God’s plan to redeem man is bound up in the family of Abraham.

Many hundreds of years later after the people of Israel have been enslaved in Egypt, gone through a period of time without a king, God chooses a descendant of Abraham named David to be king of Israel. Before David’s death, God makes this promise to David regarding God’s kingdom: *“And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever"* (1 Chronicles 17:11-14). We can see the details emerging as we follow the Bible story. What do we know up to this point?

* The seed of woman would bruise the Serpent’s head
* The family of Abraham would the source of a blessing on all the nations of the earth
* God would establish a King over a kingdom that would last forever, and this king would be a descendant of David.

In Psalm 89:1-4, David tells of God’s plan to bring mercy never before matched and of God’s promise to David that his seed would be established as King forever.

As we follow the trail, we come to the prophet Isaiah who gives us more clues regarding the mystery of God’s plan. Here is the detail Isaiah reveals: *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good”* (Is 7:14,15). Look at the connections here: a *“virgin shall conceive.”* Remember that God said to the serpent *“the seed of woman will bruise your head.”* A seemingly impossible event will occur. *“A virgin will conceive a son who will be called Immanuel,”* which means *“God with us.”* Isaiah continues to give clues in Isaiah 9:6,7: *“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice. From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”* Of all the names given to this special child, there are two that are especially significant – Mighty God, Everlasting Father. These are names belonging to the ONE God and Father. Isaiah reveals more in his chapter 53. “*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all* (vss. 5,6). The whole chapter tells us this special Child that would be of the “seed of woman.” In Micah 5:2, God actually reveals the birth place of this special person: *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."* The Old Testament actually has dozens of prophecies that tell about this *“seed of woman”* who would bruise the serpent’s head.

Now we come to the pivotal event that sets the fulfillment of this mystery plan in motion. The story begins in Matthew 1:18-23: *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:* ***"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son****, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

We receive additional detail in Luke 1:26-38: *“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,* ***to a virgin*** *betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.* ***He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*** *Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her,* ***"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God****. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.”*

When this special Child was born, an angel told some shepherds in the same country, *"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people”* (Luke 2:10) Notice the emphasis that this birth would bring **great joy to all people**.

About thirty-three years after the birth of Christ comes His death on the cross. By His death, He takes away the old covenant given by Moses at Mount Sinai and puts in place His new covenant. How does this impact the world and what was the message given by the Holy Spirit through the apostles? We can see it plainly as we follow the trail in the New Testament.

Acts 3:25,26 – *"You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."* Here Peter plainly states that Jesus, by His death and resurrection, is giving the blessing promised in the seed of Abraham first. Peter also notes that this blessing will be given to all the families of the earth.

**Acts 13:22,23** *– “He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior - Jesus.”* Paul the apostle referencing the promise of God made to David about raising up a savior king that would rule forever, recognizes that Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

**Romans 1:1-4** *– “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”* Notice that Paul is affirming again that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the fulfillment of the promise God made to David about the King coming through David’s seed. Paul also states that God affirms this by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

**Galatians 3:16** – *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.* Pay attention that Paul declares that the one seed God promised Abraham is Christ. He emphasizes this by saying that God did not say to Abraham *“and to seeds”* but of one, *“and to your Seed, who is Christ.”* Paul further teaches us in Galatians 4:3-5 that *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”* This is a critical statement because Paul is recognizing the promise of God that the Seed of Woman would bruise the serpent’s head.

Why is all this so important? Return to creation. Before God made man, He, recognizing that man would sin, designed man’s redemption by purposefully planning to come in the flesh of man, so that He might live perfectly in order to be the human representative who would pay the price for the sins of all men. Look at the following verses and see how plainly this is stated.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19** – “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is,* ***that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself****, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation”.*

**Colossians 2:8,9** – “*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.* ***For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”***

**1 Timothy 3:16–** *“****And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh,*** *Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”* Remember how at the beginning of this article we pointed out that God had kept His redemption plan as a mystery? Here in 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul plainly reveals the mystery. God, through Jesus Christ, is the ONE SEED by which He came in the form of man to redeem us. Read also Philippians 2:5-11.

Scripture further shows us the contrast between the serpent bruising the heel of Jesus and Jesus bruising the head of the serpent. Let us read Hebrews 2:14,15 *–“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same****, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.****”*The devil bruised the heel of Jesus by causing Christ to be crucified. What was the result of Satan’s effort in using death to try and conquer “The Seed?” It was wasted because Christ arose! By His resurrection, He bruised the devil’s head, literally destroying the devil and releasing all, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. If you are afraid to die, it is important for you to examine what hope you actually have in Jesus. Do not let the devil keep you in bondage.

Grasp this. The God that created us also died for us through Jesus Christ to pay for our sins so that we can have the eternal life and innocence that He always wanted us to have.

Here is a passage from the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Revelation 20:12-15 *– "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”* The great and most important question for you is this: is my name written in the book of life? If you are not depending your redemption on the “ONE SEED,” you are in serious trouble.

How does the “One Seed” bring unity for us?

* Knowing that we were redeemed by One Seed assures us that **we were redeemed the right way by the right person.**
* Knowing that the One Seed was perfect in His flesh **gives us all the same perfect example to follow.**
* Knowing that the One Seed was actually God reconciling us to Himself **gives us a love we can extend to others.**

Please take advantage of the plan of eternal life God created for you before time began.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Redeemer

1 Peter 1:18,19

*“Knowing that* ***you were not redeemed with corruptible things****, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,****but with the precious blood of Christ****, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

In our last lesson, we learned that God made promises to Abraham that would benefit the entire world centuries after the promises were made. These promises were granted to Abraham for his willingness to obey God. For instance, when God tells Abraham to pack up his things and leave his home in Haran *“to a land that I will show you”* (Genesis 12:1), a 75 year-old Abraham immediately obeys God. When God tells Abraham that he will have a son with his wife Sarah despite their old age, Abraham enters with his wife to conceive. When God instructs Abraham to offer *that* son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, Abraham obeys. Abraham *“believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness”* (Genesis 15:7). Because of Abraham’s obedience, God selected the people group who would come through Abraham’s seed to call His own.

Fast forward about 650 years. The people group God chose to preserve and protect are now slaves to the Egyptians. Not only are they slaves to the empire, but they are now slaves to the practices of a very pagan and idolatrous culture. Israel is lost. God needs to ‘buy back’ his people. His people need a Redeemer. In Exodus 6:6, we see the first indication of this: *“Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.”*

Most of us know the rest of the story: God sends Moses and his brother to the pharaoh requesting their release; after the pharaoh refuses, God inflicts the Egyptians with ten devastating plagues; after the tenth plague (the death of the firstborn of everything in Egypt), the pharaoh releases the Hebrews but immediately pursues them up to the Red Sea; finally, Moses parts the waters of the Red Sea, allowing only the Hebrews to cross over to the other side. Israel is redeemed!

The idea of redeeming something carried over into the everyday lives of God’s people. It was written in their law. Under the Old Law, people, animals, homes, and fields could be vowed, or dedicated, to the LORD. However, in the event that person wanted to buy back what was vowed, he needed to *redeem* it, typically with money. To redeem something required commitment and sacrifice. For instance, to redeem a person dedicated to the LORD, the redemption value was anywhere between three to thirty shekels (Leviticus 27:1-8). That doesn’t sound like a lot to us nowadays, but when you consider that the average monthly wage for a worker was about one shekel, now it sounds like a fortune! Imagine saving every penny you earned for three to thirty months just to buy something. And sometimes it was a lifelong commitment.

One of the cultural practices of Hebrew families was to redeem the family and possessions of a dead relative by marrying the dead relative’s widow. The book of Ruth is the story of such a case. In that book, Ruth, a Moabite woman, marries into a Hebrew family. After her husband dies, she proves her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi, by returning to Naomi’s home town of Bethlehem. Ruth gleans fields of barely in order to provide food for them to eat. But as she gleans, she catches the attention of the field owner, a wealthy man named Boaz who so happens to be related to Naomi. Naomi encourages her to pursue Boaz as a “kinsman redeemer.” (A “kinsman redeemer” was one who married a dead relative’s widow in order to keep the family lineage going and to take back possession of his assets.) Boaz eventually marries Ruth and redeems her and all her possessions.

The important thing about the redemption process is that it costed something to the purchaser. In the case of someone who vowed an animal to the LORD but changed his mind, a certain price was placed upon the animal by a priest. That price was non-negotiable. In order to redeem that animal, the owner had to pay the price of the animal plus 20 percent. This was done as a way to discourage people from simply making a vow to the LORD and not keeping it. However, in the case of Israel being redeemed from the hands of the Egyptians, it costed much more than money.

The night before the LORD was to go throughout the land of Egypt to strike down the firstborn of all living things, the people of Israel were instructed by God to slaughter a lamb at twilight. That lamb had to be one year old and without blemish or defect. Once slaughtered, its meat was then roasted by fire and its blood sprinkled on the door posts and lintel. When the LORD passed through Egypt, He ‘passed over’ every house which had the blood of the lamb on the door post and lintel. (This is where we get the Passover.) The redeeming price for Israel was the blood of an innocent lamb.

In 1 Peter 1:18,19, Peters tells us, *“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* Peter makes an interesting point by saying we were purchased by the “precious blood of Christ.” In order for someone to be the Christ, he would need to fulfill all the prophecies concerning the Christ, fulfill every role concerning the Christ, and fulfill the entire law perfectly. Only one person was able to do that: Jesus the Christ! And because He alone was able to do that, there can be only one Redeemer. But the cost of redemption was far more than gold or silver. Not only did He shed His blood and sacrifice Himself as the Lamb, but He sacrifice Himself as everything else that made Him the Christ e.g. the Son, the Prophet, the Priest, the King, etc. This is great cost!

But a question arises: redeemed from what? Colossians 1:13,14 says, *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin.”* SIN! Sin has separated us from God. What was once a perfect and harmonious relationship has now become marred, tainted. Because of sin, we die in two ways, physically and spiritually, because sin enslaves us. *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”* (Romans 6:16)

Remember in our last lesson we also learned that when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin entered the world through that act. In that moment, humanity would be doomed to the bondage of sin. Like Israel who was subject to a ruthless and demanding Egyptian master, humanity would be subject to the temptations of a sinful master. It would control us. However, in the same way that Israel received its freedom when the blood of a lamb was shed and sprinkled on a door post, humanity would receive its freedom from sin and death when the blood of the Lamb was shed on the cross. Consider the following verses:

**Ephesians 1:7** – *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”*

**Hebrews 9:12-14** – *“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* Notice in this passage the all-important phrase: “once for all.” This means the blood of Jesus need be shed only *one time* for *all time* for *all people*. This, without a doubt, is why Jesus is that ONE Redeemer. Jesus, through His perfect life, offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice before God in order to bring us back to our rightful owner.

That is the purpose of redemption: to buy back something and reconcile it to its rightful owner. Israel returned once again as the LORD’s possession after escaping the Egyptians. The owner who paid the redemption price for a vowed animal, received the animal back after paying its price. Boaz returned Naomi’s land back to the family once he married Ruth. The redeemer always received back what was rightfully his once the redemption price was paid. God is no different. The redemption price for us to be back in relationship with Him after a life of sin was the blood of His Son. That price has been paid in full. Because of that, He expects to receive back what is rightfully His once we are redeemed: *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works* (Titus 2:11-14).

There should be a drastic difference between the person we are now and the person we once were. Being slaves to a righteous master should yield different results than being slaves to a sinful master. Once redeemed, we should be determined to be that “special people, zealous for good works” and deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” as stated above. As the redeemed, we should “live soberly, righteously, and godly” *because* we were redeemed “from every lawless deed.” Knowing that Jesus *wanted* to redeem us and bring us in relationship with Him again, should make us eager for the “glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” I mean, why wouldn’t we want to see the face of our Redeemer?!

Listen to what Jesus says in Luke 21:25-28 when speaking of the end times: *“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28****Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.****”*

In a world where so many things seem uncertain, it is oftentimes hard to lift up our heads to see anything. We can get easily distracted by the sinful nature of this world because we see things at eye level. At eye-level, things happen that shouldn’t happen. At eye-level, things happen that we can’t believe. Seeing things at eye-level discourages us, or perhaps it makes us want to give up. But notice that Jesus says we should look UP when chaos surrounds us. When we focus on things at eye-level, we lose focus of our Redeemer because our Redeemer is reigning from heaven above!

I am certain that when God made His promises to Abraham, he didn’t think that some of them would be fulfilled thousands of years later. I’m sure that some of those promises seemed so farfetched that he just could not wrap his mind around them. Had he focused on those things at eye-level, he could have given up hope. But he didn’t. Abraham looked up toward God and believed Him. And just like God kept the promises He made to Abraham, He intends to keep the promises He has made to us concerning our eternal redemption. He hasn’t forgotten His promises, and His intention is to keep them. We *must* believe this. We *must* stop looking at things at eye-level. We *must* lift up our heads and look up toward our Redeemer and say with confidence: *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth.”* (Job 19:25)

How does having ONE REDEEMER promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* It keeps us focused on the ONE who paid the price to redeem us from sin.
* Having ONE REDEEMER assures us that God sees us as worth the purchase price.
* The ONE REDEEMER who now owns us is the only one with authority to say what we must do.
* Remember, we are all bought with a price, the price of redemption and we are not our own. We are all placed in common fellowship with all others of like precious faith.

**1 Corinthians 6:20***—"You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's”*

**2 Peter 1:1***—"To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”*

**Colossians 3:15***—"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body”*

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Savior

Isaiah 43:11

"*I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior”.*

**II Timothy 1:8-10** *—"God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”*

As we started down the trail of the number of unity – ONE, we have been able to show how that all the *ones* are founded in and related to Christ Jesus. Harken back to the statement that *“there is one God”* from Ephesians 4:6. Since both the Father and Son are called “God,” the simple conclusion is that the Father and the Son are one. You may remember that Jesus Himself makes this declaration, *“I and My Father are one”* (John 10:30). Thus, we come to another of the dual statements, this time the title of “Savior.” In the above passages, Isaiah has God declaring that He is the sole Savior, and Paul declares that Jesus is the Savior. Contradiction? No! There is still no contradiction for the Father and the Son are one God.

An important thing to discuss here is the difference between a “redeemer” and a “savior.” From the previous article, a “redeemer” is someone who pays a price to buy something back. It is used to also describe the action of buying someone out of slavery. Indeed, that is exactly the role Jesus fulfills when He, by His death on the cross, pays the price to buy us out of the slavery to Satan in our sin. Significantly, the price that Jesus pays is one we could have never paid ourselves since the price was “*a lamb without spot and without blemish*” (1 Peter 1:19). Jesus is the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).Jesus is our One Redeemer.

A “savior” has a different role. A savior is a deliverer, or preserver. The questions that follow are: “From what does a savior deliver people?” and “In what way does a savior preserve?” In the context of this article, we will discuss what Jesus delivers us from and how He preserve us.

It helps to see what people were asking for when they asked to be saved. A good example is found in the story of Noah. The writer of Hebrews gives us the important details: “*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*” (Hebrews 11:7). The writer of Hebrews shows that Noah builds the ark for the “*saving of his household*.” How was his household being saved? Remember that man had become so wicked that the *“thoughts and intents of their hearts was only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5). It was so bad that God actually made this determination *– “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them"* (Genesis 6:7). God determined that all life would end, but Noah found grace and was given the design for a big boat that would preserve his family and animal life from the life-killing flood God was sending. The “saving” that was going to happen was the deliverance from death in the flood.

Matthew records two interesting circumstances related to the disciples of Jesus. In Matthew chapter 8, Jesus and His disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee. During the trip, a storm arises with such magnitude that the disciples are afraid they are going to die. During the storm, Jesus is asleep. When the fear level of the disciples becomes so high that they think they will die, they wake up Jesus and say to Him, *“Lord, save us! We are perishing!"* (Matthew 8:25). They are literally asking Jesus to save their lives. Jesus saves them by calming the storm. He has a great sense of humor though. After He overcomes the storm, the result is a *“great calm.”* But now, instead of using the wind of the storm to rapidly propel the boat across the lake, the disciples now have to row the boat across. (Have you ever wondered if they sang “Row, Row, Row your boat?”) In the second story from Matthew chapter 14, the disciples begin to cross the lake ahead of Jesus while He stays behind to accomplish some purpose. During the night, Jesus walks on the water to go out to the boat and finish the ride with the disciples. Peter, recognizing Jesus, asks Him to confirm Peter’s recognition by telling him to come out of the boat and walk on the water to Jesus. Jesus tells him to come. Peter gets out of the boat and successfully walks on the water toward Jesus. However, Peter, *“when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’”* (Matthew 14:30). Peter feared for his life and begged Jesus to rescue him. Jesus does reach out to him, and they eventually go to boat together. In both of these cases, Jesus served as Savior in preserving them from dying.

In Luke 23:35-37, we have an affirmation that being saved meant deliverance from dying. As Jesus is on the cross, His enemies mock Him saying, *“‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.’”* Plainly, the idea of being saved meant being preserved from the catastrophe of death.

Being a savior also means having the capacity to preserve someone from experiencing any bad thing. For example, in sports, a defensive back that intercepts a pass on the last play of the game and prevents the opposition from scoring a winning touchdown “saves” his team from losing. Helping someone with cash or expense money when they have no resources is also “saving them” from perhaps hunger or homelessness.

In Scripture, there is a very important emphasis placed on God/Christ being a Savior. Here are some examples:

In Luke 2:11,12, an angel from heaven tells some shepherds, *“For* ***there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord****. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”*

John 4:42 shows us the reaction of the Samaritan people after meeting Jesus. They tell the woman, we know as the “woman at the well,” this: *“Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know* ***that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world****.”*

In Acts 13:23, Paul the apostle speaking to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia, says that Jesus fulfills prophecy by being of David’s seed. Paul states, *“From this man's seed, according to the promise,* ***God raised up for Israel a Savior – Jesus****.”*

We can show many other passages, but now the pivotal question in this is: What is Jesus saving us from? Scripture is plain. Let us start with what Jesus Himself says. In Matthew 16:24-26, we read this comment from Jesus: *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* Notice that Jesus is very plain that standing with Him even to point of losing our own life would result in us actually having our life saved. He also states that if we gained the whole world and lost our soul, we would have actually profited nothing.

Consider these three statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of Luke:

**Luke 9:24** *– “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”*

**Luke 9:56** *– “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.”*

**Luke 19:9,10** *– “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

Jesus is not talking about saving man from physical death because He knows all men have an appointment with death (Hebrews 9:27). He knows that all men will appear before the Judgment Seat, and there, it will be determined if a person is granted eternal life or is sentenced to dying eternally. From the time of Jesus’ entry into the world, God was already declaring that Jesus would save us from eternal destruction. When the angel of the Lord tells Joseph that his fiancé Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, the angel also says, *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). In telling Joseph that the baby boy would be called Jesus, he declares that the child would save His people from their sins. The name “Jesus” is a form of the name “Joshua.” The name Joshua means “Jehovah is salvation.”

In giving instruction to the young preachers Timothy and Titus, Paul the apostle teaches them these things:

**1 Timothy 1:15** – *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that* ***Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners****, of whom I am chief.*

**2 Timothy 1:8-10** *– God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of* ***our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality*** *to light through the gospel.*

**Titus 3:4-7** *– But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but* ***according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,*** *6* ***whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life****.*

Peter also tells of the promise of eternal life in 2 Peter 1:11: *For so* ***an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ****.*

Today people scoff at the idea of eternal life or eternal condemnation, but this is not a laughing matter. Judgment is real, and the only Deliverer (SAVIOR) is Jesus Christ! Listen to this admonition found in Revelation, the last book of the Bible: *And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.* ***I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*** *7* ***He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son****. 8* ***But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death****"* (Rev 21:6-8).

I hope you are paying attention, for men have two potential ends stated here. Option one is the fountain of the water of life. Option two is the lake which with burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The interesting thing in this passage is that God is actually begging us to make the choice to follow Jesus. God has great things planned for us in eternity. Here is more: *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying,* “*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4* ***And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away****.” 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful”* (Revelation 21:3-5).

**Revelation 22:1-5** *– And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3* ***And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him****. 4* ***They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads****. 5* ***There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever****.*

Choose this please:

**Romans 10:13** *– For “****whoever*** *calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

**Hebrews 10:39** – ***But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul****.”*

**1 Peter 4:16-19** *– Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*

How does having ONE SAVIOR promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Jesus, as our ONE SAVIOR, gives us all a single place to seek salvation: in Him
* Having ONE SAVIOR allows us to show humility toward others, knowing we were all saved from the same thing by the same Person
* Since our ONE SAVIOR was victorious over the very thing He saved us from, it assures us of our own victory
* Having ONE SAVIOR proves that we couldn’t save ourselves; therefore, we must rely on Him and His righteousness

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5,6

Part 1

*For there is one God and* ***one Mediator*** *between God and men,* ***the Man Christ Jesus*** *6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

As we have gone on our journey through the “ONES” of unity, we have seen in each case something about the role taken on by Jesus. It always turns out that only Christ has the capacity to fulfill the role. In this study, we look at the role of Christ as mediator. It is plainly stated by Paul the apostle that there is only “one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” To really understand this role of Jesus as mediator, we need to learn two things. The first is to understand the role of a mediator. The second is to understand the qualities of the mediator to enable the mediator to be most effective in the job.

The word “mediator” literally means a “go-between.” In American history a famous story of a man called to be a mediator is the story of a love triangle among three Mayflower passengers: Miles Standish, Priscilla Mullins, and John Alden. The Mayflower was the ship that brought over the pilgrims in 1619 to establish a colony. It is told in a story written by the author Longfellow. Captain Miles Standish was enamored with Priscilla Mullins. He asked John Alden to speak to Priscilla on his behalf and to ask if Priscilla would marry Captain Standish. When Priscilla hears the request from John Alden for the Captain, she counters with this famous statement: “speak for yourself John.” He and Priscilla married.

In Biblical terms, we find examples of mediators. The first is Abraham’s mediation with God over the conditions for the destruction of the city of Sodom. The story is found in Genesis 18. God had revealed to Abraham that Sodom was going to be destroyed because of the sin rampant in the city. Abraham had an interest in Sodom because his nephew Lot lived there. Abraham begins by asking God to spare the city if fifty righteous souls could be found there. God agreed to this, but Abraham fearing the number was too high, negotiated for the city to be spared if ten righteous souls could be found there. Sadly, only three were found and Sodom was destroyed. God did arrange for Lot and two of his children to escape the destruction.

A second example is Moses mediating for Israel when God had determined to destroy them all for their idolatry and rebellion against Him. The details are in Exodus 32. This occurred while Moses was with the Lord on Mt. Sinai. Not knowing what was happening with Moses, the people convinced Aaron, Moses brother, to make a golden calf idol for them to worship. This results in God declaring He would start all over with Moses and make a new nation. Exodus 32:9-10—*And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."* Moses is quick to speak on behalf of Israel and gives God three reasons not to destroy the people of Israel. (1) God has done so much for His people, that surely He will not now make all of none effect (Exodus 32:11); (2) their destruction will give a triumph to the Egyptians (Exodus 32:12); (3) the promises made to Abraham ([Genesis 15:5](https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/15-5.htm); [Genesis 17:2-6](https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/17-2.htm); etc.), Isaac ([Genesis 26:4](https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/26-4.htm)), and Jacob ([Genesis 28:14](https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/28-14.htm); [Genesis 35:11](https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/35-11.htm)), which had received a partial fulfillment, would seem to be revoked and withdrawn if the nation already formed were destroyed and a fresh start made.

As we move through the Bible story, we find a shift in how things are working out between God and man. Job leads the way making the point that when a man, a single person, sins against God, there is not mediator who can speak for the man to God. Job says of God, Job 9:32-33*--"For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both.”* Later in the story of Job, Elihu, a friend of Job makes an amazing statement that is prophetic. Listen to him. Job 33:23-24*--"If there is a messenger for him, a mediator, one among a thousand, to show man His uprightness, then He is gracious to him, and says, deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom'”* Notice Elihu’s statement that if there is a mediator for man, God will be gracious to the man and deliver him because God has received a ransom from the mediator. This is a foreshadowing of the role of the Christ.

The remaining Old Testament story to examine is found in I Samuel 2. The high priest at the time was an old man named Eli. Eli had two sons who served as priests with him. There were perverse men and used their position as priest to take sexual advantage of the women who came to God’s tabernacle to worship. In verses 22-25, Eli describes this*—"Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them.”* You can see the point of Eli is that when men sin against each other God will take a hand in determining judgment, but if a man sins against God there is no one to intercede (mediate) for him. The sons did not heed this warning and were soon killed by an enemy nation.

This brings us to the conclusion that until the time of the New Covenant, there was no one who could mediate between man and God. Mankind was without hope and was worthy of eternal destruction. Enter the Christ onto the stage.

A crucial point in picking a mediator is that the mediator is most effective if able to relate positively to both of the parties in the mediation. Think about that. We have God and man separated by sin and man in desperate need of mediation with the Creator. Where could man find someone who was familiar with the realm of God and who had a personal connection with the world of men? Are you getting the picture? Paul makes the point plainly to the Galatians when he says: Galatians 4:4-5*—"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”* Thus, God sends for Himself a mediator through His Son who also lived in our flesh as man. Who is better suited to serve as the mediator between God and man than the man in whom dwelled all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? (Galatians 2:9) Galatians 3 makes the point that under the Old Covenant man was not able to overcome sin, but that God had a promise of redemption under a new covenant wherein there would be a mediator who was the promised “Seed” who could mediate between God and man.

The book of Hebrews discusses the role of Christ as mediator. Here are the passages.

Hebrews 8:1-13 says that Jesus was given the more excellent ministry related to a new and better covenant. This was essential since the old covenant could not satisfy what was necessary for man’s redemption. In fact, a new covenant was necessary as the old covenant was obsolete and had to be replaced. A central component of the new covenant was that there was a new position, a Mediator, the more excellent ministry based on better promises.

**Hebrews 9:11-16** *—"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* ***And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”***

Notice that Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant because He was able by His death to obtain the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant. But it gets better. Christ, by that sacrifice, was able to cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

In Hebrews 12, the writer is encouraging Christians to remain faithful in all situations. He had just finished in chapter 11 telling us about Bible heroes who had been faithful to God despite adversity. In verses 22-24, the writer gives us serious benefits for standing firmly with Christ. Look at the list*—"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”* Notice these-

* We have come to Mount Zion
* We are now part of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem
* We are included with an innumerable company of angels
* We are part of the general assembly and the church of the first born who are registered in heaven
* We stand with God the judge of all
* We are with the spirits of just men made perfect
* **We are with Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant**
* We are covered by the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus that does way better than the sacrifice made by Abel (a lamb)

Imagine that scene in heaven and standing with this company of those who have made a stand with the Father and the Son.

Here is something that must be understood. Jesus is God and man. Jesus is the one promised seed. Jesus is the one redeemer. Jesus is the one savior. Because He alone fills these roles, He is the only one who can be the mediator between God and man, as Paul so declares in our opening text**,*—"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus****”*

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5,6

Part 2

*For there is one God and* ***one Mediator*** *between God and men,* ***the Man Christ Jesus*** *6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

This teaching that Christ is the ONE Mediator leads us to another set of facts. Clearly any claims that others may mediate for us with God are false claims. One, means ONE. The Catholic church has chosen to create the idea of a “patron saint” to serve as mediators for their parishioners: Catholic teaching states that “Patron saints are chosen as special protectors or guardians over areas of life. These areas can include occupations, illnesses, churches, countries, causes -- anything that is important to us.” With countless jobs, diseases, beliefs, people groups, and causes, it is no wonder why there are 1,776 patron saints of the Catholic church.

*Canonization*, or the process by which one becomes a saint for the Catholic church, is quite a lengthy process. Once a candidate for sainthood is identified, the candidate’s life and writings are investigated by the local Catholic bishop, and if found virtuous, that information is then sent to the Vatican. There, the candidate is further evaluated by a panel of theologians and cardinals, and if approved by the panel, is then sent to the pope. If the pope decides that the candidate’s life reflects the virtues of the Catholic church, then the candidate is allowed to be honored by a particular people group or region. (That process is called *beatification*.) In order to beatify the candidate, there must be evidence that he/she was able to perform two posthumous miracles i.e. performing the miracles AFTER death. Once these two miracles are confirmed, the candidate is finally declared by the pope to be a saint and can now begin his/her service as heavenly mediator, advocate, and intercessor for people.

One of the purposes for selecting saints is that they give people a model to pattern their own behaviors and lives after. Saints serve as examples that people can follow. Another purpose for saints is that they serve as “go-betweens” between people and God, and can pray to God the Father on behalf of people. (As a side note, the idea that God uses saints as “go-betweens” actually diminishes God’s omnipotence since it implies that God needs help from others in order to focus on bigger, more-important issues.) But the question that arises from this belief is this: if we can pray to saints to guide, protect, and strengthen us, where does that leave Jesus?

In John 14:6, Jesus says, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* With the Catholic church boasting over 1700 patron saints, it sounds like there are plenty of people we can go through to get to the Father who are not Jesus. But there isn’t. **Jesus is the *only* way**. In 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul declares, *“there is…one Mediator between God and men – the Man Christ Jesus.”* This is a very open and very definite statement that there is only ONE MEDIATOR: Jesus Christ. As we have stated before in this study (Lesson: There is One Faith), Jesus is not *a* way to the Father but *the* way to the Father. The road map, so to speak, to God is not up to us to create. Jesus has already given us the directions: HE is the way.

In order for us to get a better sense of the role Jesus fills as Mediator, let us take a look at who a mediator is and what a mediator does. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a mediator is “one that mediates, especially between parties at variance.” In essence, a mediator is someone who acts as the middle-person between people trying to come to an agreement. The purpose of a mediator is to act as a neutral party in the hope that their efforts will bring resolution to a dispute between people at odds. It is doubtless Jesus did this. Consider the following verse: *“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”* (Romans 5:10). We, because of our sin, became enemies of God; however, Jesus’ own sacrifice brought resolution to the conflict between the two parties, namely us and God. Paul further confirms the reason why Jesus gets to be One Mediator in verse six of our main passage: *“who gave Himself a ransom for all.”* What person can truthfully claim that their death will be “a ransom for all?” What person could be thought worthy enough to *be* “a ransom for all?” So how can *any* human being, living or dead, serve as a mediator between people and God? They can’t! That position is reserved for Jesus Christ! Jesus the Christ is the ONE and ONLY MEDIATOR!

Notice the passage also makes it plain that Mary the mother of Jesus cannot serve as a mediator for humans. She is not a man. Some will try to get around the teaching in I Timothy by saying that Mary doesn’t mediate for us with the Father, but rather with the Son. The idea is that we go to Mary, Mary goes to Jesus and Jesus goes to the Father. The problem with this chain idea is that it violates the number of unity. Do the arithmetic. Us to Mary, Mary to Jesus, Jesus to God. This process requires two mediators which is one above the stated truth, there is “one mediator between God and man.” It has been a long tradition in the Catholic Church that the recognition of the Mary as advocate, mediatrix, and co-redemptrix should be a required doctrine. Current Catholic teaching is this: “The proclamation of the doctrine of Mary as “Advocate, Mediatrix, and Co-redemptrix” by the pope would enable the Mother of Jesus to shower the world with a historic outpouring of grace, redemption, and peace in a new and dynamic way.” Please grasp that this doctrine violates multiple scriptures. We cannot emphasis this enough. Paul the apostle, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares “there is **ONE MEDIATOR** between God and man, the **MAN CHRIST JESUS**.” We have already seen in a previous lesson that there is only ONE REDEEMER-JESUS CHRIST. As we said before, His death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection from the dead give Jesus and Jesus alone the right and honor to serve as man’s redeemer and mediator. It is dishonoring and disrespectful to our Lord to insert anyone else into these positions when Christ alone has earned and been given by the Father these roles. To claim that Jesus needs help in doing these is to claim that He has not sufficient capacity to meet the needs of men. Remember Jesus himself declares, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.” To insert Mary into this process is to claim that Jesus was either in error or that He lied. To all Catholic believers in Jesus as the Christ, we humbly ask that you return to the idea that Christ is sufficient for your salvation. As we have seen, there is one Lord-Jesus. There is one “Seed”-Jesus. There is one Savior-Jesus. There is one Redeemer-Jesus. There is one Mediator-Jesus.

Let us take the word “mediator” a little further and see some other words associated with it. Some of these are: advocate, arbitrator, negotiator, peacemaker, moderator, and interceder. It is certain that a biblical example can be found of Jesus fitting the role and responsibility of each of these synonyms. For instance, “advocate.” An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of another person. Think about the role an attorney plays in a court of law. Attorneys speak to judges on behalf of their clients. People hire attorneys because they know the in’s and out’s of law and the procedures of the court room. They trust the attorney’s advice and rely on their expertise to prove them innocent; therefore, you would want the best.

Imagine this…

Something happens and you find yourself in a court of law. You hire an attorney to represent you. As your court date approaches, you hear stories of how the judge presiding over your case is no nonsense and firm in his decisions. You get nervous, but your attorney assures you to just trust him. The day finally arrives and as the bailiff announces, “All rise,” your heart sinks. You can’t even look at the judge. But out of the corner of your eye, you catch your attorney smile, wave, and say, “Hi, dad.” Imagine the relief knowing that *your* attorney is the judge’s son! That’s Jesus! Not only is He the best advocate, He is the ONLY advocate who has a special relationship with the Judge. Consider this passage:

**1 John 2:1,2** – *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

Notice that Jesus’ death (“the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins”) made Him the Advocate, or Mediator, for all men. But that process went back further than just that fateful day on the cross but involved being miraculously born of a virgin, living a perfect and sinless life, dying on a cross, AND resurrecting Himself back to life. (Talk about a posthumous miracle!) There was no committee, no panel, no decision or nomination made by human beings. No one needed to evaluate His life to see if it was one worth following since He *“was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). He didn’t need human approval since His approval came directly from God the Father: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”* (Matthew 17:5) And through His death, He mediates a way for us to have eternal life.

**Hebrews 9:14,15** – *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

**Hebrews 8:6** – *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

Christ, as our ONE MEDIATOR, represents Himself. He needs no human to act on His behalf. He needs no human to mediate for Him. And He certainly does not need anyone to act as His earthly representative, or vicar. (The term Vicar for Christ is often used to describe the pope and to express his supreme headship over the church on earth.) No human can replace Him since all humans need Him to go to the Father. He shares His place with no one: no angel, no pope, no saint. It is interesting to note that Paul does, in fact, use the word “saints” in 10 of his 13 epistles; however, he never uses the word to describe people who act as middle-men between God and men, but uses the word “saints” to simply describe Christians. Yes! People who believed, repented, confessed Jesus as the Son of God, and were baptized into His name were called “saints!” WE are saints! No committees. No posthumous miracles. We, as Christians, are not made saints by others to serve as mediators but are made saints by our Mediator to serve others.

How does having ONE MEDIATOR promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Having ONE MEDIATOR gives us a single source for advocacy, intercession, and strength
* Since being the ONE MEDIATOR required living a perfect life, we can model our behavior and life after Him
* Knowing we have ONE MEDIATOR assures us that He is a Mediator forever and that there is no need for a replacement

One: The Number of Unity – There is One High Priest

Hebrews 8:1-3

*Now this is the main point of the things we are saying:* ***We have such a High Priest,*** *who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. 3For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.*

As we have seen since our One Seed lesson, Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the unifying thread of all our *ones*. The Father, needing to redeem His most precious creation from the clutches of sin, sends His Seed to be born of a woman. By rescuing and redeeming man from sin through His death on the cross, the Seed becomes Redeemer. In addition, overcoming His own death, the Redeemer acts also as Savior by preserving man from a second death and affording him everlasting life. And it is His death and resurrection that allow for the Savior to take His rightful place as Mediator between God and man.

As we saw in our last lesson, God allowed for certain men to act as mediators between God and man e.g. Abraham interceding for Sodom; Moses interceding for Israel. Another person who officially served as mediator under the Jewish Law was the high priest. Mediation, however, was only a very small responsibility the high priest assumed. Notice in the above passage that “every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.” Therefore, he also served as teacher of the Law, communicator of divine will, offered peace and consecrating sacrifices on behalf of the people, and performed special services at the tabernacle/temple. Most importantly, the high priest entered the presence of God once a year to offer atonement for the sins of the people of Israel; however, *“it is necessary that this One also have something to offer”* (Hebrews 8:3). Who is this ONE of which the writer of Hebrews speaks and what does He offer? We will see shortly.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that this system was not always in place. Before the introduction of the Law, there were no official priests as we see them under the Law. From the time of Adam until the time of Moses, people made offerings on behalf of themselves, essentially serving as their own priest. We see this in Genesis chapter three when Abel offers God the firstborn of his flock. Noah offers God sacrifices of clean animals after the flood in Genesis chapter eight. And Abraham, in Genesis chapter 22, offers God a ram caught in some brush after he almost sacrifices his own son Isaac. [It is important to note that a priest named Melchizedek is mentioned even before the Law in Genesis 14:18-20. He is called “priest of God Most High” (vs18). Because of the description given of him in Hebrews 7:1-3, most biblical students understand this to be Christ Himself.]

As we can see from the statement above, all things in the Bible point us to Christ. Thus, we can see a “funnel effect” from the time of Adam to the time of Jesus, pointing us to a time when Jesus would assume His position as High Priest forever. As mentioned before, from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, each man was responsible for his own offering; therefore, no high priest was necessary. However, when Moses received the Law, the high priest acted on behalf of the people of Israel, but only Israel. God made no provision for priests among the Gentiles. This lasted for almost 1500 years, and since it is obvious no single man could live throughout that entire time, many men served as high priest on behalf of Israel. Thus, we went from a time with no high priest to a time of many high priests who served a single people group to Jesus the Christ: the ONE HIGH PRIEST who serves all people for all time.

Part of the high priest’s duty was to enter the Most Holy Place one time a year to stand before the Mercy Seat of God and seek atonement for the sins of the people of Israel. The Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies, was the innermost portion of the tabernacle of meeting/temple. The Most Holy Place was the place where God dwelled while with Israel. Inside the Most Holy Place was the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant which contained Moses’ Ten Commandments, Aaron’s staff that budded, and a golden pot of manna. The Most Holy Place was partitioned off by a veil and was ONLY to be entered by the high priest. Before the high priest could enter, he would first have to offer a bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, wash his body in water, and then put on special holy garments. Again, to happen once a year every year.

But when Christ came, His service and sacrifice would be completely sufficient. The Jewish high priest dealt with physical things: a physical tabernacle/temple, entering a physical Most Holy Place, a physical washing, and physical sacrifices. As we will see from the passage below, Jesus came “*with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation”* (Hebrews 9:11). Jesus dealt with the spiritual. So it is no wonder why His service and sacrifice would supersede that of the Jewish high priest. The high priest was a type of Christ, and the blood of animals was a reminder of its powerless ability to take away sin.

Look at the following passages:

**Hebrews 9:6-12** –*Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. 7But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance; 8the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience — 10concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. 11But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

**Hebrews 9:23-26** – *Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another — 26He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

**Hebrews 10:1-4** – *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”*

Notice that entry into the Most Holy Place by the high priest did not come without the shedding of blood. Some innocent animal needed to be sacrificed before the high priest was even able to go beyond the veil of the tabernacle/temple and approach the Mercy Seat of God. Its blood served to atone for the high priest’s sins not forgive him of them. And had it not been for Christ, these sacrifices would have never ceased since the blood of animals cannot ever take away sins. However, Christ came “*not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”* (Hebrews 9:12). His own blood allowed His entrance to the Most Holy Place once for all, but not for any sin that He had committed Himself. Hebrews 4:15 says, *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*. His sinless nature made Him worthy to not only go beyond the veil and into the Most Holy Place but to rend the temple veil in two, from top to bottom, upon His death (Matthew 27:51). And because of this, there is no longer a separation between God and man, for Christ has entered the Most Holy Place once and for all.

Before we conclude, let us examine Hebrews 7:20-28 in the New Living Translation. This translation is so beautiful in rendering to us the superiority of Jesus as our ONE HIGH PRIEST:

*This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron’s descendants became priests without such an oath, 21but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to him, “The Lord has taken an oath and will not break his vow: ‘You are a priest forever [in the order of Melchizedek]* (brackets mine)*.’” 22Because of this oath, Jesus is the one who guarantees this better covenant with God. 23There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. 24But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. 25Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. 26He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven. 27Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people’s sins. 28The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever.*

Jesus is our ONE HIGH PRIEST, and His High Priesthood is superior to that of the Jewish high priest under the Law in every way imaginable. He is High Priest by a promise of God and appointed by God. He is from a priestly line without beginning or end, and so His High Priesthood is forever. Jesus as High Priest saves those who come to the Father through Him and intercedes forever for them. Jesus is holy, blameless, and unstained by sin and occupies the highest place of honor in heaven. He has no weakness. He does not have to make daily sacrifices for Himself or others but offered *Himself* as the one and only perfect sacrifice. He has entered the Most Holy Place…once…for all…forever. JESUS IS HIGH PRIEST FOREVER!

How does having ONE HIGH PRIEST promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST eliminates the need for us to continuously hire, select, or vote in someone to serve in that position
* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST assures us that we can go boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and grace in our time of need
* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST gives us the confidence that we will be heard by the Father since all Christians are appointed priests in His kingdom
* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST, who can sympathize with our weaknesses, allows us to rely on the only ONE who is able to make intercession for us forever

One: The Number of Unity-There Is One High Priest

Part 2

Hebrews 2:14-18

“*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that* ***He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest*** *in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”*

When man was created, he was created in perfection. He had no need of a priest or a prophet. God communicated directly with man and did not use a messenger to tell what He wanted man to do. A prophet is a person who speaks to man for God. A priest communicates to God on behalf of man especially through offerings, sacrifices and prayers. When does the very personal relationship between God and man begin to change?

The answer is simple. When Adam and Eve sinned, God began the transition. You will see that God personally chastened Adam and Eve for their sin. However, when they were put out of the Garden of Eden, you do not see God speaking directly to man until after the death of Abel. How, then did God communicate His will to men. Jesus gives us the answer. In Luke 11:49-51, Jesus lists Abel as the first of prophets to die. Sadly, the death of Abel was caused by his brother Cain. 1 John 3:11,12 tells us the cause of Abel’s death. *“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as* ***Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.”*** Abel, as a prophet, *“offered to God by faith, a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”*(Hebrews 11:4) Abel offered a lamb, a firstling from his flock, and the Lord respected his offering. (Genesis 4:4) Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, we are confident that Abel made the offering God requested, while Cain chose his own. When you see the offering that Abel made, you can see that God was already telling us that the Savior would a “lamb slain.”

Here we have Abel as the first prophet, but we also notice that Abel served as priest. As we look through the story of man we discover an interesting thing. God often sent specific men to be prophets, but men were allowed to be their own priest. Look at this list:

* Enoch, the seventh from Adam made a prophecy (Jude 14,15).
* Lamech, the father of Noah, made a prophecy about his son (Genesis 5:29).
* Noah, the builder of the ark to save his family from the flood, is called a “*preacher of righteousness.”* (2 Peter 2:5)

This is a short prophet list from Genesis, but it shows that God was already moving to bring men to the truth by sending prophets to share His will.

Progressing to the idea of men serving as their own priest, let us make a couple of observations. In the story of man in the book of Genesis, we find only three people being designated as priests. Here is that list.

* Melchizedek, in Genesis 14:18, is declared to be “*priest of God most high.*” This will become important further along in this study.
* Joseph, when named prime minister of Egypt is given as wife “*Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On.” (*Genesis 41:45) This priest is not a priest of God, but of an idol worshipped by the people of Egypt.
* “*Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law*” (Exodus 18:1). We know he served God, but we do not know when or how he was appointed a priest.

Significantly, we do not see stories of these men making an animal sacrifice. However, we do see others who are not called priests making sacrifices.

* Noah (Genesis 8:20)
* Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 13:18; Chapter 22)
* Jacob (Genesis 33:20; 35:1)

Moses, prior to receiving the Law when Israel defeats an enemy. (Exodus 17:15)

Now we come to the place where God purposefully institutes the offices of priest and high priest. Because our goal is to the learn the name of the High Priest in the new covenant, we will focus only on the role of the High Priest under the Law of Moses.

The very first high priest of Israel was Aaron, the brother of Moses. Significantly, Aaron was a high priest only for Israel. The scriptures do not have any record of God doing the same thing for Gentile peoples. Interestingly, Aaron’s first role was that of a prophet (Exodus 7:1). In Exodus 28, we find Aaron and his sons being named as the priests for Israel. God began by describing the garments that Aaron would wear. Exodus 28:4*—"And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash.”* The high priest had to “*bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the Lord continually.*” (Exodus 28:30) The high priest had to wear a bell whose sound would be heard when he “*went into the holy place before the Lord and when he came out, that he may not die*” (Exodus 28:35). The high priest had to wear a special cord on his turban whose function was to “*bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts”* (Exodus 28:38). Sweet aromatic incense had to be burned on the altar of incense twice a day (Exodus 30:7). God also specified various sacrificial offerings that the high priest and other priests had to do regularly. We are also shown that the high priest and the other priests had the responsibility of teaching people the laws of the Old Covenant, of making medical decisions regarding skin disease, and of being sure the priests didn’t have their judgment clouded by alcoholic beverages. Further, no man who had a physical defect could serve as high priest or a regular priest (Leviticus 21:21).

The most important of the duties of the high priest was to make a sacrifice once a year on the Day of Atonement. To perform this duty, the high priest had to first make an atonement offering for and wash himself. When this was done, the high priest could go behind the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holiest of Holies. There the high priest would sprinkle blood to atone for the sins of the people on the Mercy Seat that was above the Ark of the Covenant. The detail for the Mercy Seat and the actions of the high priest regarding it are found in the following chapters: Exodus 25, 26, 30, 31, 35, 37, 39, 40, Leviticus 16. This once a year activity was to *make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel*. (Leviticus 16:17-18). You should notice that the act of atonement was never finished. It had to be done under the old covenant in perpetuity. This failing of the Old Covenant is one of the reasons God promised Israel and all mankind a New Covenant that would resolve this issue. Jeremiah the prophet is the one God uses to reveal this. Here is the statement. ***"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant*** *with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord.* ***For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*** (Jeremiah 31:31-34) Plainly God declares that He will make a new covenant that will have the significant feature of God forgiving man’s iniquity and not remembering their sins any more.

When instituting the communion, Jesus gives a strong clue of the beginning of the New Covenant. “*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”* (Matthew 26:26-29). The book of Hebrews makes it very plain as to the end of the Old Covenant and the institution of the New Covenant. *"A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”* (Hebrews 8:13) Further, the writer of Hebrews makes it very plain as to when the change took place. *“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.”* (Hebrews 9:16-18)

Under this New Covenant we have a high priest and the book of Hebrews discusses it completely. In this discourse, it is plainly stated that Jesus is our high priest. God actually explains the process in the scripture. *“And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.* ***So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him:*** *"You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”* (Psalm 2:7) *As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”* (Psalm 110:4) (Hebrews 5:4-6) Notice, Christ was given this position by God and will hold this position forever. Under the Old Covenant, Jesus could not be a priest. In that covenant you had to be from the tribe of Levi. Jesus in the flesh is from the tribe of Judah. This lets us hearken back to the priesthood held by Melchizedek we found in Genesis 14:18. Jesus is high priest under the order of Melchizedek and not under the order of Aaron.

Why is this priesthood superior? Again, the book of Hebrews gives us all the detail we need.

* *In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* (Hebrews 2:17)
* *In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted*. (Hebrews 2:18)
* *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*. (Hebrews 4:15-16)
* *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.* (Hebrews 5:9-10)
* *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*. (Hebrews 6:19-20)
* *For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God*. (Hebrews 7:19)
* *By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant*. (Hebrews 7:22)
* *Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (*Hebrews 7:23-25)
* *For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever*. (Hebrews 7:26-28)
* *Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.* (Hebrews 9:11-15)
* *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another — He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* Hebrews (9:24-27)
* *By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.* (Hebrews 10:10-14)

We have not tried to give every point that the book of Hebrews makes about the priesthood of Christ. These, however, make it plain that Christ indeed is the one person who can be the High Priest who will always be available and who had the only perfect sacrifice to offer for our sins. **Jesus is the One High Priest Forever!**

How does having ONE HIGH PRIEST promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST eliminates the need for us to continuously hire, select, or vote in someone to serve in that position
* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST assures us that we can go boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and grace in our time of need
* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST gives us the confidence that we will be heard by the Father since all Christians are appointed priests in His kingdom
* Having ONE HIGH PRIEST, who can sympathize with our weaknesses, allows us to rely on the only ONE who is able to make intercession for us forever

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:11-18

*And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12But this Man, after He had offered* ***one sacrifice*** *for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14****For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*** *15But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 16“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” 17then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” 18Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.*

If you recall from our last lesson, the high priest under the Law made many sacrifices during his tenure as high priest. Day-by-day, year-by-year, high priest-after-high priest, animal sacrifices were made. But no matter how many sacrifices were made, it was *“not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:4). That is, until Jesus came as High Priest forever and made the sacrifice which *could* take away sins: *But this Man, after He had offered* ***one sacrifice*** *for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.* – (Hebrews 10:12)

Sacrifices had been made since the dawn of time. Take Adam and Eve for instance. In Genesis chapter three, we see the very first sacrifice. After Eve is deceived by Satan to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she hands the fruit to Adam who is standing right near her. Once he eats of it also, immediately their eyes are opened, and they realize their nakedness. They sew fig leaves together in an attempt to cover themselves, however, the coverings they make are not good enough. After they confess to the LORD that they had indeed eaten of the forbidden fruit, God pronounces judgment on them but also provides for them new coverings. Unfortunately, these coverings come at a cost. Verse 21 says, *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.* Notice this: the clothes were made of skin, which means some innocent animal was sacrificed in order to cover their nakedness.

Fast forward through the times of Abel, Noah, and Abraham. All of them made sacrifices. Fast forward a little further, on the night the LORD was to go throughout Egypt to deliver His people from slavery of the pharaoh, God instructs Israel to kill a lamb and put its blood on the door posts and lintel of their dwellings. It was the blood of that lamb that God was looking for as He passed through the land. Any place He did not see the lamb’s blood, He struck down the firstborn of all things within the household. Any place He did see the lamb’s blood, He passed over. (This detail will become more significant later in this lesson.) That night, thousands upon thousands of lambs were slain.

Under the law of Moses given at Mt. Sinai, the nation of Israel had at least twenty different sacrifices that covered everything from offerings for sin, offerings for thanksgiving, offerings when well from a disease, offerings for peace, holiday offerings, daily offerings by the priests, Sabbath offerings, offerings for vows, offerings for births, offerings to consecrate priests, new moon offerings, and the annual special offering of atonement for the sins of the people and the nation. Many gentiles also, though not under the Law given to Israel, created their own gods and systems of sacrifice. These sacrifices often were blood sacrifices or human sacrifices. Two examples of these included Chemosh and Moloch. These idol gods required the sacrifice of live children burned with fire. Greek and Roman gods such as Jupiter, Diana, Apollo, and Poseidon all required sacrifice of animals. Even today, animal sacrifice is a regular event among modern African people who still serve idols, and throughout India, many modern Hindus still offer animal sacrifices to some of their gods.

Back to the nation of Israel, if we take a look at the time of the dedication of the temple, we see King Solomon offer God 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep over a seven day period! Can you imagine the amount of blood produced in the sacrificing of 142,000 animals?! But even all these combined could never do for us what ONE SACRIFICE on the cross did. But who exactly was this sacrifice, and what was the purpose of this sacrifice?

From a prophecy in Isaiah 53:7, we can see that Isaiah refers to the coming Messiah as a lamb: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth.* This is partially fulfilled when John the Baptist exclaims of Jesus, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”* (John 1:29). (The complete fulfillment eventually comes when Jesus is put on trial and ultimately crucified.) Nowhere else in Scripture is this declaration made of any other person but Jesus. Furthermore, Revelation 13:8 refers to Jesus as the *“Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* Peter further confirms this when He describes Jesus’ perfect blood as that *“of a lamb without blemish or without spot”* (1 Peter 1:18). But why a lamb? Why not the “bull of God” or the “goat of God” who takes away the sins of the world? Part of the answer to these questions can be found in simply looking at a picture of lamb. One would be hard pressed to find such a docile and innocent animal. It must be noted also that a lamb usually represents purity and perfection in Scripture. Jesus, doubtless, is all of these.

To continue, consider the following verse:

**1 Corinthians 5:7** – *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

As stated above, a lamb was necessary in saving the firstborn from the wrath of God against Egypt on the night of the very first Passover. Once the Law was established, observance of the Passover became a statute that was celebrated every year, and over an almost 1500 year span, it is with certainty that one can safely conclude that millions of lambs were sacrificed in its observance. However, none of them are able to forgive sins. Clearly, Paul, in the above verse, is outright declaring that Jesus Christ serves as *the* Passover Lamb. This is made apparent in the fact that Jesus was killed in Jerusalem during the Passover Feast. But Christ’s death as Passover Lamb is made even more significant considering the symbolic nature of the Passover. Remember that Israel, while in Egypt, was in bondage and needed salvation from a cruel master. We, as weak and sinful human beings, are subject to a cruel master called sin. In the same manner that the people of Israel killed a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the door posts and lintel of their dwelling to mark their obedience of God’s command, the blood of Jesus, the Passover Lamb, covers us upon our obedience to the command of baptism. Galatians 3:27 says, *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* (What do we put on if not His blood?!) In the very same manner the LORD passed over those dwellings sprinkled with blood thereby saving those inside, we, who are, by faith, baptized into the name of Jesus, will be passed over in judgment and saved from an eternity of death.

Returning our focus to John the Baptist’s exclamation of Jesus, his statement adds an interesting detail of the nature of the One Sacrifice. Jesus is referred to as “the Lamb of God.” This says that Jesus not only served as the sacrifice made on behalf of sinful man to God but implies that God offered Jesus as His sacrifice *to us* as a way to make for peace. This is astonishing because this explains why Jesus’ sacrifice was made “once for all” (Hebrews 7:27), for the Father would only offer to us of His best! John’s declaration also implies the end of all future sacrifices past Jesus. Notice also what the Lamb of God does: “who takes away the sins of the world.” To “take away” means to remove or to remit, and if you remember from verse 18 of our main text, *now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.* Since Jesus’ sacrifice would be for the “remission of sin” (Acts 2:38), there would be no need to offer anything after His One Sacrifice. Anything offered past Jesus’ own sacrifice would remain insufficient. As it was, “*every priest [stood] ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which [could] never take away sins”* – Hebrews 10:11. Under the Law and its system of sacrifices, imperfect men made sacrifices of things that would never be considered as perfect as the Father’s only begotten Son.

Sin revealed our nakedness. It exposed our weaknesses and limitations through its temptations. It kicked us out of a garden made in perfection. Therefore, nothing we try to ‘put on’ is good enough to satisfy our need to be clothed with a sacrifice sufficient to hide our flaws. The same way Adam and Eve made clothes of leaves to cover themselves, some try to use fortune, fame, human wisdom, possessions, or even good deeds to try to clothe themselves with their own righteousness. But as Isaiah states in Isaiah 64:6a: *But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is like filthy rags.* Our own “righteousness” is not good enough to clothe us from the nakedness sin has exposed. But the same way God sacrificed an animal and provided Adam and Eve with coverings *He* thought sufficient, He sacrificed His only begotten Son in order to provide a covering sufficient to forgive the sins of the world. We wear HIS righteousness! *“For He* *made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21.) Christ’s perfection not only made Him worthy to make the One Sacrifice, but His perfection allowed Him *to be* the One Sacrifice. He needed only to go to the cross one time, because the effects of His death are continual! He needed to be offered as the Lamb of God one time, for we wait for no other Messiah! His death, burial, and resurrection transcend all time and all people groups and is good forever and ever. Amen. Jesus Christ is our ONE and ONLY SACRIFICE!

How does having ONE SACRFICE promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Having ONE SACRIFICE ensures us that all Christians are covered by same blood, the blood of Jesus
* Having ONE SACRIFICE prevents us from going back to a system of sacrifices that could never take away sins
* Having ONE SACRIFICE for sins eliminates the perceived need for the multitude of idolatrous animal sacrifice schemes devised by humans who are deceived by Satan
* Having ONE SACRIFICE confines all under the same purchase price of sin; therefore, none can say they are worth more than another

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Covenant

Matthew 26:26-28

*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28****For this is My blood of the new covenant****, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

Seeing that Jesus serves as the one person who could not only *offer* the sacrifice to forgive man of sin but also *be* the sacrifice to forgive man of sin, we turn our focus to what His sacrifice means as it relates to the old covenant God made with Israel. [Covenant – An agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not do something specified.] We find quite a number of covenants in the Old Testament. Here are some examples that are important to us.

The first covenant we find in the Bible is the one God made with Noah. The world had become so wicked that God was determined to destroy all of mankind. Noah found grace in God’s eyes and God made a covenant with Noah that if Noah would build an ark (a large boat) and bring animals in it for preservation, Noah and his family would be saved from the coming destruction. (Genesis 6:17-21)After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah, as representative of all men, that He would never again destroy the earth and all life with a flood. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow. (Genesis 9:8-17)

A critical covenant is one that God made with Abraham that has three parts.

* God would give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham. (Genesis 9:8-17)
* God would give Abraham many descendants. (Genesis 17:1-22)
* In the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 22:18-19)

A third covenant that God made with Israel is crucial to our understanding of the place of the New Covenant that Jesus mentioned at the Passover supper on the night of His betrayal. We know it as the “ten commandments” and the law that went with them to implement the details of that covenant. The people of Israel promised that they would uphold their part of the covenant, but they failed to do so. (Exodus 19:5-9)Many people are of the mistaken notion that God made the “Ten Commandment” covenant with ALL men. Moses makes it plain that this covenant was made with the people of Israel and them alone. (Deuteronomy 5:2-4)

Another covenant important in our study of the Christ is the one that God made with David. This covenant states that God would bring a king to rule who would be a descendant of David. It also states that this king would have a kingdom that would never end. Christians understand that the fulfillment of this kingdom is Jesus Christ. (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

In Scripture, the covenant of the Ten Commandments that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai is often referred to as “the law.” There is more than enough evidence in Scripture to suggest that the old covenant God made with His sojourning people would one day be fulfilled and a far better covenant would be left in its place. Crucial to this replacement plan was that the people of Israel kept breaking the covenant. Sadly, as we today still have so many people trying to fulfill the requirements contained within the old covenant, it is important to understand that there is only ONE COVENANT to which we are bound. And thanks be to God, it far exceeds the benefits of the first! Consider the hope in these two verses:

**Hebrews 7:22** – *By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.*

**Hebrews 8:6** – *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

A better covenant? Better promises? What made the first covenant so bad that God felt the need to replace it with a better one? In our two previous lessons, we discussed, in part, the answer to this question. Remember that under the law given to Moses at Mount Sinai, sin was a constant reminder each and every year. The high priest, before he could enter the Most Holy Place, needed to first make two sacrifices on behalf of himself for his own sins before he could make a sacrifice on behalf of the nation for their sins. Reminder! Remember that no matter the quality and quantity of animal sacrifices, remission of sins was impossible through this blood. Reminder! However, Jesus openly declares at the Last Supper, *“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”* Therefore, the new covenant offers us what the old covenant only pointed us toward: grace. Take, for instance, the words of Jeremiah’s prophecy. Pay particular attention to verse 34.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** – *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. 33But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

This prophecy should have stirred a great hope for a nation who were constantly reminded of their iniquities every year. For a time to come when God would one day forgive AND forget sin, must have been downright mind blowing because the old law was hard to obey. A day would come when God would offer His grace to all men by way of His Son.

Under the old law, the people of Israel were given over 600 rules and regulations to follow. These ranged anywhere from dietary restrictions to purity laws. There were days to be celebrated and days to be at rest. Sacrifices. Grooming standards. Rites for male children. Moral laws. Civil laws. Religious laws. The list goes on and on. So with an abundance of rules, it is no wonder why not a single person bound by those statutes was able to keep it perfectly. (Think. Adam and Eve only had *one rule* that forbade them to do something, and they still managed to disobey it!) Despite all of these rules, the law served a very crucial purpose.

**Galatians 3:19-25** – *What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. 20Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. 21Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

Without going into an in-depth commentary of the above passage, here is a brief summary. Before the law, people did what was right in their own eyes. However, without a clear definition of right and wrong, people always managed to sin. So, God gave Israel a clear definition of what *He* thought was right and wrong, but even with a clear definition of right and wrong, sin still prevailed among the people. Therefore, God used His covenant with Israel to show how sinful man truly is and how man desperately needed the grace of a Savior. The law pointed us to Christ.

But why are we no longer bound by the law given unto Moses at Mount Sinai? Simply put, because Jesus fulfilled the requirements therein contained by the law. Since no mere human could live perfectly by the law, God had to fulfill the law through His Son since only God Himself could adhere to the demands of the law. Jesus confirms this in Matthew 5:17,18 by saying, *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”* Jesus’ perfect life fulfilled the law in its entirety. Every rule, every regulation – perfectly followed. Every “jot” and “tittle” – perfectly obeyed. And because of His perfect adherence to God’s covenant with Israel, Jesus’ death brought an end to the requirements of the law.

**Colossians 2:13,14** – *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

Why was the law “contrary to us?” Because it was impossible for man to live perfectly by it. But Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life, and therefore, *“wiped out the handwriting of requirements”* and *“nailed it to the cross.”* When Jesus died on the cross, the old covenant died along with Him. We, therefore, are no longer bound by that covenant. All the sacrifices – nailed! All the dietary restrictions – nailed! All the days to celebrate – nailed! It is such a wonder that people still try to bind themselves to those requirements. The law led to bondage not to liberty. In the almost 1500 years the law existed, not a single person was able to follow the law perfectly except for Jesus. Why do some insist on trying to fulfill something that only God Himself could fulfill?

Besides that, forgiveness of sins was impossible under that agreement. Look at how Paul describes us while in our sin: “dead in your trespasses.” Dead? Friend, I want to be alive! And I hope you want to be also. That was the very point of Jesus’ death: to forgive us of all our trespasses. This is GRACE! In Ephesians 2:8,9, Paul says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.* There was plenty to do under the old covenant, plenty of opportunity for works. But Christ did the ultimate work by dying on the cross and resurrecting back to life, thereby extending to us grace. And we are saved by that grace through our faith in Jesus. (Note: Remember that simply *believing in* Jesus is not faith but *believing* Jesus enough to obey all the commands He has given.) This is the primary and most significant difference between the covenant God made with Israel and the new covenant Jesus made with us by the shedding of His blood. This is why the new covenant is a far better covenant. Here are others for your consideration (but not limited to):

* The old covenant was made with only Israel; the new covenant is extended to everyone
* The old covenant was mediated by a flawed Moses, the new covenant is mediated by a perfect Jesus
* The old covenant was written on stone; the new covenant is written in the hearts and minds of Christians
* The old covenant brought death to many people; the new covenant brings life
* The old covenant actually separated God from man; the new covenant allows for God to dwell *in* man
* The old covenant changed high priests; the new covenant has one High Priest forever
* The old covenant employed many men as priests; the new covenant makes priests of all Christians
* The old covenant required many sacrifices; the new covenant required only one sacrifice for all
* The old covenant was taken out of the way once it served it function; the new covenant is eternal
* The old covenant was based on works; the new covenant justifies us by our faith.

How does having ONE COVENANT promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Having ONE COVENANT discourages us from attempting to adhere to over 600 rules and regulations that were impossible to follow
* Having ONE COVENANT ensures us that we can look to the same place to find grace
* Having ONE COVENANT means that God set in place the agreement that He will use for the judgment of all men
* Having ONE COVENANT signed with the blood of Christ guarantees the validity of the new agreement

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Lawgiver

James 4:12

***There is one Lawgiver****, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?*

From the time of man’s creation, we have been faced with someone wanting to tell us what to do. Because we have been created with free will, we have the option of ignoring what we don’t like. Because of this capacity, those with authority always put conditions with their instruction. Conditions are of two kinds. *“Do what you are told and you will have these benefits. Ignore what you are told and you will have these undesirable consequences.”* Adam and Eve experienced this. They only had one thing they could not do. They were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The undesirable consequence was that if and when they ate of that tree, they would die. (Genesis 2:17) They did fine until they were convinced by the devil that God was lying. The story of mankind has been this way since then. God sends a lawgiver and tells of the negative consequences if the laws are not followed. Men are deceived into believing that the consequences are not real and trouble soon follows.

Long ago God sent a lawgiver to the people of Israel. The name of this lawgiver was Moses. He had a profound effect on the people of Israel to the point that the law of God that he brought to Israel became known as the law of Moses. This phrase is first used in Joshua 8:31 and used a total of 21 times in scripture. The law that Moses brought to the people of Israel included the covenant of the ten commandments that God made with Israel and all the rules and explanations that went with these commandments. It is important to remember that God was the true author of this law. As we saw in the lesson “One Covenant,” it is important to remember that God had a plan to replace the law given through Moses with a new covenant given through Jesus Christ. This fact alone makes Jesus the *One Lawgiver* to whom we must give obedience. Let us look at the New Testament and see if it supports this conclusion.

The gospel of Matthew gives us the first affirmation that Jesus is the One Lawgiver by showing us the perspective of Jesus in His first major teaching called the “Sermon on the Mount.” In this teaching Jesus contrasts commonly held beliefs with His expectations. At least eleven times in this message Jesus shows His authority by declaring *“I say to you.”* A powerful example of this is found in Matthew 5:27,28*—"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But* ***I say to you*** *that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Here Jesus raises the level of adultery from the actual commission of the act to lusting after the woman even if the adulterous physical act is not committed. Throughout this message Jesus is establishing His authority above any other recognized authority. Jesus really raises the bar in Matthew 5:43,44*—"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But* ***I say to you****, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”*

Significantly, in the last part of the sermon on the mount, Jesus raises the level of His authority to one relating to being saved or lost. Consider these teachings from the Lord. In Matthew 7:21-27 we see this: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then* ***I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock****: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.* ***But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:*** *and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."* In this passage Jesus plainly takes on Himself the mantel of judge. *“I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”* He is openly declaring that He will have the say in who enters the kingdom of heaven. He further shows His authority by stating plainly that it is His word we have to follow. He has eliminated Moses from the salvation process and put Himself as the lawgiver men must obey. The audience that day did not miss the point. Matthew tells in verses 28, 29 of this chapter this *“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for* ***He taught them as one having authority****, and not as the scribes.”*

At the last supper on the night He was betrayed, Jesus again emphasizes that He is now THE LAWGIVER. Examine this passage*—"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.* ***And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*** *For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."* (John 12:46-50) Boldly, Jesus declares that man will not be judged according to the word of Moses, but according to what He Himself has spoken. He also points out that He speaks in concert with the Father. As Moses was the mouthpiece of God the Father to deliver the old covenant, Jesus the Son is the mouthpiece of God the Father to deliver the new covenant. In John 14 Jesus openly states that He is the true Lawgiver. Here are some samples from the chapter:

* Verse 6*—"I am the way, the truth, and the life****. No one comes to the Father except through Me.****”*
* Verse 15*—"If you love Me,* ***keep My commandments****.”*
* Verses 23,24*—"****If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him****. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.”*
* Verses 25,26*—"****These things I have spoken to you while being present with you****. 26 But the Helper,* ***the Holy Spirit,*** *whom the Father will send in My name,* ***He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”***

In John 15 Jesus emphasizes again that loving Him depended on doing what He said to do. In John 16 our Lord declares again that He is sending the Holy Spirit to tell them everything Jesus wanted them to know. There is no doubt from this that Jesus is saying plainly that He is now the ONE LAWGIVER.

After His resurrection from the dead and just prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus again unmistakably makes it plain that He is the ONE LAWGIVER.

He appears to His apostles and says this*—"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "****All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth****. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ***teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you****; and lo, I am with you always,* ***even to the end of the age****." Amen.* (Matthew 28:18-20) In this statement, Jesus makes three things to be plain.

* He has all authority in heaven and on earth
* The apostles are to teach people to obey everything He has commanded. Moses is left out, replaced by the new Lawgiver—Jesus
* This was to go forward to end of the age. There will not be another lawgiver coming. Jesus is the final lawgiver.

What remains is to see how the apostles understood the role of Jesus as the lawgiver. There are two figures who make it plain. Both are recognized as authorities in Christian teaching. One is Paul, the other is Peter. Let us begin with Paul.

Here are two primary passages that show openly that Christ is the authority for us today.

*“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but* ***there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*** *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that* ***the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*** (Galatians 1:6-12)

Notice that Paul says there are people seeking to pervert the gospel of Christ. He says those who do so should be accursed. He then positively states that what he teaches came by revelation of Jesus Christ. In Paul’s declaration, who is the One Lawgiver? No doubt, Jesus Christ. The second passage is much shorter but again, Paul plainly tells us who is to be our teacher and lawgiver, not Moses or any other man. *“****Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*** *in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* (Colossians 3:16-17)

Peter is equally straightforward in his teaching regarding who the lawgiver is for us today. When he preaches the first message to the gentiles represented by Cornelius and his family, Peter says this*—"Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.* ***The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ — He is Lord of all*** *— that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how* ***God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power****, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And* ***He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.*** *To* ***Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins****."* (Acts 10:34-43) Peter has four points for us to consider:

* The word was sent by God to the children of Israel and that peace was preached though Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.
* God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and Power.
* Jesus commanded the apostles to preach to the people and to testify that Jesus was ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.
* All the prophets witness that through the name of Jesus, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.

In his two epistles, Peter emphasizes the place of Jesus as the One Lawgiver. Consider these passages:

**1 Peter 1:24-25:** *"All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever."* ***Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.****”* The language here shows that the word of Christ is the intended message. Jesus taught that to the apostles when in Matthew 24:35 He said, ”*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*

**2 Peter 1:2-4**: *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* Peter emphasizes that Jesus is the source of all things that pertain to life and godliness. No room for any other lawgiver. Jesus is the ONE LAWGIVER.

Let us conclude by using the text for this lesson that without any opportunity for misunderstanding tells us, *“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.*”

There is something else that plainly leads us to this conclusion. To review, who is?

* The One Lord-Jesus
* The One Seed-Jesus
* The One Redeemer-Jesus
* The One Savior-Jesus
* The One Mediator-Jesus
* The One High Priest-Jesus
* The One Sacrifice-Jesus
* The One who gives us a new covenant-Jesus

Following this pattern, who must be the One Lawgiver? Jesus

The last thing we need to do is to give a statement of how Jesus as the One Lawgiver leads to unity in the body of believers. Here are some suggestions.

* Having ONE LAWGIVER gives all people the same standards by which to live and who will judge all people based off THOSE standards.
* Having ONE LAWGIVER ensures that all people have the same message of redemption and salvation.
* Having ONE LAWGIVER allows us to easily recognize those who pervert His word and deviate from His instructions.
* Having ONE LAWGIVER brings focus to the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus and gives us the hope in the resurrection from the dead.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Gospel

Galatians 1:6-12

***I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another;*** *but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.* ***But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed****. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.* ***But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man****. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but* ***it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ****.*

The word “gospel” is the English translation for a Greek word that means “the good news,” or a “good message.” The ideas found in the good message or gospel are so important that Paul the apostle declares that when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels that with flaming fire He will take vengeance on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul further states that those who reject the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and separated from the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:4-10). So, just what is this “good news” that is so important that to not act positively upon it results in being hit with the vengeance of the Lord Jesus? Let us move along the Biblical trail and find the answer.

The first mention of the gospel in found in Matthew 3:2 when John the Baptist preaches “*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* In Matthew 4:23-24 we find Jesus going throughout the province of Galilee “preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” To what kingdom is Jesus making a reference? In 2 Samuel 7:12-16 is the story of God talking to David. In that conversation, God makes this promise: “*And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."* When David’s son Solomon became king over Israel, God repeated the promise to him. (1 Kings 9:5) After several hundred years, the people of Israel have become so disobedient to the covenant God had made with them at Mt. Sinai, that God used the Babylonians to take the Israelites into captivity to discipline them. After that captivity took place, the people of Israel except for one short period were always a province of a bigger kingdom and not an independent kingdom.

What is significant is that God prior to the captivity had repeated His promise of an everlasting kingdom. One example is found in Psalm 145:11-13: *“They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.”* The prophet Isaiah in his prophecy about the coming Messiah or Christ says this: *“Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”* (Isaiah 9:7) Through the prophet Daniel, God repeats the same promise (2:44). The Jews of Jesus’ day were aware of these prophecies and had been waiting for the Messiah or Christ to come and deliver them from the oppression of the Romans and establish again an independent kingdom under a king who was of the seed of David. Thus, when Jesus comes proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, the Jews were all excited. It seemed to them that God was finally moving to make them an independent kingdom again.

As Jesus continued His preaching, the idea of the kingdom began to be expanded to bring to light the nature of the kingdom. Here is how Matthew describes what Jesus was accomplishing. *“The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”* (Matthew 11:5) Clearly there is something more going on than just the establishment of an earthly kingdom. The focus on the establishment of the “kingdom” includes the idea that it was good news for the poor. The average leader among the Jews would not comprehend such an idea because the poor in their eyes were not equipped to be leaders or rulers. Luke records for us an eye opening statement from Jesus in 4:18,19*—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."* Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-6, and plainly, He has something else in mind that goes well beyond the idea of an earthly independent nation. Indeed, had the Jews actually listened to John the Baptist, they would not have been surprised.

Because Jesus is not meeting the Jewish hope of establishing an independent kingdom, they turn from Him. His idea of a heavenly kingdom was not their goal. Yet, they used the proclamation by Jesus of a kingdom with Him as king to bring accusation against Jesus in front of the Romans. In Luke 23 and John 19 we find the Jewish leaders making charges against Jesus that involved the idea of Jesus promoting rebellion against the Caesar, the Roman ruler. Pilate, the Roman governor, knew of the claims that Jesus was a king and when questioning Jesus decided that Jesus was not guilty of rebellion since Jesus said, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* When Pilate asked Jewish leaders if he should crucify the king of the Jews, they responded, *“We have no king but Caesar.”* In this conversation we find the first problem with rejecting the good news of the kingdom of heaven. In doing so, one is rejecting Jesus, the Son of God as his king.

The death of Jesus on the cross seemed to put the idea of Jesus as an eternal king of an everlasting kingdom into the trash. However, His resurrection from the dead was the game changer in the idea of the “good news of the kingdom.” Indeed it opened up the whole idea that with Jesus as king, there is something a lot larger in God’s design that just a physical kingdom. Here is what we find included in the “Gospel of the Everlasting Kingdom”:

* Grace Acts 20:24
* The power of God to salvation to everyone who believes; The righteousness of God Romans 1:16,17
* Peace, good tidings of good things Romans 10:14-17
* Salvation, Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again the third day

1 Corinthians 15:1-5

* The glory of Christ, Christ Jesus is the Lord 2 Corinthians 4:3-6
* Justification by faith in Jesus and not in the works of the Law Galatians 2:14-21
* Participation in the blessings given Abraham Galatians 3:8,9
* Salvation Ephesians 1:13,14
* Heirs and partakers in the promise of Christ Ephesians 3:6,7
* Hope laid up for us in heaven Colossians 1:3-7
* Participation in God’s Kingdom and Glory 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12
* Rest when Christ is revealed 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10
* Everlasting consolation 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
* Life and immortality 2 Timothy 1:8-12
* Life with Christ; Reign with Christ 2 Timothy 2:8-13
* Born again to a new life 1 Peter 1:22-25

Here are two famous passages from Revelation that give us a word picture of our eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

**Revelation 21:3-8**

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

**Revelation 22:1-5**

*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

Why is God determined to reward those who obey but bring punishment on those that reject the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer is simple. A perfect God lived in the flesh of imperfect men to fulfill a covenant man would not and could not keep. This covenant required an atoning sacrifice to pay for sins. Jesus, the image of the invisible God, became that atoning sacrifice and had His blood shed to pay for our sins. He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. It cost God a lot to open the door of this kingdom for us. He will not allow us to disregard what He did for us and escape the consequences of our choice.

Participation in the kingdom of heaven with Jesus requires two fundamental things on our part.

The First is faith.

**Romans 1:16-17**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

The Second is obedience. We are going to see this requirement by quoting from Paul the apostle who wrote the passage just above. We do not want to let people teach in error by denying obedience when the same apostle in the same letter requires it.

**Romans 1:1-6**

*Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for* ***obedience to the faith*** *among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.*

**Romans 10:14-17**

*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things****!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*** *For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, summarizes some essential things to believe by giving us this list:

* Christ died for our sins
* Christ was buried
* Christ rose again on the third day

How do we obey this? Paul plainly tells us in Romans 6:1-6, by being crucified with Christ in baptism, by being buried with Christ in baptism, and by being resurrected with Christ when we come up from the water into a new life. Paul in his Roman letter matches beautifully the response to the gospel that Jesus says is necessary to be saved. Mark 16:16*—“He that believes and is baptized will be saved.”*

How does having ONE GOSPEL bring unity to the body of Christ?

* ONE GOSPEL gives all men a common hope.
* ONE GOSPEL unites all those who believe and obey into the same everlasting kingdom.
* ONE GOSPEL requires all people to submit to the one King, Jesus the Christ
* The ONE GOSPEL, which fulfills all prophecies concerning it and is established through the one of whom all prophecies foretold, brings certainty to the promises of the kingdom.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Way

Galatians 1:6-12

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8****But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed****. 9As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.10For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. 11But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Most biblical scholars place Paul’s first missionary trip to the region of Galatia between 47 and 49 A.D, and the commonly accepted date for Paul’s epistle to these churches is around 57 A.D. Using these two presumed dates, there is a period of 10-12 years between the time Paul establishes these churches and the time of his writing to them. His epistle deals greatly with the false doctrine that had infiltrated the churches by Judaizers who were teaching that Gentiles needed to follow the law of Moses in order to be saved. Yes, in a single decade, the gospel of Jesus Christ had become so perverted by these wicked men that Paul felt convicted to plead for the churches’ repentance!

With such an astonishing turn in such a short amount time, one can only imagine the amount of deviation the teachings of man have taken the gospel of Jesus in the almost 2000 years since then. We can see this almost everywhere. Drive down the main street of your city, and you may find several different places of worship. Some may even be next door to each other. And even though each of them teaches something different from the others, all boast the same claim: “we’re going to heaven!” As we saw in our One Faith lesson, this is an impossibility. It is absolutely impossible for all doctrines to yield the same result because there is only ONE WAY.

Notice some important things about our main text: 1) when one follows another form of doctrine, he is actually turning away from Christ; 2) any form of false doctrine is not a supplement to the doctrine delivered by Paul but *a perversion of* the doctrine delivered by him; 3) Paul pronounces a curse on anyone who distorts the gospel of Christ (including himself!); 4) Paul had previously warned the churches not to turn away from the gospel that he preached; 5) Paul was far more concerned with teaching the correct form of doctrine because it pleased God not man; 6) the doctrine that Paul taught was not his nor any other human being’s gospel but Christ’s; 7) Jesus Christ Himself revealed the gospel which He wanted Paul to deliver to the churches. Yet with all these warnings to follow only the gospel of Jesus Christ, many chose to obey a perverted doctrine rather than the one delivered by Paul to the churches. Still, many today make themselves accursed by believing or teaching a form of doctrine not given by our One Lawgiver.

King Solomon, the wisest man to have ever walked the face of the earth besides the Savior Himself, says twice in Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”* Paul further warns us, *“Do not be wise in your own opinion”* (Romans 12:16). Each and every one of us make decisions based off what we think is right for our own lives. We may have taken the advice of famous preachers, family or friends, books, television or radio shows, so-called modern day prophets, secrets of the ancient world, or simply used our own experience to guide us in our decision-making. But if any of those decisions are not in concert with the will of God, they will always lead to strife and, eventually, an eternal death. The Way is no different; yet, you can go online right now and find a church gathering that literally teaches anything you want to hear. However, there is but ONE WAY, regardless of what we think is right or what we might have been taught. ANY deviation from the gospel of Jesus Christ or anything contradictory to it is a sure way toward, as Solomon puts it, “death.” Friend, our salvation is not something we want leading toward death. Jesus is the only one who can honestly claim, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6). So, we must listen to Jesus! Believe Jesus! Obey Jesus!

I once heard a quote from a preacher-friend who I deeply respect and admire. He told me, “We must bend our beliefs to the Bible not the Bible to our beliefs.” What a concept! And what unity the church could achieve if it would only do this one thing. We would instantly resolve every form of doctrine and denomination back to the teachings of Christ. This is why we must always strive to learn from and apply what the Bible tells us. We must return to foundational teachings of the gospel of Christ. Take, for instance, this passage:

**Acts 18:24-28** – *Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.*

Notice that Apollos was a man who knew the Scriptures very well and was not ashamed to preach from them. However, he was missing an important part in his ministry: the baptism of Jesus Christ. So, Aquila and Priscilla do what any good student of the Bible should do. They correct him. And guess what? Apollos actually listens! There is no confrontation. No protest. No “That’s not what is meant. You’re taking it out of context.” (Yes, this was literally said to me repeatedly as I tried to talk with a gentleman who was handing out Christian literature at a mall one day. The literature he shared promoted salvation by faith alone [sinner’s prayer], and I was trying to convince him that faith AND baptism are essential for salvation. I opened up my Bible and showed him verse after verse about the necessity of faith and baptism; however, every single passage I showed him concerning baptism was met with this objection: “You’re taking it out of context.” Rather than hearing what the word of God said, he dismissed it. At one point, I even pleaded with him, “Brother, if I’m taking these verses out of context and I have them wrong, then please teach me. I don’t want to get this wrong. So, if I’m wrong, teach me.” It was at that point he walked away. Perhaps my salvation wasn’t that important to him… I digress.)

Apollos’ example is one from which we all can learn. Even though he knew the Scriptures very well, he changed what he perceived as truth to match the actual truth of the Scriptures. He bent his beliefs to the Bible, and we should all be determined to just that. Why? Because *“all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is *the* book. It is the ONE BOOK we must accept and base all our beliefs on because it is the inspired word of God. Anything outside of the Scriptures is not the word of God. Consider the following verses which further prove the authority of the Scriptures:

**1 Corinthians 14:37** – *If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.*

**1 Thessalonians 1:5** – *For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.*

**Hebrews 1:1,2** – *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.*

**1 Peter 1:23-25** – *Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24because “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, 25but the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.*

**2 Peter 1:20,21** – *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

**Revelation 22:18,19** – *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Finally, it is important to note that the gospel of Jesus Christ is referred to as “the Way” five times in the book of Acts (9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 24:14; 24:22). Since nothing in Scripture is accidental, this, without a doubt, is a deliberate attempt by Luke to prove that the gospel taught by Jesus and His inspired apostles is not a mere suggestion but the clear path of salvation which must be followed. The Way is not optional. Beside it, there is no other. We are not left to our own devices to create another way if we don’t like what the Way teaches. The Way is not for us to treat like the options we have at a buffet: a little bit here, a little bit there; a little bit of this, a little bit of that. It is for us to obey. Period. The Bible is the One Book that teaches the One Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ONE WAY.

How does having ONE WAY promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* The ONE WAY given by Christ ensures us that we have the *right* way.
* Having ONE WAY allows for us to maintain a focus on one place for our salvation.
* Jesus’ ONE WAY gives all a common hope.

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Name

Acts 11:25,26

*Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people.* ***And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.***

In a previous lesson, we gave the number of over 33,000 distinct denominations who say they are Christian. Among the names used by these groups are Baptist, Methodist, Mormon, Catholic, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and a myriad of others. Our purpose is not to be anyone’s judge but to see what the Scripture actually says about the name believers are to be called, then plead for all who believe in Jesus to be called by that name and that name only. We make that plea because Jesus prayed for all who believed in Him to be ONE (John 17:11; 21,22 ). The reality of the diverse names used by those who believe in Jesus is to identify themselves as distinct from other groups of believers. Effectively, the names are used to promote division.

The question thus becomes this: Did God design and plan for a unifying name for believers in Jesus Christ? If God did have such intent, it behooves us to abandon divisive names and use the ONE NAME God designed. Please go with us along the scriptural trail as we find the answer.

A primary understanding is that in the Old Testament we have the story of God’s work to bring forward a Redeemer/Savior who would unite all mem into one family. The Old Covenant was not given to all men, but to Israel alone. Certainly, it was possible for people who were Gentiles to voluntarily put themselves under that covenant if they so chose, but there was no evangelistic effort mandated for Israel to go out and try to win Gentiles to the Law of Moses. Famous examples of people who converted to the Law are the family of Rahab from the city of Jericho and Ruth the daughter-in-law of Naomi. We have seen from prophecy that God had the design of replacing the Old Covenant He made with Israel with a new covenant made for all people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). God declares that a new covenant was necessary because people broke the old covenant, and with that new covenant came a new name.

We actually have prophetic utterance that God Himself would give a new name for those who followed Him and that this new name would be given through the Gentiles. Here are the pertinent passages:

**Isaiah 62:2** – *“The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name.”*

**Isaiah 65:15** – *“You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; For the Lord GOD will slay you, And call His servants by another name.”*

**Amos 9:11,12** – *“On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” Says the LORD who does this thing.”*

What are the significant points in these prophecies?

* God Himself would give His people a new name
* The name would be given through Gentiles

Do we have evidence in the New Testament of the fulfillment of these prophecies? The answer is a resounding “YES.” In Acts 11:26 we find this simple declaration: *“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”* Why is this declaration significant? The congregation in Antioch was composed primarily of Gentiles.

People who want to defend denominational names or who wish to deny the work of God among men will normally say the name “Christian” was given by the enemies of the faith and that it was a name of derision. Basically, they are claiming the enemies of the faith were using this to “name call” people of the Way and to laugh at believers using this name to ridicule them. We categorically and emphatically deny that this is true and plainly declare that the giving of the name Christian was the fulfillment of the prophecies in Isaiah and Amos. Here is why we so declare.

In Acts chapter 15, the leaders of the early church gather in Jerusalem to discuss the issue of whether or not Gentiles are required to keep the Law of Moses as part of the New Covenant. After much discussion, the decision is made that Christians do NOT have to keep the Old Covenant to be in Jesus. The leader named James gives this statement in support of that decision to not make the Old Covenant part of the salvation plan. Here is what he says: *“Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name”* (14). James then says, *“And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After! this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name’ Says the Lord who does all these things”* (15-17). Twice in his speech, James declares that God has given the Gentiles a name and that Simon Peter agrees with him in this understanding. James also says that this is the fulfillment of the prophecy given by Amos.

Despite this undeniable evidence, it is still common today to see commentators ignore James’ plain statement regarding the name Christian by continuing to defend the idea that the name Christian was given as a way for unbelievers to show disdain toward those who accepted Christ as Lord. Is there any other way to combat the falsehood regarding the name Christian? The answer is most certainly, and this is also found in the Holy Scripture.

Why is it so hard for some to accept that the name Christian is a God given name? If Christian is the ONE NAME by which we must be called, shouldn’t the first use of this name in Acts 11:26 include proof that the name was actually given by God? This is a great question, and the answer is that Acts 11:26 *does* declare that the name Christian was given by God. We can’t see it in most of the English translations, but we are not surprised. Just as Satan has sought to hide the fact that baptism is immersion in water by putting into English the word *“baptism”* for the Greek word “*baptizo*,” translators have hidden the exact meaning of the word *“called”* in Acts 11:26. Let us do a bit of study regarding the Greek word translated as “called” in this verse.

Here is the Greek word and its correct translation: *“χρηματίζω”* or *“Chrēmatizō”* *“Were Called, actually to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven.”*

What follows is the actual definition and discussion of the word from dictionaries of the Greek language and how it should be translated into English.

Acts 11:26

 xrhmati/sai te  prw/ton e)n  )Antioxei/a| tou\ maqhta\ Xristianou

 chr¢matísai  te  prœ¡ton  en  Antiocheía  toús  math¢tás  Christianoús

Acts 11:26

were called and first in Antioch the disciples Christians

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Here now is the discussion of the phrase “were called.”

Axrhmati/zw means **give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven** (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, PC Study Bible formatted Electronic Database. Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.)

xrhmati/zw This verb occurs 9 times in the NT, **7 times referring to injunctions or prophecies from God**. (from Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament © 1990 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

xrhmatismo/ **oracular response, divine statement** (from A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Revised Edition, edited by Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, © 2003 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart. All rights reserved.)

xrhmati/zw **to make known a divine revelation - 'to make known God's message, to reveal a message from God.'** (from Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain. Copyright © 1988 United Bible Societies, New York. Used by permission.)

**Something is revealed or prophesied**. (from Bauer Greek English Lexicon)

Greek lexicons (dictionaries) that give a complete discussion of the word *“chreematísai”* found in Acts 11:26 acknowledge that the word carries the idea that the calling was a divine naming or revelation.

There are actually translations of the scripture that get it right:

**Young’s Literal Translation** Acts 11:26 – *and having found him, he brought him to Antioch, and it came to pass that they a whole year did assemble together in the assembly, and taught a great multitude, the disciples also were divinely called first in Antioch Christians.*

**The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures** Acts 11: 26 – “styled divinely”

**International English Bible** Acts 11:26 – *In Antioch, God called the followers of Jesus “Christians” for the first time.*

**New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures** Acts 11:26 – *It was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians.*

**Julia Smith Translation** Acts 11:26 – *And the disciples were Christians by divine intimation first in Antioch.*

Center references put in place by Bible students have Acts 11:26 as a reference for Amos 9:11,12. This clearly indicates that the reference writer believes that the Acts 11:26 event is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos 9:11,12.

Interestingly, a great many commentators make this remark regarding the word “called” in Acts 11:26. “The word *chrematizo* usually means by divine instruction but not in this case because there is no reason for God to give it.” Can you imagine the audacity to acknowledge the correct meaning of the word and then declare it does not have that meaning in this verse “because there is no reason for God to give it.” I would hate to stand before God Almighty on the Day of Judgment and tell God to His face that He had no reason to give the name Christian to those who believe in His Son. The book of Revelation says that at judgment *“books will be opened and the dead will be judged according the things written in the books”* (Revelation 20:12). I can imagine the Lord opening the Holy Scripture to the prophecies in Isaiah and Amos and then asking these men “who gave them permission to say that I, the Lord God, had no reason to give the name Christian to the Gentile believers in Antioch?”

Is the name “Christian” used in other place in Scripture? Yes, and here they are:

**Acts 26:28** – *Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*

**1 Peter 4:16** – *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*

Here are two other important verses that relate the name by which we believers are called:

**James 2:7**– *Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?”* What namecould this be? Clearly, the name Christian.

**Ephesians 3:14,15** – *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”* What name could this be? Clearly, the name Christian.

Does the scripture say anything about denominational names or names that divide us? The answer is yes.

**1 Corinthians 1:10-13** – *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*

**1 Corinthians 3:3,4** – *for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?”*

From these two passages, it is evident that God does not like us using names we pick because they cause division and reveal that we are not spiritual. But what about the names “disciple,” “saint,” “sons of God,” “brethren” and “members?” This is simple. These words are common descriptive nouns of those who believe and not proper names.

We should be happy to be a force of unity for those who are believers in Jesus Christ and to ask them to simply be called by Christians. We should acknowledge the authority of God in choosing that name for the followers of Christ and not try to deny His will.

Here is the ultimate question: Why do men fight Acts 11:26 and the truth it contains? The answer is simple. They deny the authority of God, for they know the uniting power of the ONE NAME: Christian.

How does having ONE NAME, CHRISTIAN, promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Since our ONE NAME is from God, it is the only name I should use since He knew that Christian is the right name to call all those who follow Him
* The ONE NAME is the only name that immediately identifies us with the One who died on the cross for our salvation
* Having ONE NAME destroys the division that men and Satan like to create by uniting us all under the same name

One: The Number of Unity – There is One Foundation

1 Corinthians 3:11

*For* ***no other foundation*** *can anyone lay than* ***that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ***

As any master builder or great debater knows, a solid and sure foundation is critical to their expertise. A single crack in the foundation of a new house can deepen and worsen to the point of total collapse. A single point left unnoticed or unstudied can render an entire argument invalid. The foundation of anything meaningful or important must be rooted in beliefs or values that cannot be compromised despite the constant pressures weighted down upon it. Businesses sometimes return to the “ground level” of thinking as a way to get back to their roots of selling products. People in finance sometimes speak of the “bottom line” as the point in which they no longer turn a profit. So, if businesses and homes have certain things in which they are founded, certainly something as important as our faith should too, right? Without a doubt, yes. This is precisely why Jesus serves as the church’s ONE FOUNDATION.

With so many different opinions that Peter or some other prophet is the foundation of the church, how can we be sure that Jesus is the ONE FOUNDATION? One needs to look no further than the main verse for this lesson. Paul, an inspired man of God, outright declares that no one can lay any other foundation “than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Paul not only tells the church at Corinth that the foundation for their faith has already been laid (which means anything taught contrary to Jesus’ teaching cannot be considered truth), but he also tells us exactly who our foundation is (which means no one but Jesus can serve as the foundation of our faith). A verse like this should leave absolutely no doubt to the mind. Yet, one of the biggest misconceptions is that Peter serves as the church’s foundation. This is false. Here is why.

The misconception comes from a passage in Matthew’s gospel (16:13-20). In that chapter, Jesus asks His disciples who the people in the area think He is. The disciples answer that some people think He is John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or some other prophet. Jesus then asks who *they* think He is. Peter, being the mouthpiece of the Twelve and certainly the most zealous, answers, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (vs 16). Jesus’ response serves as the place where unlearned or stubborn men begin their misunderstanding: *Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* Notice in verse 18 that Jesus says to Peter, “And on this rock I will build my church.” Some people take this statement to mean that Jesus would eventually build His church upon Peter. We will show you why this is undeniably false.

First, according to Strong’s Concordance, the name Jesus gives to Simon (“Peter”) in the Greek language is *Petros*, meaning “a (piece of) rock.” Think pebble or stone. This word is also masculine in language gender. But when we look forward at the word Jesus uses for the “rock” He will build His church upon, we see a different word: *petra*. *Petra* means “a (mass of) rock” either literally or figuratively. Think foundation or slab. This word is feminine in language gender. Scripture always refers to Jesus’ church as female (Ephesians 5:22-33), so it would make sense that the church would also be built upon the *petra*, a female gender noun. Therefore, Peter cannot be the “rock” upon which Jesus builds His church since the “rock” He will build upon is female in gender. Peter is male. Jesus is speaking of two different things which He distinguishes by using two different words: the “rock” upon which Jesus builds His church is the “(mass of) rock” [*petra*], which is the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, not merely “a (piece of) rock” [*Petros*], a flawed human being. This brings up our next point.

Secondly, to say the church is founded upon Peter is to believe that the church is founded upon a man who was flawed and imperfect, a person who needed the forgiveness of sins just as much as the rest of the world. Remember that it is important to sometimes read everything written above and below a passage. Let’s take a look at something below our passage in Matthew: *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” 23But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.* Do you notice what Jesus calls Peter? Satan! Why does Jesus call Peter this? The word “satan” means “enemy” or “adversary.” Peter in his ignorance is trying to prevent the redemption of mankind by seeking to keep Jesus from dying on the cross. If the church is founded upon Peter, then the church is actually founded upon on a man who, for a moment, was an enemy of Christ, “a satan,” who tried to prevent our salvation. This cannot be so! Why would a perfect Savior found His most precious possession, the church, upon a flawed human being whom He just called a “satan”? Notice also that Peter rebukes Jesus. What kind of mentality must a man possess to rebuke the Son of God? (Peter made that mistake several times before he learned better at the Last Supper.) Should the church ever have the audacity to rebuke Jesus? Jesus also calls Peter an “offense” and says that he is “not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Dear friend, the church is not founded upon an offensive man who was not mindful of the things of God!

The “rock” upon which Jesus builds His church is not *who* stated the confession that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God” in Matthew 16:16. It could have been any of the other disciples. Insert any other person making that confession, and the church would still not be founded upon that person. The church is not founded upon *who* is making the confession but *what* is being confessed – namely, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God. Our entire faith is based upon this one fact. All our beliefs, all the promises made by God, are grounded in this one fact. If Jesus is not the Christ, the Son of the Living God, then our faith is all for nothing, and we are people to be pitied. Consider what Paul says:

**1 Corinthians 15:12-19** – *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

The fact that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God, grounds the church on the only perfect foundation. In Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul tells us: *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* What a beautiful spiritual home, with Jesus as our “chief cornerstone!”

Foundations were laid quite differently in Jesus’ time than they are today. Today’s foundations are typically built using boards, rebar, and concrete. In Jesus’ day, foundations were first laid by using one large stone called a cornerstone. This stone was hewed out of an even larger rock and fashioned into a rectangular block. The most important thing about the cornerstone is that, out of all the other stones used for the foundation of these ancient buildings, it had to be the one that was the smoothest, straightest, and strongest. One imperfect side and the walls would be skewed. One blemished corner and the floors would be sloped. One cracked plane and the entire building would fall. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Jesus is called by Paul the “chief cornerstone” of the church. The image is undeniable: God, being called the Rock several times in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 22:2,32,47; Psalm 18:2,31,46), hews an image of Himself as the Man Jesus (Colossians 1:15) who becomes the perfect cornerstone on which the church is founded by living a completely perfect life (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus, as the chief cornerstone is also the fulfillment of prophecy. Consider the following prophecies and their fulfillment:

Prophecy: **Psalm 118:22** – ***The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone****.*

Fulfillment: **Matthew 21:42-46** – *Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘****The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone****. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? 43“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” 45Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.*

This statement by Jesus is also found in Mark 12:10-12 and Luke 20:17-20. In all three gospels, it is evident that Jesus is claiming to be the rejected stone which has become the chief cornerstone. Jesus is outright claiming that He is the foundation.

Fulfillment: **Acts 4:10-12** – This is part of Peter’s sermon at the temple after he and John healed the man who was lame. *“Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11****This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone****.’ 12Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Notice there are two things that Peter is saying. First, Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy. By implication, Peter is also saying that he is NOT the foundation.

Prophecy: **Isaiah 8:13-15** – *“The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. 14He will be as a sanctuary, but* ***a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel****, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.”*

Fulfillment: Romans 9:30-33 – *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31****but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness****. 32Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.* ***For they stumbled at that stumbling stone****. 33As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion* ***a stumbling stone and rock of offense****, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”*

Prophecy: **Isaiah 28:16** – *Therefore thus says the Lord God: “****Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily****.”*

Fulfillment: **1 Peter 2:4-6** – *Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “****Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame****.”* Notice again that Peter is very plain in stating that Jesus is the foundation stone. He also is stating by implication that he, Peter, is NOT the foundation stone.

What is significant about the prophecies and their fulfillment are the plain declarations by Peter that Jesus Christ and NOT he, Peter, is the foundation or chief cornerstone. Those who insist on claiming that Peter is the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ make this claim in the face of Peter’s personal refusal to accept that role. Peter insists Jesus Christ is the one foundation.

It is with absolute and certain disregard for Scripture to believe that anyone or anything besides Jesus the Christ could serve as the foundation of His church. Believing in Jesus and believing Jesus are two different things. Simply *believing in* Jesus does not save you. *Believing Jesus* to the point that we actually do what He commands, without a doubt, does. When we do this, we are like the wise man who builds his house on the rock. Even though the floodwaters rose and beat violently against the house, it remained unmovable since its foundation was dug into the rock (Luke 6:46-49). And this is certainly our goal – to build a spiritual home founded upon Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God, our ONE FOUNDATION which cannot be moved!

As children, some of us learned this song: *I’m on the rock. Hallelujah! I’m on the rock to stay. Hallelujah! For he lifted me from the miry clay. I’m on the rock to stay.* We plead with you to stand with us on Christ the solid rock.

How does having ONE FOUNDATION promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* Having ONE FOUNDATION roots us all into the same perfect cornerstone: Jesus
* With ONE FOUNDATION, we can ensure our individual spiritual homes collectively grow into a temple which glorifies God
* ONE FOUDATION establishes us on the same beliefs and principles which allow us to whether any storm, since our foundation is immovable

One: The Number of Unity-One Head

Colossians 1:15-18

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.* ***And He is the head of the body, the church****, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

In Revelation 22:13, Jesus claims, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”* Here, Jesus is without a doubt claiming His preeminence in all things. Like the first letter of the Greek alphabet Alpha and the last letter Omega, nothing was before Him and nothing can be after Him. He has always been, He is, and He will always be. In the previous lesson, we saw that the foundation for the church is Jesus Christ, serving as the chief cornerstone. In this lesson, we will see that He also serves as the ONE HEAD. Serving as both the foundation and the head gives Jesus the preeminence in all things concerning the church. Since nothing can be laid before a foundation nor can be above the head, Jesus is the first, the last, and everything in between. With this, He holds the exclusive rights to all power, honor, and authority. He is the ONE HEAD of the church!

As we can see from the verse in Colossians, the Holy Spirit gives Paul an important analogy in comparing the church to a human body and declaring that the church, as a body, has a head. He names the head of the church to be Jesus Christ. It is no coincidence that Paul on several occasions likens the church to a human body (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). The human body is a series of cells which make up tissues which make up organs which make up systems that work in concert to provide life to the body. Each have their own purpose and function. In the same way, we all have different abilities which aid to support the body of Christ. However, in every reference, Paul never gives a mere member of the body the role of the head. This again, is no coincidence, for Christ, and Christ alone, is the head of all things to include His body, the church. Why is the idea of a church having a head so important? Let us consider the function of the head on a body, the body of any living thing.

We first realize that the head of a body is a crucial part of any body. No head, NO life. The human head is the source of all kinds of vital functions since it houses the most important part of the body: the brain. For instance, a part of the brain called the medulla oblongata controls automatic functions such as breathing, blood pressure, and heart rhythm. Here is a list of other things the head controls—

Behavior, Intelligence, Memory, Movement, Hearing, Speech, Vision, Consciousness, Swallowing, Language, Reading, Sensations, Balance, Coordination, Control of motor function, Control of your nerve system, Smell, and Taste.

This list is not complete, but as you watch the brain in our head deteriorate, you see the capacity of the body in the areas controlled by the brain diminish. You can clearly see, that without the head, the body cannot function. This is important because the head should control all that the body does. Can you imagine the legs just deciding all on their own to cross a busy street against the brain’s advice to wait for traffic to pass? Tragedy could ensue! In order for the human body to function optimally, it must “be on the same page” with itself. It must be guided by the function of the brain (head). The thing that is certainly true from Paul’s statement is that he sees the function of Christ the head as vital to church being able to function correctly. The head provides direction to the body, Christ provides direction to the church. The church without a head would be without true direction.

The religious world recognizes the necessity of a head for the church to provide teaching, direction and regulation of the functions of the body. All the organized denominations select a “head” of the organization to run things. The problem with this approach is that it does two things. First it provides conflict between the Head Christ and the head man. The second thing is that it turns the church into something that in the world will be seen as freakish. Martin Luther recognized this in the 16th century when he started the Reformation. Here is what he said regarding the claim of the Roman pope to be the head of the church—“If the pope were the head of the Christian Church, then the church were a monster with two heads, seeing that Paul says that Christ is her head.” As Martin Luther says, Paul the apostle plainly declares that Christ is the head of the church.

Paul actually goes further and makes a bigger declaration: **Colossians 2:9-10** *“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”* Notice this is a much larger authority Paul claims belongs to Jesus, *“head of ALL principality and power.”* This makes Jesus the head of every nation and government on the earth. Remember the book of Revelation calls Jesus the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Notice how Paul says that we are “complete in Him.” It should be apparent why Jesus serves as the most vital part of His body – namely, the head. Paul declares this even further when speaking to the people of Athens in Acts 17:28 – *“For in Him we live and move and have our being.”* Without our head, we have no life, no movement, and no purpose. Christ gives purpose and meaning to those who are in Him.

Three times in the letter to the Ephesians Paul teaches us that Jesus is the head of the church. Here are the passages:

**Ephesians 1:18-23** – *“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His 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 age but also in that which is to come.* ***And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”***

**Ephesians 4:11-16** – *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,* ***but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —*** *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

**Ephesians 5:23-24** – *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also* ***Christ is head of the church;*** *and* *He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”*

What is valuable about all these passages is that they not only affirm that Christ is THE HEAD of the church, but they also tell us why He is THE HEAD. Let us see what is revealed in these scriptures.

* *God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places*
* *He is far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come*
* *God put all things under His feet*
* *Christ as the head joins and knits the whole body together*
* *Christ as the head causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love*
* *He is the Savior of the body*

Christ, as head, not only brings unity to the body by joining people of different races, ages, genders, skill levels, economic classes, and physical abilities (placing them exactly where He sees fit) but also by giving them access to the same mind. Therefore, since we are Christ’s body, we, too, must “be on the same page” with Him. God did not leave out this important detail concerning His body. Consider the following passage:

**1 Corinthians 2:11-16** – *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?”* ***But we have the mind of Christ.***

Notice that “we have the mind of Christ!” Having the mind of Christ means that we know His will for us. Having the mind of Christ means that we have the same goals and desires as Him. Having the mind of Christ means that we have the same attitude as He does. Having the same mind we speak the same things, learn the same things, and believe the same things. The mind of Christ unites. It doesn’t divide. This is why Paul warns the churches or individuals to be of the same mind no less than ten times throughout His letters. Whether it was the false doctrine of the Judaizers in the book of Galatians or Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians chapter four, something or someone had disrupted the synergy of the body of Christ.

This is no different today. Many false doctrines and false apostles still plague the church. As we have covered extensively throughout this study, denominations brought about by man have divided the body of Christ. What was supposed to be a single organism is now splayed across the globe as separate organizations, each claiming to be the church that Jesus set up upon His resurrection. Many claim Jesus as the head of their church yet leave the teachings of the church in the hands of men. This cannot be so! If Jesus is the head of the church, then let Jesus be the head of the church! This is not to say that leaders of congregations cannot set in order meeting places, times, or other things such as studies or support groups. Christ being the ONE HEAD *does* mean, however, they must teach their congregations the doctrine of Jesus, the One who died for the body. But how can this be accomplished with so many beliefs and doctrines? Simple! We abandon the things from the minds of men and look to the mind of Christ.

**Philippians 2:5-11** – ***Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*** *6who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7but* ***made Himself of no reputation,*** *taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8And being found in appearance as a man,* ***He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*** *9Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The mind of Christ is humility. My friend, if we were all to practice the same mind as Christ, there would be no room to lift ourselves or anyone else into any place reserved for Him. God “highly exalted Him” not me. He gave Him “the name which is above every name.” Jesus was in God’s form and knew it was not robbery because He is equal to God. I am but a mere man, a mortal, a person so desperately in need of Jesus that I must confess my sins to Him on a daily basis. No one will bow their knee to my name nor confess me as the Lord. Therefore, we must submit to Him who knows the will of the Father and lived the only perfect live. We must trust the source of our life, our movement, and our being: the ONE HEAD of the body, Jesus Christ.

How does having ONE HEAD promote unity in the body of Christ, the church?

* ONE HEAD gives the body the same set of directions and the same teachings which point the body to eternal life
* With Jesus as the ONE HEAD, He shows us the same mind we are to have so that we are in concert with the Father’s will
* Having ONE HEAD gives us security on Judgment Day if we, the body, have obeyed that Head