

Greetings, dear reader, in the Blessed, Bountiful, and Beautiful Name of JESUS!

Here we look at the church as the Body of Christ.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. I Cor 12:27

In I Corinthians 12, Paul uses this picture of the church to show how every member in the body has a part to play, and how if one member or part of the body of Christ suffers, other parts suffer with it, and how we have need one of another, because we have differing gifts.

For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And if they were all one member, where were the body?

But now are they many members, yet but one body.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. I Cor 12:14-26

The early church, which consisted purely of Jews, thought, up to Acts 18, that Gentiles would have to become Jews, i.e. adopt a Jewish lifestyle, to be saved. We (the Gentile component who are now in the majority) tend to

have gone to the other extreme, namely we tend to think Jews have to abandon their Jewishness to be saved, and that all the promises in the Bible which pertain to Israel really pertain to us. I wish to address this topic and provide some needed balance.

The church includes both redeemed "Messianic" Jews as well as redeemed Gentiles as the people of God. However, there are promises in the Word specifically for Jews which are being fulfilled, and some which still have to be fulfilled.

Check Gen 12 and Gen 17 - God made a covenant with Abraham and promised:

(1) A blessing to the world (Gen 12:3) through Abraham's descendants via a son of promise (Isaac, through whom came Jacob whose name was changed to Israel, whose sons were the 12 tribes of Israel from whence came the Jews). The New Testament makes it plain that this promise was fulfilled by Jesus (Gal 3:8).

(2) That the Jews would inherit a physical spot of land (Canaan) in the Middle East for "an everlasting possession". (Gen 17:8).

Jeremiah 31:1-14 is a passage that has been fulfilled in our generation before our eyes, through the return of the Jews to their promised homeland.

Jeremiah 3:14 (Israel may have backslid but the Lord is still married to her), Hosea 14:4, Zech 2:7-8 and Zech 8:1-3 show God's great love for the Jews as "the apple of His eye" and of Jerusalem. The Bible was written entirely by Jews. The early church was composed entirely of Jews, Jesus was a Jew and He Himself said that *"salvation is of the Jews"* (John 4:22).

Read and study Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11 on this subject. Paul points out in Romans 9 that *"they are not all Israel, who are of Israel"* (ie the Gentiles are included) and that neither are all the Jews the children of God, but that the children of God are the children of promise, i.e. those with faith in Christ, the promised seed of Abraham through Whom all the nations are blessed, Jews and Gentiles alike. There is, in Christ, no difference between the Jew and the Gentile (Romans 10:12, also read Ephesians 2 & 3). Paul however laments the spiritual blindness on his natural people the Jews. Then in Romans 11:11-26 he makes some extremely important statements concerning them:

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved..."

Alas, the Christian church has not, over the centuries, fully appreciated this passage of scripture. Christendom has, in spiritual blindness even worse than that of the Jews, indulged in a level of persecution of the Jews that makes it now difficult to win them to the Lord. I wish to point out, as the apostle Paul tried to, that we own them a tremendous debt. The Jews are our spiritual roots; we should honour them just as we should honour our parents. In my country Barbados we own them a special natural debt also. In the 16th century it was Sephardi Jews (of Spanish/Portugese descent) who were largely responsible for guiding the building of our 500 odd windmills at the

time. We also have one of the oldest synagogues in the Western Hemisphere in our capital city of Bridgetown.

Thank God that the cross makes both Jew and Gentile one through the blood of Christ; the apostle Paul thrice emphasizes this point in his epistles:

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

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

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all **one** in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:27-28*

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but **Christ is all, and in all**. Col 3:9-11*

May God's people indeed be one, united and strong.

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