

# BAPTIST ALTERNATIVES TO CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGY

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## Tuesday Afternoon

### THE BODY OF CHRIST

#### Introduction

1. Older/earlier Baptist theologians derived/argued about the meaning of church primarily by analysis of the classical Greek usage. That does make sense, for most of Paul's letters where he discusses the church were written to Greek cities, which were quite familiar with the classical Greek usage and culture.
2. Apparently most current scholars think that Paul's treatment of the body of Christ is the place where focus should lie.
3. Indeed, discussion about the body of Christ and its relation with both baptism and the Lord's Supper is where most believers in the invisible, universal church base their arguments.
4. A close presupposition is that the expressions "in Christ" and "in the body of Christ" are essentially synonymous.
5. The current lecture, accordingly, will discuss the body of Christ, beginning with the most familiar passage (in Eph. 4) which seems to affirm that there is only one body, and conclude with an alternate view as to what the body of Christ is.

#### I. Paul's Exhortation for Spiritual Unity in the Church (Eph. 4:1-6)

1. A hortatory passage. -- "I beseech" -- exhort, urge.
2. *There is* has been added to bring out the generally supposed meaning. Hence, "there is

one body and one spirit."

3. A seven-fold unity of the Spirit? – body, spirit, hope, lord, faith, baptism, God and father?
4. **But** "body" and "spirit" are set apart from the others: "even [or, just] as . . . . one hope."
5. The real exhortation refers only to the first two: "body" and "spirit." The Ephesians are exhorted to strive to maintain "spiritual unity" (i.e., "unity of the spirit" by being "one body" and "one spirit . . . in the bond of peace"– peace is what bonds them together!
6. Paul is not stating a declarative sentence in which he affirms an actual, absolute body.
7. Elsewhere he does the same thing, with almost the same expression:
  - a. Stand worthy in one spirit and one soul (Phil. 1:27-28) – a letter written about the same time as Ephesians – Prison Epistles.
  - b. One mind and one purpose (1 Cor. 1:5-10). The Corinthians were a very divided church, which needed to strive for unity.
8. Assuredly, this passage does NOT state that THERE IS ONE BODY.

## **II. Paul's Use of "the Body" Seen as Ideal and not Absolute – the Goal**

1. "The body" is often "the *human* body, and often seen in the generic or institutional sense, not the concrete.
2. Body of Christ as a metaphor best illustrates a local, visible body, and not a universal group.
  - a. The spiritual gifts are for function or action and not salvation. These are all operating in a physical, concrete location, and not universal. "Savior of the body"? – Lordship and not salvation per se (Eph. 5:23).
  - b. These gifts are not to function in heaven; they are on earth.

## **III. Body of Christ Seen as a Metaphor, and Not an Actual Reality**

1. The terms "fellowship" (*koinonia*) and "service" (*diakonia*) set forth the basic and principal ideas pertaining to body of Christ.
2. Only Paul uses "body of Christ" expression. "Church" (*ekklesia*) is actually the preferred word.
3. "Fellowship" demonstrated how the various parts of the body function together, best seen on a local, visible manner and not universal invisible. "Service" is what the body does.

## **IV. Generic, Institutional Use of "The Church" and "The Body"**

1. "A husband" is "head" of "the wife" (Eph. 5:22-23).
2. What does one mean by "the local church"? There is no such thing except in individual churches, like "the wife," etc.
3. Most examples of church in NT are clearly local, visible churches. The other examples can be seen in the generic or institutional sense also.

## **V. A Term for All of the Saved?**

1. Clearly there is need for a term to refer to all of the redeemed, or saved, if "church" is not appropriate.
2. "Family of God" might be good. We say we are "born again" and refer to others as "brother" or "sister." But, were OT saints "born again"? They were justified by faith in God (like us) but probably not correct to use that term to refer to them.

3. "People of God" might be a good term, or "redeemed," or "saved," but "church" or "body of Christ" would give a wrong connotation. There were no such entities in the OT period.

## VI. Implications of *Koinonia* and *Diakonia*

1. Word Study: Fellowship (*koinonia*) and Ministry (*diakonia*).
  - a. *Koinonia* and cognate words.
    - i. *Koinonos* -- "fellow," "participant:" It implies fellowship or sharing with someone or in something.
    - ii. *Koinoneo* -- "to share with someone" (to be *koinonos*), "to take part," "to have a share with someone," "to give a part," "to impart."
    - iii *Koinonia* -- an abstract term from *koinonos*, denoting "participation," "fellowship." A two-sided relationship with emphasis either on the giving or receiving. It can be translated, therefore, "participation," "impartation," "fellowship."
  - b. *Diakonia* and cognate.
    - i. *Diakonia* -- "service," "ministry," "aid," "support," "distribution."
    - ii. *Diakonos* -- "deacon," "minister," "servant."
2. Definition of Church: "A congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word" (New Hampshire Confession).
3. *Koinonia* (fellowship), therefore, pertains to the relationship between the members .
4. *Diakonia* (ministry) pertains to the role of the church in serving Christ.
5. The Pauline expression "Body of Christ" is a metaphor illuminating these two facets of the nature and purpose of the church.

## VII. *Koinonia* and *Diakonia* in the Body of Christ

1. 1 Corinthians 12.
  - a. A church is compared to a human body (12, 13, 28).
  - b. Unity and diversity in the body.
    - i. Unity is required for it to be a body (12, 13).
    - ii. Diversity requires many parts, members (14-17).
    - iii. Differences in function needed so that it will be a body (19-20).
    - iv. God designed the differences (18).
    - v. All parts of the body are included and needed (21-24).
    - vi. *Koinonia* in unity and fellow-suffering and fellow-rejoicing (25-26).
  - c. The (a) church is Christ's body (27). Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους.
  - i. Gifts are for function, not salvation: apostles, prophets, etc. (28-30; cf. Rom. 12:4).
  - ii. Salvation is presupposed, but not discussed.
  - d. *Koinonia*, therefore, occurs in the unity and diversity (different people working together).
  - e. *Diakonia* also appears as the body working together gets the job done.
2. Ephesians 4:7-16
  - a. A list of gifts relating to function, compared to human body (7-11; Rom 12, 1 Cor 12).
  - b. The gifts are given "for (*pros*) the equipping of the saints for (*eis*) the work of service

- (*diakonia*), to (*eis*) the building up of the body of Christ" (12).
- c. Service and growth is the purpose of the gifts (13-15).
  - d. *Koinonia* in the body produces growth and service (16).
  - e. This passage is another good example of fellowship and service in the church.

### VIII. Christ's Church Is Very Important

1. The church is important because it is the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23).
  - a. It is "His body" -- a concept showing the inter-relatedness of the members.
  - b. It is "His body" and "the fulness" -- a concept showing the important relationship to Christ -- the "complement" or "completer" -- "full development, plenitude" -- of Christ.
2. The church is important because it is God's chosen place to receive glory (Eph 3:21).
  - a. A prayer (or doxology) for glory to God -- a wish not a declarative statement.
  - b. God is to receive glory in the church -- but not exclusively -- the main way but not the sole way.

**Conclusion.** -- God established and designed the church so that the various members working together could grow and be His body on earth while He is in heaven.

Eph 4:1 (KJS) I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, {of the Lord: or, in the Lord} 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 [There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all.

**Eph 4:4 (GNT)** "Ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν· 5 εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα, 6 εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὃ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν.

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11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: {in: or, into} {stature: or, age} 14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: {speaking...: or, being sincere} **16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**

The reader is referred to the author's web page for other articles on this subject, both historical and biblical. Some of the articles contain a number of the Greek and Hebrew texts cited as evidence in this series of lectures: <http://geocities.com/prbryan.geo>