

# Mystery of The Ages

## PART 13 - THE CHURCH AGE

INTRODUCTION: It is not until Acts 8 that any man hears of Christ's death as a blood atonement for Sin. It is not until Acts 9 that a man realizes that Christ indwells the bodies of Christians, and it is not until Acts 10 that Peter wakes up to the fact that WATER BAPTISM is NOT essential to salvation! The tentative commission is, "Never mind worrying about the literal, physical, visible Kingdom, which someday I will restore to Israel - (I will restore it, but not right now). Now, you get busy and get out there and tell them about ME, and I will bear witness to your testimony by giving you power to do signs and wonders in My name" (Acts 1,2,4,15).

They go. They perform the Apostolic "signs and wonders". Sidestepping the doctrinal and historical involvements of the Book of the Acts, as it is related to the Pauline ministry and epistles, one thing becomes very clear; a spiritual Kingdom is being preached to Jews and Gentiles, and the Gentiles are taking to it better than the Jews! (see Acts 13, 16,18,28). The last verse in the Book of Acts is a clear, didactic, dogmatic statement that until the Kingdom of God appears visibly on earth with its supernatural beings (Lk. 19:11), there is NO KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. Paul was "preaching the Kingdom of GOD, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:31). This Kingdom is said to be "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17) It does not become synonymous with the Kingdom of HEAVEN until the One who rules both of them returns (see Rev. 11:15; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17-25). In this age, the two Kingdoms are different, and one of them is not even here; this "absent one" (the Kingdom of HEAVEN) is the one that Rome and the National Council profess to control, guide, and spread. Without making them the same, there would be no authority to "establish a Kingdom". With the postponement of the Kingdom till the seventh millennium, in steps a Harlot Woman (Matt. 13:33, Rev. 17:4) with a fist full of leavened doctrine (Matt. 13:33). This woman usurps the position of the "Virgin daughter of Israel" (Zeph. 3:14; Jer. 14:17), taking for granted that her cast off mother (Hos. 1) can no longer "bring forth children" (Isa. 54:1-9; 66:5-10). Thus, with the postponement of the Kingdom, there comes the inevitable counterfeit.

For the sake of clarity we shall consider what the church is not and then what it really is in the light of the word.

### I. WHAT THE CHURCH IS NOT

A. It is not a continuation of the "Jewish Dispensation" under another name - The Jews have been shunted to a sidetrack that the "Main Line" may be clear for the

passage of the church. Jesus said - "The Law and the Prophets are until John." If the Scriptures put Moses and Law in one Dispensation and Christ and Grace in another let us respect the Divine order and not join together what God has put asunder.

It is because some religious bodies believe that the Christian Church is but another phase of what they call the "Jewish Church," that they insist on a "ceremonial ritual" and retain the Priesthood with its altar, vestments, etc., and Temple-like buildings; and call the ordinances of the Christian Church "Sacrifices" and Sacraments." They also go further and advocate a "State Church," with the Church as the head, and claim that all the Old Testament promises of riches and glory have been transferred from the Jew to the Church. This we shall see is unscriptural.

B. It is not "The Kingdom" - John the Baptist came preaching that the "Kingdom of Heaven" was "at hand" and Jesus sent out the Twelve and the Seventy to do the same, but the Jewish people rejected their King, and the setting up of the Kingdom was postponed. There cannot be any Kingdom until the "Nobleman Farmer" who has gone into a "far country" to receive the Kingdom returns (Lk. 19:11-27).

The Church is never compared with the Kingdom in the Scriptures. The Church is compared to a "House" (1 Tim. 3:15) to a "Temple" (1 Cor. 3:16,17), to a "Body" (1 Cor. 12:27-31), but never to a Kingdom. Christ is the "HEAD" of His Church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18), but He is never spoken of as its King. The Church's relation to Christ is to be that of a "Bride." (Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 21:2,9,10)

## II. WHAT THE CHURCH IS

A. It is a "mystery" - The Kingdom was no mystery. The Old Testament prophets describe it in glowing terms. But something was a "Mystery" to them, and that was what was to come between the "Sufferings" and "Glory" of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:9-12) That is, between the Cross and the Crown. Jesus intimated that there was to be something that He called the "Church," but He did not say when it should appear, or what it would be like. (Matt. 16:13-20)

The "Mystery of the Church" was first revealed to Paul:

"For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of 'the dispensation of the grace of God' which is given me to you ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me "THE MYSTERY"...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that THE GENTILES should be fellow heirs and of THE SAME BODY, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel ...according to the "Eternal Purpose" which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:1-11).

From this we see that the Church was unknown to the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. That the Gentiles were to be saved was no mystery. (Rom 9:24-30) The "Mystery" was that God was going to form an entirely "NEW THING," composed of both Jew and Gentile, to be called "THE CHURCH."

B. It is a "called out" Body - While Israel is a "called out body" it is a "National Body", composed exclusively of the descendants of Abraham, but the Church is not a national body for it is composed of people from every kindred and kind.

That Israel and the Church are distinct and separate and cannot be blended is clear from the fact that their "election" was made at different dates, and that the "election" of the Church antedates the "election" of Israel. Israel was chosen in Abraham from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34), while the Church was chosen in HIM (Jesus) BEFORE the Foundation of the World, (Eph. 1:4-6). Israel was elected to bring forth a physical seed while the church was elected to bring forth a spiritual seed.

C. It is the "Body of Christ" - The fact that the Church is a "Body made up of "living members" shows that it is not an "Organization," but an ORGANISM." An "Organization" is made up of distinct units like the doors, windows, roof, floors, etc., of a building, that may be removed and replaced by new parts without destroying the integrity of the building; but a human body is an organism. You cannot remove an eye, or ear, or arm, or foot, or even a finger nail or tooth, without destroying the integrity of the body and causing a mutilation. So, we see from this for Christ to lose One Member of His Body (the Church) is to MUTILATE it.

Neither can the Church, as the "Body of Christ" die, for who ever saw a dead body attached to a living head? Christ the Head is ALIVE and can NEVER DIE AGAIN, for He tells us in (Rev. 1:18), "I am He that liveth and was dead (on the Cross), and behold, I am ALIVE FOREVERMORE." It follows therefore that "when Christ, who is our LIFE, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. 3:4) Jesus Christ not only gave His life for the Church, but to the Church.

But why call the Church the "Body of Christ?" What is a body for? It is for the Manifestation of a Personality.

A person can exist without a physical body, as the soul exists without a physical body between death and the resurrection of the body, but that existence cannot be made manifest. So the only way Christ, who is now in glory, can manifest Himself to the world is through His Body - THE CHURCH. The only way the world can see Christ today is in Christian believers. This is probably what Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippians, "For to me to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21). That is, so that the world might see Christ manifested in Paul.