

The Body and Mind of Christ (Part 1)

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, I would like to begin an examination, in a little depth, of the following verse found in Romans 12:5: “So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

There are three ideas found in those simple words, all of which are important for our spiritual development, and I would like to look at them individually.

1) The first is that we are “one Body in Christ.”

Genesis tells us that mankind was created in the “image” of the Almighty. Although the Scriptures describe the features of Yah, such as His face, His arms, His legs, His back, and so on, some have debated about how literally these words should be taken. For the purpose of our sanctification, the degree to which Yah’s essential nature corresponds to our physical bodies is not particularly relevant; however, it is important to know that our Father chooses to express Himself in ways that are familiar to us.

The way that Yah represents Himself is the way that He formed us out of the earth, and there is meaning in how He chooses to draw near to us in His language... inviting us to see Him as the great and eternal Type from which we were all created.

The goal of our sanctification is to become as close as possible to the Type, and this is described as a state of perfect unity, a one-ness of Spirit and purpose that blends the will of the human and the divine until, as was naturally the case with Yahshua, no characteristic difference can be seen.

Unity with Yahshua is the path to everlasting life, and we find in the Gospels that the Son is eager to experience this with His people both individually and as a collective Church. That last point, that Yahshua desires to experience unity with His people as a “Church” is not commonly taught; nevertheless it is a really important element of His relationship with us. Consider this verse, which I indicated last week was worth of some further discussion: “Then said Yahshua unto them again, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.’” (John 10:7, 8)

This concept, that Yahshua is the Savior of the “flock,” of the “many,” is one worthy of greater focus than it has received. He is not only the Savior of individual people, but the Savior of the “Body,” as it says in Ephesians 5:23.

But the phrasing of that verse in John 10 indicates something else as well, and here is another verse that reveals the same idea: “And no man hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of man which is in Heaven.” (John 3:13)

Now, what do these two verses have in common? And what do they have to do with unity? The Creator said in the Old Testament, “I am Yahweh; that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” (Isa 42:8)

The Father says that His glory is for Him alone, and it is not to be shared with any false god, or in fact anything other than Himself, for it is Yah alone who saves. Turning to the New Testament, however, we see this remarkable statement from the Savior: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own Self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:5) This reveals the one-ness between the Father and Son, close enough, in fact, that Yahshua is not even considered to be “another,” but is worthy and capable of sharing in the Father’s unique glory.

Even more remarkably, we find a little later in the same chapter, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.” (John 17:22) The glory is given to the followers of Yahshua so that they may be one; that is the very “purpose” of the sharing of the glory. None who are not “one” with Yahshua and His people have that glory – isn’t that what it says? – and none who have truly received that glory can remain separate. They will come into one-ness, they will come into unity, for that is the goal that the glory accomplishes. Thereafter we are not “another,” but we are “one Body,” capable of sharing that unique glory that is Yahweh’s Own, and counted as one (not by merit, but by grace) with the Father and Son.

Now, we have spoken about these verses to some extent in the past, regarding statements such as the one indicating we are “made the righteousness of Yah in [Yahshua].” (2Cor 5:21) This, to me, remains one of the most inspiring verses of the Bible.

But what about those two previous verses that I quoted? In a sense, they tell us the very same thing.

“All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them,” says Yahshua. But what could He mean by that? Is it true that all individuals who came before Yahshua claiming to be teachers of truth were thieves and robbers? Well, not really... what of Moses, and Abraham, and all the other heroes of the faith? What of the prophets like Daniel, Jeremiah and Isaiah?

These were neither thieves nor robbers, yet they came before Yahshua.

The answer to this lies in the kinds of people Yahshua was indicating by His statement. We know that in the time up to and including His birth, Yahshua’s country had borne witness to a number of people claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah. In Acts, Gamaliel speaks of a Theudas, and a Judas of Galilee, who attempted to rescue the people from their circumstances... and history tells us of others as well.

These, though they managed to convince various people of their validity, do not have their words or deeds appear in the Biblical record, and the reason is simple: they were not sent by Yah to share HIS words with the people. Those who came before Yahshua, and yet were legitimate teachers, were only counted true because their words were not their own. Their actions were undertaken under the leading of the Holy Spirit, and thus their writings have authority as coming from Heaven itself to refine the soul, and to correct doctrine.

Similarly, we know that some “ascended” to Heaven before Yahshua, such as Enoch and Elijah. Some have argued, incorrectly, that this verse proves that those who were “translated” in the past were not actually taken to Heaven, but were moved up into the air for a time, (a correct but limited translation of the word for “heaven” in the Old Testament) and set back down at some hidden location on earth. This is clearly false, as Elijah appears in glorified form to Yahshua in the New Testament, demonstrating that he had “put on immortality,” (Mat 17:3) and he further appears with Moses, who (as Adventists have taught) was raised early from the grave.

The point of these passages, and the significance for our spiritual growth, is that Yahweh does not share His glory with anyone or anything considered to be “another;” but – through the Son – He shared it with us. Because of our unity with Christ, we are neither thieves nor liars when we teach the Gospel, and we are counted as One with Him who has descended from Heaven only to “arise with healing in His wings,” (Mal 4:2) and who has called us to a covenant unity that is closer than the ties of blood or the vows of marriage.

Because of this, we are the righteousness of Yahweh in the Son, and no sin can survive in the presence of the Father’s light and Spirit... in the presence of His glory, which is within us, and pours out unto the world through us, because we are His.

2) That verse again is, “So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

The second idea of that verse is that, although we are one Body, we are also “many.”

We do become one, but not in every sense. If we became one in all ways, and lost our identities, then salvation would have little meaning. It would not be “we” who are saved, but copies of us that are essentially different. Our personalities, our characters, would not need refinement, sanctification, or perfection, if they were to be replaced with a duplicate of the Son. But we are, in fact, called to this duty.

The idea is that we draw “near” to Yah, and this by our own choices, our own agreement, and in so doing we “become” Christ-like. We are changed into the divine image, while still maintaining that aspect of the soul that makes us who we truly are.

Were it otherwise, then we might well surrender to the idea that there is such a thing as a Trinity, three Beings who are so lost in one another that they are indistinct, blending into one another as they are so often pictured.

But the Father and Son, although One came forth from the Other, and although both are perfect, and perfectly united in Spirit, nevertheless do have distinct roles, and individual wills. During His trial in Gethsemane, the Son said, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42)

That verse alone shows that there is a “not” in one will that is absent in the other – a difference. Now, to be clear, the desire was the same in Both Father and Son: to save humanity at any cost. But the Son’s trial was in dealing with the conflicting pressure of His flesh to survive, to live on, as all life naturally and properly desires. It is in His submission to the Father, despite the urgings of His flesh and His emotions, that Yahshua became our perfect Example. Thus, it is not the mere desire and intention to do good that makes one righteous; it is by the submission to righteousness, despite the promptings of the flesh, that we overcome. It is precisely this to which the Book of Hebrews refers where it reads, “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb 2:10)

Again, we also have desires, urgings, promptings, that may not be in perfect harmony with the Father’s will. This is the way by which we are tempted. But there is no sin in this. There is certainly righteousness in having preferences, in being unique, but the righteousness is made manifest, and the virtue is accounted to us, when we – like Yahshua – submit our will to the Father’s. It is then that our individuality takes on sanctified meaning, and what were mere “differences” before now become distinct “roles.”

Within the Body of Christ, within our unity and one-ness, we each have distinct parts to play, parts for which we are uniquely suited due to our talents, characteristics, and personalities. What one can do, another cannot, at least not as well or easily, and this is the power of the covenant.

We are strong because we are “one,” and we are strong because we are “many.” This is a beautiful (apparent) contradiction, and it really reinforces the idea that there is one Spirit living in each of us who are Christ’s and that Spirit’s purpose is to draw us into unity without losing us TO that unity in the process.

We remember, from our examination of the Trinity doctrine, that names represent Person-hood. The true name of a person indicates his spiritual self; and those in the Scriptures who had names that did not suit Yah’s purpose for them were given other names.

We have pointed out that while the Father and Son have names, and therefore distinct Personalities, the Spirit does not. Considering this, then the following verses might have new meaning: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a

white stone; and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (Rev 2:17)

It is the Father Himself who created us to be who we are, and all who find His purpose for their lives, and fulfill it, will have that intended name revealed to them on that day. The Father did not create one person many times, but many people. It is only when we are one with Him that we can know who we are, what we are called to do. Yah gives us our names, gave us a name from our creation, and each name is unique.

As I mentioned earlier, Yahshua is eager to experience unity with us both individually and as a collective people. This has always held true for His Church, which is given a name (by Him) to perfectly reflect its “personality” and unique role in the course of human history. We read, “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Yahweh shall name.” (Isa 62:2)

As CSDAs, we have had quite a lot to say about the importance of divinely-assigned names. This is not, after all, a new doctrine; it is merely the corporate expression of individuality. In other words, every Church that has been called by Yah throughout the ages has, like each person that has ever been born, been created for a particular purpose, and is given a name (by Yah, spoken by His mouth, not chosen for itself) that perfectly reflects that purpose.

In the acceptance of that God-spoken name, the Church agrees with Yah that “This is my purpose,” and expresses its individuality, acknowledging its distinct purpose for that period of time in the Plan of Salvation. Through the meaning of its name, that Church (any true Church) is tasked to draw near to the Father, and to and perform His perfect will on the earth. In light of this, it should be obvious that any person, force, or authority that attempts to prevent a Church from fulfilling what its name means is working contrary to the Almighty, and is – whether deliberately or in ignorance – serving the Beast, the enemy of souls.

So, we have seen tonight that this verse, Romans 12:5, has some powerful ideas for us to examine. We are described as being “One Body,” and also “many members.” Both are keys to our sanctification, keeping us from the ditch on either side of the road – extreme individualism, and cult conformity. Above all, we are “free” in Christ, free to express our person-hood unconstrained by the slavery of sin.

Next week, I would like to continue from here, looking at the final idea in that verse, that is, that we are “members one of another.” This is a third, and very powerful idea, and will explain why this pair of studies is entitled “The Body and Mind of Christ.”

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