

# Week Two

Quarter 3

Union With Christ

The Church: Its Nature, Marks, and Purpose

# Outline

- Union With Christ (Chapter 43)
  - We are in Christ
  - Christ is in us
  - We are like Christ
  - We are with Christ
- The Church: Its Nature, Marks, and Purpose (Chapter 44)
  - The nature of the church
  - The marks of the church
  - The purpose of the church

# The Union with Christ

- Definition – a phrase that summarizes several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation, including:
  - We are in Christ
  - Christ is in us
  - We are like Christ
  - We are with Christ

# We Are in Christ (1)

- In God's eternal plan
  - God chose us in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4)
  - God saw man as having the right to share in the blessings of Christ's work
- During Christ's life on earth
  - Believers were present in Christ only in God's thoughts (God attributed Christ's actions to us)
  - “By one man's obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19)

# We Are in Christ (2)

- During our lives now
  - Dying and rising with Christ
    - “You were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col 2:12)
    - It is as if the Holy Spirit reproduced Jesus’ death and resurrection in our lives when we believe in Christ (pg 842)
  - New life in Christ
    - Not only in terms of redemption, but also in terms of His present life in heaven, and His continuing possession of all the spiritual resources we need to live in the Christian life (pg 843)
    - “God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11)

# We Are in Christ (3)

- During our lives now (cont.)
  - All our actions can be done in Christ
    - To become a Christian is to enter the newness of the age to come, and to experience to some degree the new powers of the kingdom of God affecting every part of our lives (pg 843)
    - “In Christ”, Paul: spoke the truth, was proud of his work, reminded the Corinthians of his ways, hoped to send Timothy to Philippi, rejoiced greatly, commanded, beseeched, exhorted, and said “I can do all things” (Phil 4:13)
  - One body in Christ
    - Christ is the head of the body, which is the church (Eph 5:23)
    - We are “one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:17, 12:12-27)
    - Even though we shall someday attain perfect unity with other believers, we will remain distinct people

# Christ Is in Us

- “He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit” (John 15:5)
- “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20)
- He remains in us through faith
  - “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:17)
  - “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Cor 13:5)

# We Are Like Christ

- “Be imitators of me [Paul], as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1)
- There are many commands for us to imitate Christ
  - “Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you” (Rom 15:7)
  - “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ love the church” (Eph 5:25)
  - “As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col 3:13)
  - “Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (2 Pet 2:21)
- When we act like Christ, we become like Christ (pg 846)

# We Are With Christ

- Personal fellowship with Christ
  - “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt 28:20)
    - Since Jesus’ body ascended, this must refer to His divine nature
  - We also know Him, Work together with Him, are comforted by Him, are taught by Him, and live our lives in His presence (see pg 847 for references)
- Union with the Father and with the Holy Spirit
  - We are in the Father (John 17:21; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1; 1 John 2:24, 4:15-16, 5:20)
  - We are in the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Tim 1:14)
  - The Father is in us (John 14:23)
  - The Holy Spirit is in us (Rom 8:9,11)
  - We have fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3, Matt 6:9, 2 Cor 6:16-18)
  - We have fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16, Acts 15:28, 2 Cor 13:14, Eph 4:30)

# Who / What Is the “Church”?

- Definition: the church is the community of all true believers for all time
- “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25)
  - Here, the church refers to all who are saved by the death of Christ
- “He [God the Father] has put all things under His [Jesus’] feet and has made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” Eph 1:22-23)
- Old Testament believers count as well
  - Stephen spoke of Israel in the wilderness as “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38)
  - God told Moses to “Gather the people to me”, using the same word in the Septuagint as “church” in the New Testament

# The Church is Invisible, Yet Visible

- The invisible church is the church as God sees it
  - Martin Luther & John Calvin were eager to affirm this, stating that the Roman Catholic church had veered from the truth
  - “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim 2:19)
- The visible church
  - As it is perceived by those who are genuine believers and have an understanding of the difference between believers and unbelievers (pg 856)
  - Paul wrote “To the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thes 1:1)
    - Same for Corinth (1 Cor 1:2)
    - The church in Philemon’s house (Phil 1-2)
  - He wrote knowing that there were some unbelievers in these groups, but could not tell with certainty who they were
  - We should also make a “charitable judgment” on such issues

# The Church is Local and Universal

- A “house church” is called a “church”
  - “Greet also the church in their house” (Rom 16:5)
  - “Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord” (1 Cor 16:19)
- An entire city is called a “church” (1 Cor 1:2, 2 Cor 1:1, 1 Thes 1:1)
- A region is called a “church”
  - “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up” (Acts 9:31)
- The entire world is called a “church”
  - “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25)
  - “God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, etc.” (1 Cor 12:28)
- Conclusion → a community of God’s people considered at any level can rightly be called a church (pg 858)

# Metaphors for the Church

- Family (1 Tim 5:1-2, Eph 3:14, 2 Cor 6:18, Matt 12:49-50, 1 John 3:14-18)
- Bride of Christ (Eph 5:32, 2 Cor 11:2)
- Branches on a vine (John 15:5)
- An olive tree (Rom 11:17-24)
- A field of crops (1 Cor 3:6-9)
- A building (1 Cor 3:9)
- A new temple (1 Peter 2:4-8)
- A new group of priests (1 Pet 2:5)
- God's house (Heb 3:6)
- A pillar and bulwark of truth (1 Tim 3:15)
- The body of Christ
  - The whole body = the church in 1 Cor 12:12-27
  - The body minus the head = the church in Eph 1:22-23, 4:15-16; and Col 2:19
- Etc.

What do we learn from each of these metaphors?

# What Do Dispensationalists Believe?

- A dividing of history into seven dispensations
  - Man innocent (creation to before the fall)
  - Man under conscience (fall to Noah)
  - Man in authority over earth (Noah to Abraham)
  - Man under promise (Abraham to Moses)
  - Man under law (Moses to Jesus' first coming)
  - Man under grace (Jesus' first coming to His second coming)
  - Man under the personal reign of Christ (after Jesus' second coming)
- Other beliefs
  - A pretribulational rapture and literal fulfillment of Revelation
  - A literal fulfillment of OT prophecies for Israel
  - Different “modes” of salvation under each dispensation
- Started by J. N. Darby, propagated by the Scofield Reference Bible

# The Church and Israel (Dispensational View)

- God's promises to Israel are for earthly blessings
- God's promises for the church are heavenly blessings
- These two groups will be distinct during the "Millennial Reign"
- The church did not begin until Pentecost
- All OT prophecies about Israel will be fulfilled by ethnic Jewish people who will believe in Christ and live in the land of Israel as a "model nation" to see and learn from
- Grudem states: questions about the exact way in which biblical prophecies about the future will be fulfilled are, in the nature of the case, difficult to decide with certainty, and it is wise to have some tentativeness in our conclusions on these matters (pg 861)

# The Church and Israel

## (non-Dispensational View) (1)

- New Testament references to “new Israel” indicate that Israel = the church
- There are some prophecies about a future large-scale conversion (Rom 11:12-31), but such conversion would be “grafted back into their own olive tree” (Rom 11:24)
- “not all who are descended from Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants...it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants” (Rom 9:6-8)
- “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29)
- James writes his letter “To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (James 1:1)

# The Church and Israel

## (non-Dispensational View) (2)

- “God has made us [Jews and gentiles] both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross” (Eph 2:19-20)
- “gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body” (Eph 3:6)
- “The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Heb 8:8-10)
- Hence, Israel = the church

# The Church and the Kingdom of God

- From George Ladd:
  - The Kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God, and derivatively, the sphere in which the rule is experienced
  - The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself
  - The Kingdom is the rule of God; the church is a society of men
- Five aspects (all references on pages 863-864)
  - The church is not the kingdom
  - The kingdom creates the church
  - The church witnesses to the kingdom
  - The church is an instrument of the kingdom
  - The church is the custodian of the kingdom
- They are closely related, but different

# The “Marks” of the Church (Distinguishing Characteristics) (1)

- There are true churches and false churches
  - There was little controversy over the idea of one true church until:
    - 1000’s, the East-West Schism
    - Early 1500’s, the Reformation
      - Luther and Calvin defined the true church in a way other than the Roman Catholic church
      - Their combined definitions:
        - » Word of God is rightly/purely taught and heard
        - » Sacraments are administered
      - The Roman Catholic church claimed that it was the visible church descended from Peter and the apostles is the true church

# The “Marks” of the Church

## (Distinguishing Characteristics) (2)

- What “churches” exist today that do not fit those criteria?
  - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
  - Jehovah’s Witness
  - Works-focused, too liberal, ...?
- Parachurch organizations
  - Definition: Christian faith-based organizations which work outside of and across denominations to engage in social welfare and evangelism, usually independent of church oversight (wikipedia)
  - Most function mostly as churches, but do not administer the sacraments
  - Examples – Salvation Army, Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Youth With a Mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators, etc.
  - Such organizations do NOT replace a church body, but can help with an effective furthering of the kingdom of God

# The Purpose of the Church (1)

- Ministry to God: Worship
  - Paul commands the church at Colossae to “sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16)
- Ministry to Believers: Nurture
  - God gave the church gifted officials “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13)
- Ministry to World: Evangelism and Mercy
  - Jesus told the His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19)
  - Caring for the poor and needy (Acts 11:29, 2 Cor 8:4, 1 John 3:17)
    - Civic activities, governmental policies, social injustice, etc. ???

# The Purpose of the Church (2)

- Keep the purposes in balance
- Too much of any one is unhealthy
  - Too much worship → people become ingrown and eventually begin to wither
  - Too much edification of believers → little joy in worship or evangelism
  - Too much evangelism → immature Christians who emphasize growth in numbers but less genuine love, maturity, etc.
- It is still okay for an individual to focus more on one than the others, but the church should remain balanced

# Application

- Be imitators of Christ
- Be united with the body of Christ
- Make sure your church is balancing it's three missions
  - Worship
  - Nurture
  - Evangelism & Mercy

# Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 45
  - The Purity and Unity of the Church
    - Homework – questions 1, 8, 9, 12
- Chapter 46
  - The Power of the Church
    - Homework – questions 1, 4, 5, 8