THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH



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And it came to pass that the leper died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's busom
Luke 16:22



This Messianic Bible Study will be divided into eight divisions: the introduction, the definition, the beginning, the composition, the foundation, the purposes, the symbolic illustrations, and the future destiny of the universal church.

INTRODUCTION

The universal church is sometimes referred to as the invisible church, as over against the local or visible church. By way of introduction, the first division of the study of the universal church concerns an explanation of the word "church" and its various usages.

A. The Word Ekklesia

The Greek word translated "church" is *ekklesia*. Etymologically, this word is a combination of two words: *ek*, which means "out of," and *kaleo*, which means, "to call." So the word *ekklesia* means a "called-out assembly," a group that is called out from the mass to form a distinct group in itself.

In ancient Greek secular literature, the word *ekklesia* was always used of the assembly itself, never of the people who belonged to the assembly. In the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament made about 250 B.C., the word *ekklesia* was used for the Hebrew word *kahal*, which referred to the congregation of Israel. But again, it was never used to speak of the people themselves. Only in the New Testament is the word *ekklesia* used to speak of the people who belong to this called-out group.

In the New Testament, the Greek *ekklesia* was never used in the five ways that people often use it today. First, it was never used of a building. Often when people speak of "going to church," they think of

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a particular building where they attend worship services. However, Scripture never applies the word *ekklesia* to a building. Secondly, it was never used of a denomination. Today, the word is used in reference to denominations such as the Baptist Church, the Lutheran Church, the Episcopalian Church, but in Scripture, it is never used of a denomination in this way. Thirdly, it was never used of a national church. Today, there is the Church of England or the Church of Norway, but in the Bible, it was never used of a national church. Fourthly, the word was never used of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is distinct from the Church itself. And fifth, the word "church" in reference to the Body of the Messiah, was never used to speak of Israel as such. Though theologians like to use it that way and like to refer to the "old church" or the "new Church," the "old Israel" or the "new Israel," the Bible itself never used the term in reference to Israel in the way some theologians do today in reference to the Church.

Again, in the New Testament, the word "church" was never used of a building, a denomination, a national church, the Kingdom of God, or Israel; but it is used to speak of the people themselves who belong to this called-out group or assembly.

B. The Frequency of Usage

In the New Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used a total of one hundred fourteen times. In the Gospels, it is used only three times, all of which are in Matthew: once in 16:18 and twice in 18:17. The other one hundred eleven times this word is used are in the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. Outside the Gospels, *ekklesia* is found in every New Testament book except seven: II Timothy, Titus, I and II Peter, I and II John, and Jude. Of the total number of times, this word is used, seventy-nine times it is used in the singular form, and thirty-five times in the plural form.

Of the one hundred fourteen times that *ekklesia* is used, one hundred nine times it is used of the Church as believers think of it: a called-out group or assembly. Five times it is not used of the New Testament Church, but it is used either in its classical Greek usage of an assembly or in its Septuagint usage of the congregation of Israel. The five exceptions where the word *ekklesia* does not refer to the New Testament Church are: Acts 7:38; 19:32, 39, 41; and Hebrews 2:12.

C. The Categories of Usage

All together, the word ekklesia is used in four categories. The first category is its classical Greek usage, and this is the way it was mostly used in secular Greek literature. In this sense, ekklesia refers to an assembly of townspeople called out for a political meeting. It is used this way three times in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41.

The second category is its usage of the Jewish people in the wilderness. In this case, it reflects the same usage as that of the

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Septuagint. It is used twice in this sense: Acts 7:38 and Hebrews 2:12.

The third category of usage is in reference to the universal church, the Church as a whole that is composed of all believers everywhere. Because these believers are not all visible, the universal church is sometimes referred to as the "invisible church." This is the topic of this manuscript and it is this aspect in reference to the universal church that will be developed in this study.

The fourth category of usage is in reference to the local church. Because the local church is localized and visible, it is sometimes referred to as the "visible church."

As mentioned earlier, the word *ekklesia* or church is used in both the plural and singular forms. In reference to the local church, the word is used both in the singular form and in the plural form, depending on whether the writer is speaking of one local church or many churches. The word *ekklesia* is used only in the singular form in reference to the universal church because there is only one universal, invisible church.

I. THE DEFINITION OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The second division in the study of the universal church concerns a definition of the topic: What is meant by the universal church? A very simple definition is: "The universal church is that spiritual organism of which the Messiah is the Head, and it is composed of all believers from Pentecost until the Rapture." Four points about the definition will be discussed.

A. The Ramifications

This definition has four ramifications that should be detailed. First, it is the Messiah's Church; it is a Church that belongs to the Messiah. This point is made in the very first reference to the Church (Mat. 16:18), when Yeshua (Jesus) said to Peter: *upon this rock I will build my church*. With the usage of the personal possessive pronoun *my*, Yeshua said that the Church He would build would be His personal Church.

The fact that it is the Messiah's Church can be seen in five ways. First, He was the One who taught and trained its first leaders and prepared them for their roles in this Church. One of the best teaching sessions that prepared them for their future roles was during the Upper Room Discourse (Jn. 14, 15, 16). Secondly, He was the One who sent the Holy Spirit to inhabit this Church (Acts 2:33). Thirdly, Jesus was the One who provided the spiritual gifts in that He sent the Holy Spirit to do the work of dispensing the gifts of the Spirit (Eph. 4:8-11). Where an individual will function in the Church is based upon which spiritual gifts he is given. Fourthly, it is the Messiah's Church in that He is the Head of this Church (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18). Fifthly, He is preparing the Church to be His Bride (Eph. 5:25-27). It is indeed the

Messiah's Church, His personal property.

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The second ramification of this definition is that the Church is composed of all believers. Insofar as the universal, invisible church is concerned, it is composed of all believers from Acts 2 onward. There are not two types of believers today with some being part of the universal church and others who are not; all believers today are part of the universal church.

The third ramification is that it is composed only of believers. There are no unbelievers in the universal or invisible church. In the local church or visible church, there are both believers and unbelievers as members, but that is not true of the universal, invisible church. It is composed only of believers.

The fourth ramification of this definition is that the universal church consists of those saints between Pentecost in Acts 2, until the Rapture. The Church does not include the Old Testaments saints, and it will not include the Tribulation saints, or Millennial saints. The Church is a Body composed of believers between Acts 2 and when the Rapture occurs. More on this point will brought out later in this manuscript when dealing with the question of just how and when the Church began. At that time, the biblical evidence that the universal church consists only of believers from Pentecost to the Rapture, not those before or after, will be presented.

B. Conceived in the Mind of God

The second point about this definition is that, while the Church itself did have a historical beginning, nevertheless it was conceived in eternity past in the mind of God. The Church should not be viewed as being a parenthesis, something God was forced to stick between the First and Second Comings of the Messiah, or between Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua and her future acceptance of His Messiahship. The Church was always a part of the divine plan of God.

The fact that the Church was conceived in the mind of God is taught by Ephesians 3:9: *and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages has been hid in God who created all things.*
In the context of this verse, Paul was discussing this new entity called the "Church," consisting of both Jewish and Gentile believers. He pointed out that it was already conceived in the mind of God. It had been hidden in God in the past, but was now revealed in the days in which the apostles were living.

Furthermore, Colossians 1:24 26 states: *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the*

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word of God, even the mystery which has been hid for ages and generations: but now has it been manifested to his saints.

Here Paul made the comment that, while the universal church had a historical beginning, it was nevertheless already conceived in the mind of God and planned for all eternity. It was not a sudden parenthesis. While it had been hidden *for ages and generations*, it has now been *manifested to his saints.*

C. The Use of the Singular Noun

The third point about this definition is that, in the light of the fact that there is only one universal church, the word *ekklesia* is used only in the singular form in reference to the universal church, never in the plural form. So when the New Testament speaks of the universal, invisible church, it uses the singular noun only.

For example, Paul said he persecuted the Church (Acts 8:3; I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6). While he persecuted many local churches, the singular noun is used when dealing with the fact that he persecuted the universal church. Furthermore, the Messiah loves the Church (Eph. 5:25-33), sanctifies the Church (Eph. 5:26-27), and is the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18). In all cases, only the singular noun is used. Furthermore, He set up apostles, plural noun, in the Church, singular noun (I Cor. 12:28). The Church makes known the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10), something that is not true with many individual, local churches. Finally, there is *the church of the firstborn* (Heb. 12:23).

The point of all these examples is that in every case when the word ekklesia is used in reference to the one universal, invisible church, the singular noun is always used. The plural form will never be used simply because there is only one such Church.

D. The Church is Not Israel

The fourth and last point by way of definition is that the *ekklesia* is not Israel. It is something that is distinct from Israel, and the New Testament never makes the Church and Israel one and the same. It is not a continuation of the chosen people of God; it is a distinct element, a distinct "peoplehood," and a distinct part of God's program. Because the Church is not Israel, one must be careful not to confuse the two in defining exactly what the Church is.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The third division of this study deals with the question: Exactly when did the universal church begin? There is some confusion here in that some teach that the universal church has always existed and, therefore, it began with Adam. Others like to say that the universal church began with Abraham. Still others say that the universal church began some time after Acts 2, either at Acts 9 or as late as Acts 28.

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A. The Timing

As far as the Bible is concerned, exactly when did the universal church begin? Several passages of Scripture must be examined to get the answer to this question. The first passage is Matthew 16:18, where Jesus said: *upon this rock I will build my church.*

This Church is the universal church. At the time that Yeshua made this statement, the building of the Church was still future. Jesus did not say, "I am building my Church" or "I am continuing to build my Church" or "I have been building my Church." Rather, He said: *I will build my church*. Thus, the beginning of the universal church had to be some time in the future to Matthew 16:18, because Yeshua used the future tense. It is a tense that cannot be interpreted as referring to a church already in existence.

A key reason why the Church was still future to Matthew 16:18 is because two events were essential for the founding and establishment of the Church: first, the Resurrection of Yeshua; and secondly, the Ascension of Yeshua. Until these two events occurred, the Church could not have been established.

The fact that the Resurrection of Jesus was a prerequisite to the establishment of the Church is taught by Ephesians 1:19-20: *and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.* In verses 2-3, Paul dealt with the concept of the universal church. Then later in verses 19-20, he spoke of a prerequisite to that universal church: the Resurrection of Yeshua from the dead. Until that event occurred, the Church could not be established.

Not only was the Resurrection necessary before the Church could be formed, but the Ascension was also necessary, after which the spiritual gifts would be given according to Ephesians 4:7-12: *But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he said, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men. (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.* In these verses, Paul pointed out that it was only after Jesus ascended into Heaven that the spiritual gifts were given. The purpose of the spiritual gifts, spelled out by Paul in Ephesians 4:12-16, is to build up the Body of the Messiah, the Church. Without these spiritual gifts being present, there is no universal church. Since these spiritual gifts could not be given until after the Ascension of Yeshua, the reason that the Church was still future to Matthew 16:18 was because both the

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Resurrection and the Ascension were essential prerequisites for the founding of the Church. The Church did not begin in the Old Testament nor did it have its beginning during the history of the Gospels; the Church was born at Pentecost in Acts 2.

B. The Biblical Evidence

What is the biblical evidence that the Church began at Pentecost in Acts 2? The evidence comes in four passages of Scripture. The first passage that deals with the beginning of the universal church is Colossians 1:18: *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*
The point of this verse is that the Church is the Body of the Messiah.

The second passage that deals with beginning of the universal church is I Corinthians 12:13: *For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.*
The point of this verse is that entrance into this Body, the Church, is by means of Spirit baptism. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit's ministry of Spirit baptism that places one into the Body of the Messiah. This is the reason this verse clearly teaches that every believer has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of the Messiah, not just some. So long as there was no ministry of Spirit baptism, there was no universal church. If it can be determined just when Spirit baptism began, that will also reveal when the Church began, since Spirit baptism is an absolutely essential element to the existence of the Church, the Body of the Messiah.

The third passage that deals with the beginning of the universal church is Acts 1:5: *for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.*
According to this verse, Spirit baptism was still future as of Acts 1. Spirit baptism had not yet begun, because Jesus used the future tense again, "You will be baptized by the Spirit *not many days hence*." They had not yet experienced this because, although Yeshua had already been resurrected, He was not yet ascended. So the question is: Just when did Spirit baptism begin? The logical answer is that Spirit baptism began in Acts 2. The problem is, however, that Acts 2:1-4 does not mention Spirit baptism. What is mentioned is the fact that the Holy Spirit filled them, but the passage does not state that He baptized them. How can it be proven that Spirit baptism did begin in Acts 2, and therefore, so did the Church?

The exact beginning of the universal church can be proven by the fourth passage, Acts 11:15-16. The background to this passage begins in Acts 10 when Peter had gone to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter had preached the gospel to these Gentiles and they had been saved and filled with the Holy Spirit as a result. In Acts 11, Peter defended his actions of going to a Gentile home before the council of the Jerusalem Church. Verses 15-16 state: *And as I began to speak, the*

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Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In verse 15, Peter stated that *the Holy Spirit fell upon them* [these Gentiles], *even as on us* [the Jews] *at the beginning*. When was this beginning? The beginning was Acts 2, for in verse 16, Peter stated that what had happened at the beginning was a fulfillment of the words of Jesus (Acts 1:5). So Spirit baptism began at Pentecost. Since Spirit baptism is essential to the existence of the Church, that is also when the Church was born.

Summarizing the four points of evidence dealing with the beginning of the universal church found in these four passages: point one is that the Church is the Body of the Messiah (Col. 1:18); point two is that entrance into this Body is by Spirit baptism (I Cor. 12:13); point three is that Spirit baptism was still future as of Acts 1:5; and point four is that the Church began at Pentecost in Acts 2 and will continue until the Rapture occurs (Acts 11:15-16).

III. THE COMPOSITION OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The fourth division of this study deals with the composition of the universal church. Simply put, it consists of believing Jews and believing Gentiles. This truth is taught in two passages: Ephesians 2:11-16 and Colossians 1:24-27.

A. Ephesians 2:11-16

Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

The point of this passage is that the universal church is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have believed in Yeshua, and this is the uniqueness of the universal church. This is the "mystery" now revealed, according to Paul, in the books of Ephesians and Colossians. Some teach that the Church as such is one of the mysteries.

When the New Testament uses the word "mystery," it refers to a doctrine that was totally unrevealed in the Old Testament, but was revealed only in the New Testament; it was not foreseen by the Old Testament at all. Some people teach that there was not even a hint of the existence of the Church in the Old Testament. However, this is not exactly true. In Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul cited certain Old Testament references that hinted of the Church.

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The mystery was not the Church itself, but the mystery was that the Church would be composed of Jews and Gentiles, united into one Body. That is the mystery now being revealed. Paul mentioned this twice. The first time is in Ephesians 3:1-6: *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles, if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*
After using the term mystery twice, he defined the mystery now being revealed in this present Dispensation of Grace, not as the Church as such, but rather that the Church is composed of Jewish and Gentile believers in one Body.

B. Colossians 1:24-27

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery which had been hid for ages and generations: but now has it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
In the second passage concerning the composition of the universal church, Paul again used the term *mystery* twice. As he defined the word *mystery*, he did not refer to the Church as such or even to the Dispensation of Grace as such, but he used the word *mystery* in reference to the fact that the Jews and Gentiles were united into one Body. The *mystery* also included: *Christ in you, the hope of Glory*. This also was not revealed in the Old Testament. It was not revealed that Jews and Gentiles would be in one Body nor was it revealed that the Messiah would indwell these Jews and Gentiles.

In conclusion, insofar as the composition of the Body is concerned, it is composed of Jews and Gentiles who are believers. It is this unity of Jews and Gentiles that is the mystery now being revealed in the Dispensation of Grace.

IV. THE FOUNDATION OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The fifth division of this study answers the question: What is the foundation of the universal, invisible church?

A. The Rock: Matthew 16:18

Basing its position upon Matthew 16:18, Roman Catholicism has taught that the foundation of the Church was the Apostle Peter. They

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claim that the word rock refers to Peter, ignoring the fact that there are two different nouns used for that word, one being masculine and one feminine. The word that Yeshua used when He said: *upon this rock I will build my church* was the Greek word *petra*, which means "cliff-rock." It is a feminine noun that refers to a cliff, a large ledge of rock, a massive rock. The Greek word for Peter is *petros*, a masculine noun which means "a small stone" or "a pebble."

Furthermore, to say that Peter is the *rock* violates the rules of Greek Grammar. One of the rules of Greek grammar is that a feminine word does not modify a masculine word, neither can a masculine word modify a feminine word. So the *petra*, a feminine word, cannot refer to the *petros*, a masculine word. For Catholicism to teach that the word rock refers to Peter violates the rules of Greek grammar.

The word *petra* is used a total of sixteen times in the New Testament and it is used in two ways: literally and symbolically. Eleven times, it is used literally to speak of a large ledge of rock. Five times, it is used symbolically of the Messiah Jesus: once in Matthew 16:18; once in Romans 9:33; twice in I Corinthians 10:4; and once I Peter 2:8. It is never used of a man like Peter.

While the Bible does use many symbols, it is consistent in its usage of symbols. One specific symbol will mean the same thing throughout the Old and New Testaments in ninety-five percent of the cases. Whenever the word "rock" or "stone" is used symbolically, it is always a symbol of the Messiah, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus of Nazareth, but it is never used of a man like Peter.

B. The Two Types of Foundations: Matthew 7:24-27

In Matthew 7:24-27, Yeshua spoke of the two types of foundations: the foundation of sand and the foundation of rock.
The foundation of rock was symbolic of Yeshua and His teachings. Paul made it very clear that the Messiah was this Foundation in I Corinthians 3:11: *For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

C. The Chief Corner Stone: Ephesians 2:20-22

Not only is the Messiah the Foundation, He is the Cornerstone of that foundation according to Ephesians 2:20-22: *being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.*
The Messiah is the *chief corner stone* as well as *the foundation*. The apostles and prophets are the other stones of the foundation. Peter played no special role any more than the other apostles played. So *the foundation* of the Church is Jesus the Messiah Himself. He is *the chief corner stone*, and the two lines of the foundation are the *apostles* and *prophets*.

V. THE PURPOSES OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

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The sixth division concerns the purposes of the universal church. All together there are five specific purposes given for the universal church.

A. A People for His Name: Acts 15:13-18

And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon has rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof, And I will set it up: That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.

The first purpose given for the universal church is to call out from among the Gentiles *a people for his name* (v. 14). The fact that the Church will play a role with Jews was a foregone conclusion. In fact, Acts 15 reports on the first Church council at Jerusalem. At that point, the Church was almost totally Jewish. Now that Paul had begun to go out to the Gentiles, now that Gentiles were believing in Jesus, the question was: Were the Gentiles really savable without first converting to Judaism and adopting the Law of Moses? There was never any question on the part of these Jewish believers that there would be Jews in the Body of the Messiah. However, many of them thought there would only be Jews in the Church. They thought that the only Gentiles who would be made part of the Body of the Messiah were those who had first become proselytes to Judaism. The point made here is that there was a more universal goal for the Church: there would be a calling out from among the Gentiles a *people for his name.*

It is only when this purpose is accomplished that the Church will finally come to completion according to Romans 11:25-26: *For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part has befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

Verse 25 mentions *the fulness of the Gentiles*. A blindness *in part* has befallen Israel, until *the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*. The term fulness refers to "a number." In other words, God has a set number of Gentiles that He intends to bring into the Body of the Messiah. Once this set number of Gentiles is reached, the Church will be complete.

In verse 26, he states that at this point the partial blindness of Israel will be removed. Only after the full number of Gentiles has come in will all Israel be saved.

One purpose of the universal church is to call out from among the Gentiles *a people for his name*; once this purpose is accomplished, the Church will be complete.

B. To Provoke the Jews to Jealousy: Romans 11:11-14

I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall is

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the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them.

Paul pointed out in this passage that his unique calling was to be an *apostle to the Gentiles*; Paul was the one who established Gentile evangelism. The Gentiles are part of the composition of the Church, and one of the purposes of the universal church is to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

The first purpose leads to the second purpose: the reason God wanted to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His name was to provoke Jews to jealousy. The Greek word which Paul used that is translated *provoke to jealousy* is *parazeilao*. This was a combination of two Greek words: first, para, which means, "to come alongside"; secondly, *zeilos*, which means "to burn," "to seethe," "to start a fire," "to make red hot." So *parazeilao* means for someone to come alongside another in order to cause him to seethe, to boil, to turn red with jealousy in order that he will desire what the one who has come alongside him has. The Gentile believer, then, is to come alongside a Jewish person and live the kind of life that will cause the Jewish person to seethe with jealousy so that he will say, "What is that Gentile doing with my Messiah?" and want to believe on Yeshua himself. It is sad that, throughout most of its history, the tendency of the Church has been to provoke the Jews to anger rather than to jealousy. This is the second purpose for the universal church during this Dispensation of Grace: *to provoke the Jews to jealousy in order that they will come to saving faith.*

Indeed, many Gentiles have done this. A survey of the thousands of Jewish believers today was taken recently and showed that the majority of them were led to the Messiah through Gentile believers, including this author. The blindness of Israel is only partial. There is a Remnant in this age according to the election of grace.

Again, the composition of the universal church includes both Jews and Gentiles who are believers. One of the means by which Jews become believers and are brought into the Body of the Messiah is by being provoked by Gentile believers.

C. To Make Known the Manifold Wisdom of God: Ephesians 3:10

to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.

The third purpose of the universal church is to make known *the manifold wisdom of God*, specifically to angelic beings. In particular, these are fallen angelic beings because Paul used the same terminology here that he used in Ephesians 6:12, where he clearly referred to demons. So even the fallen angels learn of *the manifold wisdom of God* by virtue of what He is doing in the Church.

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D. To Constitute a Dwelling-Place for God: Ephesians 2:20-22

being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

The fourth purpose of the universal church is that not only is the individual believer *a habitation of God*, but the universal church itself, as an organism, is a dwelling-place, *a habitation for God.*

E. To Bring Eternal Glory to God: Ephesians 3:20-21

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul stated that the fifth purpose for the universal church is to bring eternal glory to God. By the time God's program for the Church is complete, it will indeed do exactly that.

VI. THE SYMBOLIC ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The seventh division concerns the symbolic illustrations used in the New Testament to illustrate the universal church and its relationship to Yeshua the Messiah. There are ten such symbolic illustrations, and each one makes specific points and has specific applications.

A. The Shepherd and the Sheep

The major passage for the first illustration is John 10:1-39, which contains the discourse on the Good Shepherd.

1. Ten Specific Points

All together this passage makes ten specific points. First, John emphasized that it is the Messiah who came in by the door in verses 1-2: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

The point of these verses is that Yeshua came in by the true door. Anyone else who came in by *some other way* showed that he was not a shepherd, but a robber.

The second point is that the true shepherd will always be followed by those who are truly the sheep according to verses 3-5: *To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he has put forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Later in verse 14, He stated: *I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own,*

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and mine own know me.
The true shepherd will be followed by those who are truly his sheep; they will not listen to the voice of a stranger.
The third point is made in verse 7: *Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*
Not only did He come in through the door, but He is also *the door of the sheep.*

The fourth point is that He loves the sheep, and the fifth point is that He provides for the sheep. That is all part of the Good Shepherd motif of verse 14. In His role as the Good Shepherd, He loves the sheep, and this love is expressed by making provision for the sheep.

The sixth point is in verse 8: *All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*
Again, other shepherds are naturally false, and the true sheep, which is the true Church, will not follow a false shepherd.

The seventh point is in verses 9-10: *I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. The thief comes not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.*
There is fellowship between the shepherd and the sheep; they have a relationship with each other. Because of this fellowship, they will not be fooled by those who are impostors.

The eighth point of the illustration of this relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is that the Jewish sheep and Gentile sheep will be brought together into one fold according to verse 16: *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.*
Previously, it was pointed out that one of the mysteries, which was contained in the New Testament but not revealed in the Old Testament, was that the composition of the Church would be of Jewish and Gentile believers united into one Body. This particular passage contains the first indication of the revelation of that mystery. The sheep about which He had been speaking up to this point were Jewish sheep. Then in verse 16, He mentioned that He had *other sheep* that were *not of this fold*. The sheep of *this fold* were the Jewish believers, and the *other sheep* were the Gentile believers, who were separated at the time John 10 was taking place. Unity between Jews and Gentiles into *one flock* would come only after His death, Resurrection, and Ascension. The point He made here was that both Jews and Gentiles will be brought together into one fold, the Church; they will become *one flock* under the *one shepherd*. So already as early as John 10, there was an implication that there would be a new entity of Jewish and Gentile believers.

The ninth point of the illustration is that, as the Shepherd of the

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sheep, He will lay down his life for the true sheep according to verses 11 and 15.
Verse 11 states: *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
Verse 15 states: *even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*
A true shepherd over his true sheep is willing to lay down his life for his sheep.

The tenth point of the illustration to be noted concerning the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is that there are certain time-distinctions in this relationship: past, present, and future. Insofar as the past is concerned, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for His sheep (Jn. 10:11). As far as the present is concerned, He is now the Great Shepherd of the sheep and is in the process of sanctifying the sheep (Heb. 13:20-21). Insofar as the future is concerned, the Shepherd is going to reward the sheep (I Pet. 5:1-4)
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2. Five Specific Applications

The first symbolic illustration of the shepherd and the sheep has five specific applications. The first application is that of the Messiah's intercession: He intercedes on behalf of His sheep.

The second application is that of provision: it is not the job of the sheep to find their own pasture; it is the responsibility of the shepherd to lead the sheep to food and water. The fact that we are sheep and He is our Shepherd promises that He is going to provide for our basic needs. He does not promise to provide for our wants; that is only in accordance with His will and can differ with different believers. However, insofar as the basic necessities of life are concerned, these will be provided.

The third application is that of protection: it is also the responsibility of the shepherd to protect his sheep from attacks from the outside, be it the lion, the bear, or the wolf.

The fourth application is one of calling. At certain times of the day, the shepherd calls to the sheep with a special call that only his sheep understand and recognize. His sheep then move toward the shepherd so that they can be led to water, to pasture, or to the fold. Indeed, in this application, He is calling believers to do various functions within that fold, using their different gifts for the building up of the Body. The sheep are responsible to obey that call.

And the fifth application is one of security; there is security in this Shepherd according to John 10:27-29: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the*

Father's hand.
The promise of security is that, once we become His sheep, we can never become not His sheep. Part of this relationship is the eternal security of our salvation.

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B. The Vine and the Branches

The second symbolic illustration of the relationship of the universal church to the Messiah is found in John 15:1-16.

1. Seven Specific Points

Seven points can be made in this illustration. First, this illustration teaches the concept of union with the Messiah; just as the branch is united into the vine, so believers are united to Him.

Secondly, just as there is communion with the branch, so there is communion with the Messiah. The branch receives its life, strength, and power to produce fruit from the vine. Yeshua is the Vine and believers are the branches; they receive life, ability to function, and power for service from this Vine.

The third point is that believers are to abide in unbroken fellowship. Just as the branch continually lives on the vine, so believers are to continually abide in unbroken fellowship with their Vine, Jesus the Messiah.

Fourthly, there will be cleansing and pruning. The purpose of cleansing and pruning the branches is so they will produce even more fruit. Even so, believers are going to be cleansed and pruned, either by way of blessing or discipline, in order to produce more fruit.

A fifth point is that of effectual prayer. Effectual prayer is dependent upon a lifeline-connection with this Vine. If believers abide in it, then they will be able to pray effectually.

The sixth point is that of celestial joy; believers are going to produce fruit in joy because of their attachment to this Vine.

And the seventh point is that there are going to be three degrees of fruitfulness. The first degree is basic fruit in 15:2a: *Every branch in me that bears not fruit, he takes it away: and every branch that bears fruit, he cleanses it.*

The second degree of fruitfulness is the element of more fruit in 2b: *that it may bear more fruit.*

And the third degree of fruitfulness is much fruit in verse 5: *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing.*
If believers produce basic *fruit*, He is going to cleanse them so they can produce even *more fruit*; if believers produce more fruit and continually abide in Him, they are going to produce much fruit. So the more

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believers grow in grace, the more they will learn how to live a Spirit-filled life, and the more fruitful they will become.

2. Four Specific Applications

This particular symbolic illustration lends itself to four applications. First, believers are partakers of the Messiah's glory; just as the branch partakes of the sap of the vine, so believers will partake of His glory. The second application is that of fruitfulness; fruitfulness depends on abiding in this Vine. The third application is that of spiritual strength; the power to produce comes from abiding in that Vine. The fourth application is that He is the source of life and the source of sanctification for the Church.

C. The Cornerstone and the Stones of the Building

The best single passage that describes the third symbolic illustration of the relationship of the universal church to the Messiah is found in Ephesians 2:19-22.

1. Four Specific Points

This particular illustration lends itself to four main points. First, that the Church is in the process of being built. In Matthew 16:18, Yeshua said: *upon this rock I will build my church*. When He made that statement, the Church was yet future, but since that time, the Church has been founded and is now being built, because the cornerstone has been laid. He is the Cornerstone; the apostles and prophets are the foundation stones; and believers are the stones of the building being built upon that foundation.

The second point is that individual believers are living stones, being placed one on top of the other as the building is being erected (I Pet. 2:5).

The third point of this illustration is that Yeshua is both the Foundation and the Cornerstone (I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20-22; I Pet. 2:6).

And the fourth point is that the building, composed of believers, is the habitation of the Spirit. This is the point of verses 19-20: *So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone.*
The picture in these verses is of a building that is being erected: this building is the Church. The first thing a builder does is to lay down a cornerstone: that Cornerstone is Yeshua the Messiah. From the cornerstone there are two lines of foundation stones going first in one direction, then in the other direction, so that a basic square is formed: of the two lines of foundation stones, one line represents the *apostles* and the other line represents the New Testament *prophets*. Once the cornerstone is laid, and the foundation stones are set in place, then the other stones can be built on top: believers are the individual stones

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now being erected on top of the foundation. Once this building is complete, the Rapture will occur.

2. Four Specific Applications

This particular symbolic illustration provides four applications. The first application is the interdependence of believers. Just as a building has stones of various sizes placed on top of each other in such a way that if one stone is pulled out it will cause several other stones to fall, so believers are mutually interdependent. In fact, the whole doctrine of spiritual gifts in the Body emphasizes the interdependence of believers.

The second application is one of stability. The purpose of laying the foundation is to give the building stability. Only if believers build on the proper foundation will they be stable in their spiritual lives.

The third application is that of direction. The purpose of laying down the cornerstone is so the other foundation stones can be placed in a straight line; the cornerstone gives direction to the other stones. In this illustration, the Lord directs the lives of believers.

And the fourth application is that rewards for the saints will be based on how they build on the foundation, Yeshua the Messiah (I Cor. 3:10-15).

D. The High Priest and the Kingdom of Priests

The fourth symbolic illustration of the relationship between the universal church and the Messiah is brought out in Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-5:10; 7:1-10:18; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6.

1. Two Specific Points

This illustration has two major points. First, Jesus went to Heaven after sacrificing His blood and becoming the final sacrifice for sin. He is the Sacrifice, but since He Himself offered the sacrifice, in that sense, He is also the Priest according to Hebrews 4:14-16: *Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that has been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.*

This point is also brought out in Hebrews 9:24: *For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us.*

This point is brought out again in Hebrews 10:19-22: *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and*

having our body washed with pure water.

In these passages the first major point of the illustration of the high priest and the kingdom of priests is that Jesus, as the High Priest, offered the final sacrifice and then went into Heaven.

That leads to the second point, which is that Yeshua is now interceding on behalf of His kingdom of priests. This point is brought out in Romans 8:34: *who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

This point is brought again out in Hebrews 7:25: *Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.*

2. Two Specific Applications

This illustration lends itself to two applications. First, that Yeshua is now in His priestly ministry. During His First Coming, He was a Prophet; after the Second Coming, He will be a King; between the First and Second Comings, He is functioning as a Priest. His major role in functioning as a priest is that of an intercessor, making intercession for us. One of the reasons believers are eternally secure is because "He ever lives making intercession for them." That is why He saves to the uttermost. Because He lives again, He will never die again.

The second application is that in light of all this believers are to offer sacrifices. They are a kingdom of priests. The role of a priest is to offer sacrifices, and believers are to be offering sacrifices. However, they are not to offer sacrifices of blood, but four other types of sacrifices. The first type of sacrifice is that believers are to present their bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord, and this means to make Him the Lord of their lives (Rom. 12:1-2). The second type of sacrifice that believers are to make is the spiritual sacrifices of worship, giving praise, and thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15; I Pet. 2:5, 9). The third type of sacrifice is that of monetary support for the work of the Lord (Heb. 13:16). The fourth type of sacrifice is that of good works (Heb. 13:16).

E. The Head and the Body

There is one main passage for the fifth symbolic illustration of the relationship of Jesus to the universal church, I Corinthians 12:12-27.

1. Seven Specific Points

Seven points are made in this passage. The first point is that the Church is a self-developing Body, composed of individuals who have spiritual gifts. The purpose of the spiritual gifts is for the building up, the nourishing and strengthening, of this Body (Eph. 4:13-16).

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The second point is that the members of the Body are appointed to a specific service, a specific part of the Body, in accordance with their spiritual gifts.

The third point in this illustration is that the Body is a living organism, united eternally with the Messiah.

The fourth point is that entrance into this Body is by means of Spirit baptism, for by one Spirit all were baptized into one Body *whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free and were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

The fifth point is that the Father made the Messiah the Head of the Body.

The sixth point is that the Head is preeminent; therefore, He has preeminence over the Body, the Church.

And the seventh point of this illustration is that there is a unity between the Head and the Body.

Other passages that picture this illustration of the Head and the Body are Ephesians 2:16; 4:4, 5, 16; 5:30-32; Colossians 1:24; and 2:19.

2. Five Specific Applications

This illustration lends itself to five applications. The first application is that of nourishment; just as the body receives nourishment through the control center, the head, even so believers receive nourishment from Him.

A second application is that of cherishing; just as the control center, the head, cherishes the body that it controls, even so He cherishes believers.

The third application is that of strength; just as the body receives its strength to function from the head, the brain, even so believers receive strength to function from Him.

The fourth application is one of sanctification; it is the Head that controls when and how the Body is going to be cleansed.

And the fifth application is the use of spiritual gifts. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift. It is the responsibility of every believer to use his spiritual gifts for the building up of the Body.

F. The Last Adam and the New Creation

The main passage for the sixth symbolic illustration of the relationship of the Messiah to the universal church is found in I Corinthians 15:20-22 and 45-49.

Verses 20-22 state: *But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made*

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alive.

Verse 45-49 state: *So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

1. Three Specific Points

In this illustration, three points are made. First, believers are now in a new order: they are now in Christ rather than in Adam.

The second point of this illustration is that believers are partakers of the new birth, the new nature, righteousness, sanctification, and new promises.

The third point as a result of all this is eternal life, since the work of regeneration is not a work that can be undone.

Other passages that teach this illustration are Romans 5:12-21; II Corinthians 5:17; and Galatians 6:15.

2. One Specific Application

The main application of this illustration is the hope of resurrection power and life.

G. The Bridegroom and the Bride

The seventh symbolic illustration of the relationship of the universal church to Yeshua is found in II Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:25 33.

1. Two Specific Points

Two main points are made in this illustration. First, the Church is viewed as a virgin bride not yet joined to her husband, but waiting for the arrival of the groom according to II Corinthians 11:2: *For I am jealous over you with a godly jealously: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*

The second point of this illustration is the emphasis of the main passage, Ephesians 5:25-33, concerning the work of the Bridegroom on behalf of the Bride.

This work of the Bridegroom on behalf of the Bride has a time-relationship of past, present, and future. The past element is that He died for the Bride according to verse 25: *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.*

The present work of the Bridegroom for the Bride is that He is now sanctifying the Bride according to verse 26: *that he might sanctify it, having*

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cleansed it by the washing of water with the word.
And the future work of the Bridegroom for the Bride is that He will present the glorified Church without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish according to verse 27: *that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

2. Three Specific Applications

This illustration lends itself to three applications. The first application is the obvious one of love; just as there is a love-relationship between a husband and a wife, even so there is a love-relationship between the Messiah and the Church.

The second application is one of intimacy; just as a husband and wife share a certain intimacy they do not share outside the marriage relationship, even so believers share an intimacy with the Messiah that is not experienced by those outside the Body of believers.

The third application is that there should be a reflection of the relationship of the Messiah and the Church in the relationship between the husband and the wife; the believing husband and believing wife should have the type of relationship that reflects the relationship of the Messiah and the Church.

H. The Heir and the Joint-Heirs

The eighth symbolic illustration of the relationship of the universal church to Yeshua is emphasized by two main passages: Romans 8:17 and Hebrews 1:2a.

1. Two Specific Points

This illustration makes two points. The first point is in Romans 8:17: *and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.*
Believers are *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. The Messiah is the Son of God and, as the only begotten Son of the Father, He is the Heir. Since believers are now the adopted sons, they become *joint-heirs* with Him.
The second point is made in Hebrews 1:2a: *has at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things.*
The Son is heir of all things; He is to inherit all things. Because of the believer's relationship with the Son, they are going to become joint-heirs and enjoy these things as well.

2. Three Specific Applications

This illustration lends itself to three applications. The first application is that sufferings in this life will lead to glorification.

The second application is that believers are destined to coreign with the Messiah; this is their inheritance and they will exercise this

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authority in the Messianic Kingdom.

The third application is that the inheritance is going to include rewards. In fact, the degree of authority in the Kingdom will be based upon the rewards received.

I. The First-Fruits and the Harvest

The main passage for the ninth symbolic illustration of the relationship of Yeshua to the universal church is in I Corinthians 15:23: *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming.*

1. Two Specific Points

The illustration of the *firstfruits*, which is the Messiah, and the harvest, which is the believers, makes two main points. The first point is that Yeshua was resurrected.

The second point is that, since He was resurrected, believers will also be resurrected.

2. One Specific Application

The application of this illustration is the hope of resurrection from which our comfort is derived.

J. The Masters and the Servants

The two main passages that teach the tenth symbolic illustration of the relationship of the universal church and Yeshua are found in I Corinthians 7:20-24 and Colossians 4:1.

1. Three Specific Points

In this illustration, three main points are made. First, to be freed by the Messiah is to become a servant of the Messiah.

The second point of this illustration is that the believer was bought with a price, which was the blood of the Messiah.

The third point of this illustration is that those in authority are, as a result, under authority themselves. A servant could be placed in a position of authority within a household, but, being a servant, he is always under authority himself.

2. Two Specific Applications

This illustration lends itself to two applications. The first application is one of obedience; it is the job of a servant to obey his master. The Messiah is the Master, believers are the servants, and they must obey Him.

The second application is the encouragement to become a bondslave. A mere slave was someone who fell into slavery without a choice, but a bondslave was one who chose to become a slave to a specific master for life. Believers have been purchased from the slave market of sin,

therefore, their calling is to become a bondslave to the Messiah.

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VII. THE FUTURE DESTINY OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The eighth division concerns the question: What is the future destiny of the universal church? One thing it is not: it is not the destiny of the Church to conquer the world with the gospel. For centuries, this was a common misconception: once the world had been conquered with the gospel, then the Kingdom could be set up; once the Kingdom was set up, only then would Yeshua return.

This view ignored the passages of Scripture, which taught that the Church will lose ground in the last days and become more and more apostate. The Church was not destined to conquer the world with the gospel. In fact, no point in Scripture ever teaches that the Church is to rule in this age. In fact, the opposite is taught by the Bible: the function of the Church is to be subservient to "Caesar," the government, not rule over Caesar. Believers are to obey Caesar as long as the government does not ask them to do something that is clearly against the teachings of Scripture. So whatever the destiny of the Church is, one thing it will not do is conquer the world with the gospel. The future destiny of the Church involves five things.

A. Raptured

The first thing involved in the future destiny of the Church is that it will be raptured (I Thess. 4:13-18). One of the purposes of the universal church is to take out from among the Gentiles *a people for his name*. This process will continue *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*, until the set number of believers that God has ordained to be in the Body, then the Body will be complete. Once the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, the Church is going to be raptured. The ones who are going to be raptured are those *in Christ*. This term used by Paul is a technical term referring only to those in the Body of the Messiah. The Church does not include Old Testament saints, Tribulation saints, or Millennial saints; the Church includes only those who have been saved between Acts 2 and the Rapture. Therefore, the Rapture will include only the Church.

B. Rewarded

The second thing involved in the future destiny of the Church is that it will be rewarded according to II Corinthians 5:10: *For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.* The judgment in which the rewards will come is the Judgment Seat of the Messiah. The basis of the judgment will be works. The judgment is not to determine whether one is saved or not, because that is determined once a person believes. But those who have believed will then be judged on the basis of how they conducted their spiritual lives.

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A more extended passage that deals with the aspect of the Church's rewards is I Corinthians 3:10-15. Verses 10-11 state: *According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another builds thereon. But let each man take heed how he builds thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
Believers are going to be judged on how they build on the foundation, *which is Jesus Christ*; He is the foundation of spiritual life.

Depending upon how believers conduct their spiritual lives, these rewards will be given or withheld according to verses 12-13: *But if any man builds on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is.*
Every believer's work is going to be evaluated and tested to see if it can withstand the fires of purification. Wood, hay, and stubble will not withstand the fires of purification and will be totally burned away. Gold, silver, and precious stones will withstand the fire, and any impurities in the gold, silver, and precious stones will be burned away .
The results are given in verses 14-15: *If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.*
Those who build wisely on this foundation will be rewarded; those who do not will suffer loss. They will not suffer the loss of salvation, but they will suffer the loss of rewards.

C. Married

The third thing involved in the future destiny of the Church is that it will be married to Yeshua the Messiah according to Revelation 19:6-9: *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are true words of God.*
After the Church has been purified at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah and has been cleansed, she will then be married. By comparing the first part of chapter 19 with the second part, it is obvious that this *marriage of the Lamb* to the Church will take place in Heaven before the Second Coming. The Second Coming is in verses 11-16. This is one of the evidences that the Second Coming and the Rapture are not the same thing, because the Church, the Bride of the Messiah, is already in Heaven before the Second Coming takes place. She was brought into Heaven by means of the Rapture. Also according to this passage, at the time the Church is married to the Messiah she is wearing *fine linen, bright and pure*, symbolizing *the righteous acts of the saints*. Obviously, the marriage takes place after the Church

has undergone the purification of the Judgment Seat of the Messiah and has been duly rewarded.

All of these events follow a logical progression: the Church is raptured into Heaven; once in Heaven, she undergoes the Judgment Seat of the Messiah and is purified; then she is married.

D. Coreigning with the Messiah

The fourth thing involved in the future destiny of the Church is that it will coreign with the Messiah in the Kingdom according to Revelation 20:4-6: *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

Both the Church saints and the Tribulation saints will reign with the Messiah, but this manuscript is concerned only with the Church saints. After the marriage takes place between the Messiah and the Church in Heaven, the Messiah will return and set up His Kingdom. The Church is destined to coreign with the Messiah in the Kingdom. The degree of authority that each individual Church saint will have will be based upon the rewards he received at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah. This coreigning goes on for only *a thousand years*, so this cannot be the final destiny of the Church.

E. Abiding in the New Jerusalem

The fifth and final thing involved in the future destiny of the Church is that it will abide with the whole Triune God in the eternal New Jerusalem. This is brought out in detail in Revelation 21:1-22:5.✡

NOTES

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:
MBS106, 108, 109 and 112