

Body Works

A To Do List for the Body of Christ

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Background

Several generations after the great flood that had destroyed all life on earth except Noah and those with him in the Ark, men had repopulated the earth and were back to their old tricks. They had forgotten the one true and living God and worshipped all kinds of Idols.

But God had made a covenant (an agreement or contract) with Noah (Ge 8:21-22; 9:8-17) that He would not destroy the earth again so God appeared to a man called Abram (Ge 11:27-12:7) and promised to make him and his descendents into a new nation.

According to this promise, God made Abram more or less into the ruler of the earth. God would now deal with all men based on how they treated Abram. (Ge 12:3)

The Lord appeared again to Abram (Ge 13:14-17) and promised to give Abram and his descendents a certain piece of land as a **possession forever**. God also promised that Abram's descendents would be as numerous as the dust of the earth. Note that there are no conditions which Abram has to meet to receive this promise. God just says "**I will give it to you forever.**" The land is further described in Ge 15:18-21. This means that the land still belongs to Abraham (his name was changed from Abram to Abraham in Ge 17:5) today and will be his for eternity. (Read all of Ge 17) This is sometimes referred to as the dispensation of promise.

In this dispensation, Abraham's descendents, Israel, are separated from the rest of the world (Gentiles) and **given a special privileged position**. They are the channel through which God deals with the Gentiles and through which the Gentiles may come to God. Remember that the Bible was written by Jews and even when God took to Himself a human form, it was as a Jew. So even God's revelation and salvation came through Israel. **They are to be a kingdom (Nation) of priests over the Gentiles.** (Ex 19:6; Re 1:6; 5:10) **This is their purpose.**

From time to time God added things like the Law of Moses and the Throne of David to this eternal, unconditional covenant with Abraham but **He has never rescinded it!** God has reinforced this promise through all of His prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:21)

Even when Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, came to earth, this was not something new and different. It was the fulfillment of God's promise. (Ge 3:15; Isa 7:14; 9:6) During His earthly ministry, Jesus preached the Kingdom Gospel. (Mt 4:17; Lu 4:17-21) Many use Jesus' words. (Joh 14:2) "**In my Father's house** there are many resting-places. Were it otherwise, I would have told you; for I am going to make ready a place for you." (WNT) to say that Jesus told His apostles that they would go to Heaven. On close examination, however, we find that His "Father's house" is actually the earthly temple in Jerusalem. (Joh 2:16; Isa 56:4-6; Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; Lu 19:45-46) For more information on this see Ezekiel chapters 40-48 where the many rooms in the millennial temple are described. For eternity, they will live in the place Jesus prepared for them, New Jerusalem. (Re 21)

From the above, we see that Israel's hope is on the earth. It always was on the earth and will forever be on the earth. Nowhere in the Bible was Israel ever given a hope in Heaven.

A New Dispensation

Around 37 A.D. God converted Saul, a Jew from Tarsus, (Acts 9:1-16) and committed to him a new dispensation. Just as Abram's name was changed to Abraham as head of the Dispensation of the Promise, so Saul's name was changed to Paul as head of this dispensation. (Acts 13:9) In doing this, **God did not take back His promise to Israel.** God merely set Israel

aside in **temporary, partial blindness** until the new dispensation was fulfilled. (Ro 11:25-27) When this program, called the "Dispensation of the Grace of God," is complete, God will once again deal with all of the inhabitants of the earth through Israel.

This dispensation is also referred to as the "Dispensation of the Mystery" because it was not revealed to anyone before Paul. During this dispensation, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. All of God's elect in this dispensation are set apart by the Holy Spirit and placed into what is referred to as "The Body of Christ." (1 Co 12:12-14) The hope of the Body of Christ is to spend eternity in Heaven. We have no part of the earth. The earth belongs to Israel and saved Gentiles from other ages such as Abel, Noah, Job, & etc.

The Body of Christ

The Body of Christ is the name of the assembly of believers gathered by the Holy Spirit from both Jews and Gentiles and is the only true "Church" for the Dispensation of Grace. This "Church" is part of the mystery revealed to Paul by the Lord from Heaven. It cannot be found in any part of the Bible other than that which was written by Paul. This "Church" began when Paul was converted (Acts 9) (Paul was the first member) and will end at the Rapture when we will be taken to Heaven where we will spend eternity. (1 Th 4:16-17)

Salvation

While we always turn to Eph 2:8-9 to show how we are saved (from the penalty for sin) in this dispensation, it should be noted that this is the only method by which anyone has ever been saved. **All of the elect throughout eternity; past, present, and future; have been saved by the grace of God through the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ.** Neither works nor merit had any part in their salvation. To be saved, they had to be given a new nature and that requires the Resurrection Power of God to accomplish. The only difference is the distinction in their individual hopes.

The hope of the BOC is to spend eternity in Heaven with the Lord. (Eph 1:1-2:7) We will even judge angels. (1 Co 6:3)

The hope of Israel is to spend eternity on the earth where they will rule over the whole earth and all its inhabitants as a kingdom of priests. (Ex 19:6; Re 1:6; 5:10) (Isa 49:22; 49:23; 54:3; 60:3, 5-7, 9-12, 14, 16; 61:5-6, 9; 62:2-3; 66:12, 19-20, 22-23; Mic 5:7-8)

The hope of the Gentiles is to spend eternity on the earth where they will be servants to Israel. (Isa 49:22; 49:23; 54:3; 60:3, 5-7, 9-12, 14, 16; 61:5-6, 9; 62:2-3; 66:12, 19-20, 22-23; Mic 5:7-8)

The Non-Elect of all ages and dispensations have no hope and will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. (Re 20:15)

Works

Works play no part in obtaining salvation so why are the elect required to do good works? The works demonstrate that the worker is one of the elect. (Heb 11:4) By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, **by which he obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.(KJV) Notice that Heb 11:4 says that Abel's offering was a witness that he was righteous. The act did not make him righteous; it just demonstrated that he already was righteous. The whole chapter of Hebrews 11 talks about the acts of some of God's elect in demonstration of their faith. They do good works because of who they are in the same manner that an apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree.

Works and the BOC

All of the elect, including the members of the BOC are required to do good works. While it is usually overlooked, Eph 2:10 is very specific on this point. (Eph 2:10) For we are his

workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV) **The very purpose of our being is to do good works.** (See also 2 Co 9:8)

O.K., so the Body of Christ must do good works! What are these works? How do we determine what to do? Do we make a list of things and then toss a coin over each one and if it comes up heads, it's a good work and tails indicates a bad one? Not Hardly!

Body of Christ "TO DO" List

1. The Apostle Paul gives us a list to follow. We might even consider that the first item on the BOC to do list is: (1Co 11:1) **Be ye followers of me, (Paul) even as I also am of Christ.** See also (1Co 4:16; Eph 5:1; Php 3:17; 1Co 11:2Th 3:9)

But why should we follow Paul? Isn't Paul just full of pride and arrogance when he says such things? Not at all. Remember Paul is writing scripture and is therefore inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is actually God telling us to follow Paul. After all, Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. (Ro 11:13; 15:16; Gal 2:2, 7-9; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11) The dispensation of the Grace of God and the Revelation of the Mystery were both given to Paul. (Ac 20:24; 26:16-17; Ro 16:25; 1 Co 2:7; Ep 3:1-9; Col 1:25-27)

2. Next and probably the most important, though most overlooked and ignored, item is: (2Ti 2:15) **Study to show yourself approved unto God**, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** A proper, diligent and prayerful study of the Bible is the only way we can know who we are, what we are, and what our hope is. Study of God's word has often been called food for the soul and rightly so. We must obey this command or we will not be able to follow any others. In fact, we won't even know what they are.

Paul also says: (2Ti 3:16-17) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." According to this, we are to form our doctrine based on the whole Bible. (Ro 15:4) This is only possible if we rightly divide it! Most people already divide the Bible to some extent. For example: no one is building an ark, yet the Bible commands it. No problem; this command was addressed to Noah – not to us. In fact, the only real problem with rightly dividing seems to arise when considering the Kingdom Program and Israel's Earthly Hope in relation to the Mystery and the Heavenly Hope of the Body of Christ. **Yet this distinction is probably the most important dividing of Scripture that one can do. Paul emphasizes this in Gal 1:6-9. Remember Paul is our example and he even confronts Peter over this. (Gal 2:11-21)**

Since most of us today are familiar with E-mail, it might help us understand "rightly dividing" by considering the Bible as a group of E-mails from God.

In the heading there are two types of addressees:

1. TO: Those who should respond to and take action on this message.
2. CC: Those whom the author feels should know the content of the message but are not required to respond or take action.

All of Paul's epistles would be addressed TO: The Body of Christ and all the other books of the Bible would be addressed CC: The Body of Christ.

Paul tells us that the other books were written for our learning (Ro 15:4) so we find principles throughout the Bible that should temper our doctrine. (i.e. Ps 118:8 & 119:11 and etc.)

A note of caution: We should not study just to gain knowledge. If we don't use what we learn, study is a waste of time and effort! (Ps 119:11) **I have hidden Your word in my heart, so that I might not sin against You.** (MKJV)

It should be noted at this point that the Body of Christ is not some religious organization with lots of rules to follow and rituals to perform. It is actually life itself, both now and for

eternity. (2 Co 5:21; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3-4) We are members of a new creation (2 Co 5:17) by the working of the Holy Spirit. (1 Co 12:12-13) We are already citizens of Heaven. (Php 3:20) We have already been justified and glorified. (Ro 8:30) Nothing can remove us from the Body of Christ. (Ro 8:35-39)

3. Learn the mysteries revealed to Paul. The gospel (good news) for us is according to the Revelation of the Mystery. (Ro 16:25; 1 Co 2:7; Ep3:8-9)

- Israel has been set aside in temporary, partial blindness. (Ro 11:25)
- We will someday (soon) meet the Lord in the air and then go with Him to our home in Heaven. (1Co 15:51-58; 1 Th 4:13-18)
- The mystery of Christ and the Church. (Ep 5:32)
- The riches of the mystery. (Col 1:27)
- The mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ. (Col 2:2)
- The mystery of godliness. (1Ti 3:16)
- Who the Body of Christ really is. (Ep 2:14-18; Ep 1:22-23)

4. Walk in the Spirit if you live in the Spirit. (Gal 5:16, 25) This should be the attitude of our daily life. If you are walking in the spirit, you should exhibit the fruit of the spirit. (Gal 5:22-23) If you are not walking in the spirit, your life will be characterized by the works of the flesh. (Gal 5:19-21) This is not to say that we never slip but as we strive to walk in the spirit, its fruit will become more apparent and the works of the flesh will diminish. Additionally, if we are trying to walk in the spirit, we will not be condemned for our failures. (Ro 8:1) Regular daily Bible study does much to improve our spiritual walk. (See also Ps 119:11)

If you don't eat, you die! I'm sure that everyone will agree with this. Most will even agree that if you don't eat the right things, you will get sick and probably die. At least the quality of your life will be greatly reduced. No one would be so foolish as to think: I've been eating all of my life and now I am grown. I know who I am and how I came to be, so I don't need to eat anymore.

The same thing applies to our spiritual life and walk. However mature in the faith we might be, we must continue to partake of spiritual nourishment. A walk is a continuous effort and without food, our ability to walk decreases and could stop completely. The less we study our Bibles, the more difficult it becomes to walk in the spirit. The fruit of the spirit will decrease and the works of the flesh will gradually increase. We will not, we cannot, lose our salvation but there is nothing more miserable than a believer with spiritual sickness.

5. Walk worthy of your calling. (Eph 4:1-32)

Paul explains what walking worthy of our calling is. We are to conduct ourselves in humility and patience forbearing one another in love. We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This does not mean peace and unity at any cost. He is not telling us to forget doctrine because some may be upset over it. In fact, he lists seven doctrinal points upon which we are to base our unity. (Ep 4:3-7)

1. There is one body and that body is the Body of Christ. The members of this body may have been either Jew or Gentile but once in the body, they lose all distinction. (Gal 3:28; Ep 2:11-16; Col 3:10-11; 1 Co 1:10-15)
2. There is one Spirit. (the Holy Spirit)
3. There is one hope and that hope is in Heaven. (Ep 1:3, 18, 20-23; Php 3:20; Co 3:1-4; Ro 8:16-19; 2 Co 5:1-8, 21; 1 Co 6:3)
4. There is one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ and He is God. (Col 2:8-9; Joh 1:1-5, 14)
5. There is one faith. (Ro 10:8-13; 2 Co 5:21; Ro 8:36-39)

6. There is one baptism and it is the one performed by the Holy Spirit. (1 Co 12:13)

7. There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all.

6. Walk worthy of the Lord. (Col 1:10)

7. Walk worthy of God. (1 Th 2:12) To help us walk worthy, Paul prays for us and we should pray for each other. See also (Col 1:9-14)

Here is Paul's prayer: That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; and that having the eyes of your heart full of light, you may have knowledge of what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His heritage in the saints, and how unlimited is His power to us who have faith, as is seen in the working of the strength of His power, by which He made Christ come back from the dead, and gave Him a place at His right hand in Heaven, far over all rule and authority and power and every name which is named, not only in the present order, but in that which is to come: And He has put all things under His feet, and has made Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body, the full measure of Him in whom all things are made complete. (Ep 1:17-23)

8. Don't desire vain glory provoking and envying one another. (Gal 5:26)

9. Help others and do good when you have opportunity. (Ga 6:1-2, 9-10)

10. Remember who you were and that were it not for God's grace you would still be without hope in the world. (Eph 2:11-13)

11. Put off the old nature and be renewed in mind and spirit. (Eph 4:17-19; 22-32)

12. Follow God as dear children walking in love. (Eph 5:1-4)

13. Do not let men deceive you with vain words. (Eph 5:6-8)

14. Do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness. (Eph 5:10-11)

15. Submit yourselves one to another. (Eph 5:15-25; 6:1-7; 9-18)

16. Be of one accord and of one mind. Be humble. (Php 2:2-8)

17. Don't gripe and complain. (Php 2:14-18)

18. Rejoice in the Lord. Don't worry about anything. By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, submit your requests to God. (Php 3:1-2; 4:4-9)

19. Focus your mind on Heavenly things, not on things of the earth. (Col 3:1-2, 5, 8-9, 12-23; 4:1-2, 5-6; 1Th 4:1-6, 11-12) After all we are citizens of Heaven – not of Earth. (Php 3:20) There are some who tell us not to be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good. But the fact of the matter is that the more heavenly minded we become the more earthly good we will be.

20. Walk in Christ and continue in the faith. (Col 1:23; 2:6-7, 9-10, 16-22; 1 Th 5:6-8, 11, 14-22; 2 Th 2:15; 3:6, 10-15)

21. Don't be worried or upset as you see signs that indicate the Tribulation Period is coming soon. It can't begin until after we have gone to Heaven. (2Th 2:1-6; 1Th 5:1-5, 9)

22. Confess with your mouth and your life that Jesus is God if you really believe it. (Ro 10:9-10; 12:1-3) Of course, your "friends" may ostracize you but so what. It happened to Paul (2 Ti 4:16) and even to Jesus. (Joh 6:66) Just live by faith and don't be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. (Ro 1:16-17; 10:11)

23. Walk in newness of life. (Ro 6:1-16)

24. Obey the laws of your country. (Ro 13:1-6)

25. Obey the nine commandments of the moral law. Keeping of the Sabbath has been done away. (Col 2:16)

26. **Do not deceive yourself.** (1 Co 3:18-23)
27. **Separate yourself from unbelievers** (2 Co 6:14-18) and even from believers who don't follow Paul. (2 Th 3:6)
28. **Don't back-talk God.** (Ro 9:19-20)
29. **Don't boast or brag.** (1Co 4:6-7)
30. **Don't be ignorant.** (Ro 11:25-26; 1 Co 10:1-14; 12:1-31)
31. **Be reconciled to God.** (2 Co 5:17-21)
32. **Cleanse yourself from the filthiness of the flesh.** (2 Co 7:1)
33. **Examine yourselves to see whether you are in "the faith."** (2 Co 13:5)
34. **Prepare for war!** (Ep 6:11-18; 2 Co 10:3-5)

If you do not believe that Jesus is God and that He died and rose again, then you are not a member of the Body of Christ.

If you truly want to know God and become a member of the Body of Christ, then God has given you a spark of interest, which can only be answered by reading the gospel of John. Read it over and over until you know that Jesus is God and what He did.

If after this, you believe that Jesus is God, that He died on the cross, was buried and then rose again, then you are a member of the Body of Christ.

Next study Paul's epistles to Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians until you understand them. You will then be ready to study the rest of Paul's epistles and then the whole Bible.

However, if you still do not believe after a thorough study of the gospel of John, then God did not elect you into the BOC.