

What does “The Body of Christ” mean in the Bible?

Sunday, February 26, 2023 – RE Congress, Session 7-07

A) Physical/Mortal Body of the Human Jesus:

John 1:14a – Incarnation: “And the Word became **flesh** and made his dwelling among us...”

Mark 14:8b – Anointing at Bethany: “She has anticipated anointing **my body** for burial.” (cf. Mt 26:12)

Mark 15:43-44 – Joseph Arimathea asks Pilate for “**the body of Jesus**” (cf. Mt 27:58-59; Lk 23:52-55; Jn 19:38-42)

Luke 24:1-3 – On Easter morning, the women do not find “**the body of the Lord Jesus**” in the tomb. (cf. Lk 24:23)

Rom 7:4 – “In the same way, my brothers, you also were put to death to the law **through the body of Christ**, so that you might belong to another, to *the one who was raised from the dead* in order that we might bear fruit for God.”

Col 1:21-22 – “And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds²² he has now reconciled in **his fleshly body** through his death, to present you holy, without blemish, and irreproachable before him...”

Heb 10:5, 10 – “When he came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but **a body** you prepared for me;’ /.../ ¹⁰By this ‘will,’ we have been consecrated through the offering of the **body of Jesus Christ** once for all.”

1 Pet 2:24 – “He himself bore our sins **in his body upon the cross**, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

B) Glorified/Risen Body of the Resurrected Christ:

Matt 28:9b – Women meet the risen Lord: “They approached, embraced **his feet**, and did him homage.”

Luke 24:39-40 – “Look at **my hands and my feet**, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have **flesh and bones** as you can see I have.⁴⁰ And as he said this, he showed them **his hands and his feet**.”

John 2:19b-22 – [Jesus]: “Destroy **this temple** and in three days **I will raise it up**.”²⁰ The Jews said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?”²¹ But he was speaking about the **temple of his body**.²² Therefore, *when he was raised from the dead*, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

John 20:20, 25b-28 – “[Jesus] showed them **his hands and his side**. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” /.../ ^{25b}[Thomas]: “Unless I see the mark of the nails in **his hands** and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into **his side**, I will not believe.”²⁶ Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.”²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see **my hands**, and bring your hand and put it into **my side**, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.”²⁸ Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

1 Cor 15:1-58 – ¹² But if **Christ** is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. /.../ ²⁰ But now **Christ has been raised from the dead**, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. /.../ ³⁵ But someone may say, “How are the dead raised? **With what kind of body will they come back?**” ³⁶ You fool! What you sow is not brought to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And *what you sow is not the body that is to be* but a bare kernel of wheat, perhaps, or of some other kind; ³⁸ but *God gives it a body as he chooses*, and to each of the seeds its own body. ³⁹ **Not all flesh is the same**, but there is **one kind for human beings**, another kind of flesh for animals, another kind of flesh for birds, and another for fish. /.../ ⁴² **So also is the resurrection of the dead**. It is sown *corruptible*; it is *raised incorruptible*. ⁴³ It is sown *dishonorable*; it is *raised glorious*. It is sown *weak*; it is *raised powerful*. ⁴⁴ It is **sown a natural body**; it is **raised a spiritual body**. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one.

C) Sacramental/Eucharistic Body of Christ:

Gen 14:18-19a – [When Abram returned from a victory...] “Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out **bread and wine**. He was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ He blessed Abram with these words...”

Mark 14:22-25 – While they were eating, he **took bread**, said the **blessing**, **broke** it, and **gave** it to them, and said, **"Take it; this is my body."** ²³ Then he **took a cup**, **gave thanks**, and **gave** it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ He said to them, **"This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.** ²⁵ Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (cf. Mt 26:26; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23-25)

Luke 24:30-35 – [Emmaus]: And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he **took bread**, said the **blessing**, **broke** it, and **gave** it to them. ³¹ With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. ³² Then they said to each other, **"Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"** ³³ So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem... /.../ ³⁵ Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in **the breaking of the bread**.

John 6:48-58 – **"I am the bread of life.** ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; ⁵⁰ **this is the bread that comes down from heaven** so that one may eat it and not die. ⁵¹ **I am the living bread that came down from heaven**; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and **the bread that I will give is my flesh** for the life of the world." ⁵² The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³ Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood**, you do not have life within you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats **my flesh** and drinks **my blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. ⁵⁵ For **my flesh** is true food, and **my blood** is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats **my flesh** and drinks **my blood** remains in me and I in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who **feeds** on me will have life because of me. ⁵⁸ **This is the bread that came down from heaven.** Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, **whoever eats this bread will live forever.**"

1 Cor 10:16-17 – “The **cup of blessing** that we bless, is it not a **participation in the blood of Christ**? The **bread that we break**, is it not a **participation in the body of Christ**? ¹⁷ Because **the loaf of bread** is one, we, though many, are **one body**, for we all partake of the **one loaf**.”

1 Cor 11:17-34a – “In giving this instruction, I do not praise the fact that your meetings are doing more harm than good. ¹⁸ First of all, I hear that when you meet as a church there are divisions among you, and to a degree I believe it; ¹⁹ there have to be factions among you in order that also those who are approved among you may become known. ²⁰ **When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord's supper,** ²¹ for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk. ²² Do you not have houses in which you can eat and drink? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and make those who have nothing feel ashamed? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this matter I do not praise you.

²³ *For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, **took bread,** ²⁴ and, after he had given thanks, **broke it** and said, **"This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."** ²⁵ In the same way also the **cup**, after supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."***

²⁶ **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.**

²⁷ Therefore **whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily** will have to answer for **the body and blood of the Lord**. ²⁸ A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. ²⁹ For **anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body**, eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. ³¹ If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; ³² but since we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³ Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that your meetings may not result in judgment....”

D) Spiritual/Mystical Body of Christ: The One United Church

Romans 12:4-5 – “For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function,⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”

1 Cor 12:12-27 – “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, **so also Christ**.¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.¹⁴ **Now the body is not a single part, but many.**

¹⁵ If a foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,’ it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. ¹⁶ Or if an ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,’ it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. ¹⁹ *If they were all one part, where would the body be?* ²⁰ But as it is, **there are many parts, yet one body**. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I do not need you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I do not need you.’ ²² Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, ²³ and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, ²⁴ whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, ²⁵ **so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.** ²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. ²⁷ **Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.**”

Gal 3:26-28 – “For through faith **you are all children of God in Christ Jesus**.²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus.**”

Col 1:18, 24 – “**He is the head of the body, the church.** He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead... // ²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of **his body, which is the church...**”

Col 2:9-10 – “For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity **bodily**,¹⁰ and you share in this fullness in him, who is the **head** of every principality and power.”

Col 2:18-19 – “Let no one disqualify you, delighting in self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions, inflated without reason by his fleshly mind,¹⁹ and not holding closely to **the head**, from whom **the whole body**, supported and held together by its ligaments and bonds, achieves the growth that comes from God.”

Col 3:15 – “And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in **one body...**”

Eph 1:22-23 – “He [God] put all things beneath his [Jesus] feet and gave him as **head** over all things to **the church**,²³ **which is his body**, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.”

Eph 2:13-22 – But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace, *he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh*,¹⁵ abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself **one new person** in place of the two, thus establishing peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile both with God, **in one body**, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,¹⁸ for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but *you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God*,²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. ²¹ Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into **a temple sacred in the Lord**;²² in him you also are being built together into **a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**”

Eph 3:6 – "...that the **Gentiles** are coheirs, **members of the same body**, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

Eph 4:1-6 – "I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, ³ striving to preserve the **unity** of the spirit through the bond of peace: ⁴ **one body** and **one Spirit**, as you were also called to the **one hope** of your call; ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; ⁶ **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all."

Eph 5:21-33 (NRSV) – "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife **just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior**. ²⁴ Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind-- yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, **just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body**. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a *great mystery*, and *I am applying it to Christ and the church*. ³³ Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband."

E) The Spirit of Christ Dwells in Our Mortal Bodies

1 Cor 6:12-20 – "Everything is lawful for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is lawful for me," but I will not let myself be dominated by anything. ¹³ "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food," but God will do away with both the one and the other. *The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body*; ¹⁴ God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁵ **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?** Shall I then take Christ's members and make them the members of a prostitute? Of course not! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For "the two," it says, "will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But *whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him*. ¹⁸ Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ **Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you**, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, **glorify God in your body.**"

Romans 8:1-17 – "Hence, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law, weakened by the flesh, was powerless to do, this God has done: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the sake of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us, who live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit with the things of the spirit. ⁶ The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it; ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But *if Christ is in you*, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ *If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you*. ¹² Consequently, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, "Abba, Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."