



Bible Student's NotebookTM Weekly

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XX
Issue 490

The Body of Christ

Its Beginning and Maturity

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Body of Christ began with Paul prior to the writing of his first epistle. Of his 13 epistles, 6 of them (the number of imperfection) were *foundational* epistles – written in the infancy/adolescence stage of the Body of Christ. The last 7 were the *perfection* epistles (7 being the number of perfection). These final 7 were written to the Body of Christ in its maturity.



salonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:52²).

Israel's spiritual blessings, which the Body of Christ has left behind, are not a loss for us: the pinnacle of revelation committed to Paul far exceeds anything that ever belonged to Israel. Take their hope for example. We have been graciously granted a prior expectation (Ephesians 1:12), different from Israel's prophesied one. The expectancy of Paul's *early* epistles is not the *current* hope of the Body of Christ. In fact, the so-called "Rapture" teaching is actually a mixture of Israel's hope with pure religious fiction. Paul taught an earlier "*appearing*" of Christ in which we will be participants (Colossians 3:4).

Acts 13 marks the beginning of the Body of Christ,¹ and Acts 28 marks its maturity and breaking from Israel. During the period covered by the book of Acts, in which Paul's first 6 epistles were written, the Body of Christ had a *primary* relationship with Israel, as a "minor" does with its mother and father (Abraham being the Body of Christ's father (Romans 4:16), and Jerusalem its mother (Galatians 4:26)). In this "infancy" ("minority") the Body of Christ shared in Israel's "*spiritual things*" (Romans 15:27) – just as a "minor" shares in the identity and benefits of their parents. This included, for example, Israel's Passover (*i.e.*, "The Lord's Supper," I Corinthians 5:7; I Corinthians 11:17-34), miraculous signs and gifts (such as "tongues," I Corinthians 12:10; "miracles" and "healings," I Corinthians 12:28, etc.), and "hope" (I Thes-

At Acts 28, with the final casting away of Israel, the Body of Christ no longer had this "father and mother" relationship and came into its own as an adult, with its own *distinct* identity, blessings, callings and hope – completely apart from Israel. When the Body of Christ became an adult, it put away all the things from its childhood (its "*childish things*," I Corinthians 13:11) and became "*a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13).

(see **BODY OF CHRIST**, page 4323)

- When the Body of Christ began may not be the important question. The more accurate and poignant question may be, "What letters are for the Body of Christ today?" To assist us in answering this, we need to ask ourselves one simple question: "Is the middle wall of division up?" (*cf.* Ephesians 2:14). We can do this by asking other questions such as:
 - Was the Jew first?
 - Were there obligations to support Israel financially?
 - Was there any value in circumcision?
 - Was Israel being provoked to jealousy?
 - Was anyone legitimately a minister of the New Covenant?
 - Was being an heir or seed of Abraham of any spiritual value?

- Cf.* Acts 24:14-15; 26:6-7, 22-23; Acts 28:20.

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Bible Student's Notebook™ Weekly

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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ABBREVIATION KEY

<u>Scripture Version</u>	Concordance (Knoch)
(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the Bible Student's Version).	CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
CV: Concordant Literal Version	CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
DAR: Darby Translation	FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
DT: Dabhar Translation	SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible	TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
KJV: King James Version	UR: Unsearchable Riches
RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible	VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
WT: Weymouth Translation	YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance
YLT: Young's Literal Translation	
<u>Reference Sources</u>	<u>Reference Notations</u>
AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)	cf. – compare
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon	e.g. – for example
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)	et al. – and others
CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)	etc. – et cetera (and so on)
CKC: Concordant Keyword	ff. – and the following
	i.e., – that is

Bible Student's Notebook™

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor
André Sneidar – Managing Editor

Department Managers and Assistants

Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Keith Martin, Nathan H. Pilkington, Janet L. Maher, Stephen & Amy Hill, Mark Peters, Cindy Pilkington, Nadine Sneidar

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Paul's Previous Epistles Need Minor Modifications

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

In the transitional era preceding the present secret administration of God's transcendent riches of grace, Paul wrote his epistles to the Thessalonians and to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, as well as his first letter to Timothy. The question arises, did the revelation of the secret in Ephesians and its companion epistles annul the previous revelation completely, and ignore its recipients, so that Romans to Galatians and Thessalonians are obsolete, or do they still stand just as they are, so that Ephesians is a mere addition to their message?

Or is there a third course indicated, between these two extremes, their acceptance as a whole, yet with modifications in detail to accord with the later revelation? Is this [Ephesian] epistle addressed to those in Christ Jesus to whom Paul wrote his previous epistles?

The third item of the secret settles these questions for us satisfactorily. We are *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which Paul *became* the dispenser (Ephesians 3:6-7). Note the past tense, *became*. It tells us that Paul is speaking of the evangel which he *had* preached. It is limited by the title "*Christ Jesus*" to that which is recorded in his pre-



vious epistles and does not include his ministry in the synagogues in Acts. In this evangel the nations had been partakers, but not *joint*-partakers. It was to the Jew first. The nations had a secondary place. The secret now revealed is not that the nations are to be partakers, but that they are to be *joint*-partakers.

[W]e have a complete answer to our questions here. All of Paul's previous epistles are definitely declared to be ours, yet with such modifications as the abrogation of Israel's priority involves. Ephesians does not restate Paul's previous evangel, for that would have been useless. All to whom the new revelation came were acquainted with it. All that they needed was the ability to adapt it to the larger light.

As a consequence, the epistle to the Ephesians is full of *contacts and contrasts* with Paul's previous teaching. Not only are we given the broad basis on which to build our attitude toward Paul's other writings, but many of the details are developed for us and the character of the link between the two is carefully considered. ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 18 (1927)

BODY OF CHRIST (continued from front page)

While all of Paul's epistles are written to the Body of Christ, the early, "infancy/adolescence" epistles are no longer *strictly applicable* and must be read in the light of the latter, "mature/adult" epistles. This would be similar to a letter that you may have saved from your childhood (say, when you were 8 years old) that was written to you, but much of which is no longer actually *applicable* to you today – adulthood having made the difference.

According to Romans 15:4-13, the early ministry and epistles of Paul were founded on the Old Testament

and Israel. Of necessity, then, Paul's early letters are filled with Old Testament quotations, while in His latter epistles they are nearly absent.

We mix the dispensations when we attempt to carry the distinct truths of Paul's latter epistles with his former ones. Dispensational truth relevant for our day was revealed by Paul after Acts 28 and is recorded in his latter epistles. The current "*dispensation of the Mystery*" was a secret and had been previously "*hid in God*" (Ephesians 3:9). ■

Rapture? or Appearing?

Three Simple Truths in I Thessalonians 4

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

As we know, the word “Rapture” does not occur in Scripture. What generally is known as the “Rapture” is an event that is described in one of Paul’s early epistles: I Thessalonians 4. In this passage let’s notice three simple truths:

- (1) “The Lord Himself shall **descend from heaven**” (:16);
- (2) The participants will be raised or “**caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**” (:17);
- (3) The participants will “**ever be with the Lord**” (:18).

The standard event that this passage is supposed to describe is thus: Believers will be raptured to heaven, ever to be with the Lord.

The simple fact is that, after an honest look at the passage, we can see clearly that it does not even mention *anyone* going to heaven; not the Lord, nor any of the participants.

The idea of being raptured to heaven is read *into* this passage. What these verses actually reveal is that the Lord is *leaving* heaven and the participants are caught up to meet Him in the *earth’s atmosphere* (“*clouds*,” “*air*”) on His way *down*, where the participants will “*ever be with*” Him as He reigns and rules on the

earth. This is all in agreement with Israel’s hope.

We, however, have what was a secret to prophecy, an **earlier** expectation on the timeline (being “*pre-expectant in the Christ*” – Ephesians 1:12, CV). At an undisclosed time, *prior* to Christ’s *leaving* heaven, He will *appear* with God *among the celestials* and we will join Him there for glorification with Him (Colossians 4:3). We will *at that time* receive our immortality¹ and enter our heavenly calling among the celestials (Ephesians 2:4-7; Colossians 3:1-3).² ■

1. There are three distinct orders (or, classes) in the resurrection. These are listed in I Corinthians 15:23-24 as:

“*But every man in his own order: (1) Christ the Firstfruit; (2) afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming. (3) Then cometh the end ...*”

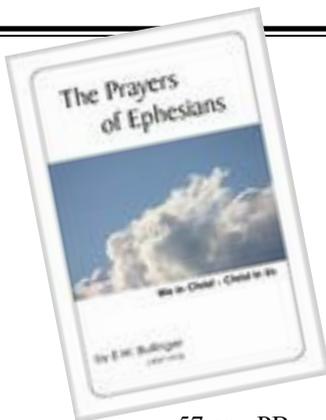
- (1) Christ’s resurrection.
- (2) Those who will be raised at Christ’s coming.
- (3) The rest will be resurrected at the end (or, “*consummation*,” CV).

Where do we fit in all of this?

It is easy to see how many would wrongly assume that we are in the second class – at Christ’s Coming; however, according to the “*revelation of the mystery, kept secret from ages past*” (Romans 16:25), ours is the prior resurrection.

Paul’s revelation is that we have been made a part of Christ’s death and resurrection (Ephesians 2:5-6; Colossians 2:12-13). We are counted among the Firstfruit; and as members of Christ’s Body, we are counted as “*Christ*” (“*so also is Christ*” I Corinthians 12:12).

2. All of these passages look to the future for their fulfillment, as God through Paul is “*calling those things which be not as though they were*.” Though we may walk according to these truths, one glorious day we will literally live in them, seated in the celestials.



57 pp., PB

See order form.

Prayers of Ephesians, The: We in Christ – Christ in Us

by — E.W. Bullinger

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains two long prayers plus a shorter concluding one. The two longer prayers have a common subject: Jesus Christ and Believers. The first prayer concentrates on Christ’s purpose for us, whereas the second focuses on what God has made us in Christ. In other words, the first asserts “*We in Christ*,” while the second proclaims “*Christ in Us*.” The first prayer deals with God’s power which He wrought in Christ, while the second one deals with God’s power which is at work in us.

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“Happy Hope”? or Whimsical Wish?

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Looking for that happy hope, and the glorious appearing
of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

THE OBJECT OF OUR HOPE

Within Christendom, as with so many other things, there is a skewed understanding of hope – especially our hope. Our true hope has been diminished by an emphasis on *timing*.

One day our Head, Christ, will make His glorious appearance with God in the Celestials; when He does, we, His Body, will likewise make our appearance with Him there. This will be our transformation to immortality and entrance into the ordained work for which He has already begun to prepare us in this, our first stage of life. *This* is the object of our “Happy Hope.”¹ Our Hope is the grand event itself, and *not its timing*.

THE MEANING OF “HOPE”

The word “*hope*” used in most translations of our text does not mean “wish” as it often does in daily speech. The Greek is ἐλπίς (*elpis*) and means a *confident expectation* of that which will surely come to pass² – a sure and certain hope.³ It is a divine certainty. This is why the *Concordant Version* translates it as “*happy expectation*.”

DON'T CONFUSE THE OBJECT WITH THE TIMING OF OUR HOPE

Our Happy Hope is a confident expectation of a divine reality that unquestionably will take place.

When we confuse *the object*⁴ of our Hope with *its timing*, we add a human wish-factor to it that diminishes its grand influence – so that it is not a “hope” at all.

If we say that we have Hope in our joint-appearing with Christ, this is indeed in something that is sure and certain to take place. However, if we confuse our Hope with some element of timing that we force on its truth, we make it a mere “wish.” We must not confuse *the timing of our hope* with our actual confident expectation of its object.

It is the *object* of our joint-glorification at His appearing that is our hope, *not its timing*. Otherwise the “hope” of all of the believing dead was in vain, because in reality it was *only* a “wish” and not a truth. Let me explain further.

4. “Blessed *object* of hope” (E.W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*); the *object* of hope” (Vincent’s *Word Studies*)

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1. *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*.

2. “Confidence” (Strong); “confident expectation” (Thayer).

3. *Concordant Keyword Concordance*.

THE DIVINE GUARANTEE

Paul was given the *confident expectation* of our Happy Hope. This hope was a divine guarantee; but it came with no such guarantee that Paul himself would experience this appearing *during* his earthy lifetime. The timing was not in any way a part of the “Hope” of his latter epistles. The appearing of Christ in Paul’s lifetime was not a sure and certain expectation of his greater revelation.

Consequently, if any believer during the past nearly 2,000 years had confused the *object* of their Happy Hope for its *timing*, they would have “hoped” in vain – and vanity is not a part of faith.

Confusion concerning the “wish” for the joint-appearing to take place in our lifetime with the actual event of the Happy Hope given us in Scripture is likely to produce distraction, disap-

pointment, disillusionment and depression instead of joy, happiness, contentment and peace. This often has been the experience of those who have confused such a “wish” for divine certainty.

However, when we realize that there has been no specific timetable revealed in association with our confident expectation, then its object can remain genuinely steadfast day-by-day through the trials of life, even until death.

Be sure to grasp the serious and crucial distinction. Our “wishing” for something, regardless of how sincere and earnest we may be, simply will not make it so – nor will it make it the truth of Scripture.

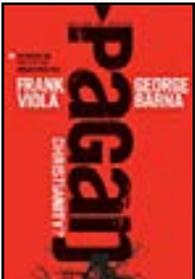
Never let anyone take away the object of our Happy Hope and substitute it for some wish. Our peace and joy are *not* dependent on either timing or circumstances, but on *Him* – and our confident expectation, our sure and certain destiny, is to join Him in His appearance in glory!

CHRIST’S APPEARANCE: NEAR TO ALL OF US

Before closing, I would like to make a *relative* application of these truths to our own lives. I often remember some very precious words from A.E. Knoch that I will adapt here for us:

In actual practice our appearing with Christ is not relatively a far-off future meeting, with long centuries of waiting in between. To our *consciousness* it comes immediately at the close of life. To be sure, the Lord does not appear at the decease of His saints; but to those who die it will seem *just as if* He has. To a sleeper, the morning immediately follows the evening. The night is nothing. To each one the moment of death will seem the moment of rousing.⁵ ■

5. *Concordant Studies in the Book of Daniel*, p. 330, adapted and abridged.



Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices
by — Frank Viola & George Barna
293 pp, PB
(See order form.)

Have you ever wondered why Christians do what they do for “church” every Sunday morning? Have you ever asked yourself any of the following questions: Why do folks “dress up” for “church”? Why does the “pastor” preach a sermon every Sunday? Why are there pulpits and pews? Why “church” buildings, steeples, choirs and seminaries? Where did all of these things come from?

This book proposes that what Christians do in “churches” has no root in the Scriptures! It rather has its origin in pagan culture. As shocking as that sounds, the authors prove their points by documenting every claim they make.

Fully footnoted, *Pagan Christianity* documents the story of modern church practices. If you are content with status quo “churchianity,” then you will not want to read this book. It is reserved for those who are ready to embark on an eye-opening venture that challenges every aspect of their church experience.

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Strictly Personal

When Did the Body of Christ Begin? Gospels? Acts 2? Acts 13? Acts 28?

Is all of the Greek Scripture written to us? Are all of the Epistles ours? Are all of Paul's Epistles directed to the Body of Christ? Are they all applicable for today?

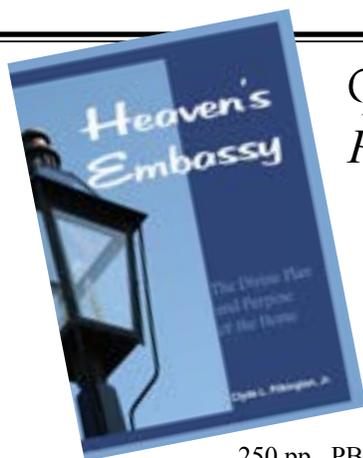
I first began reading the materials of those who held a "mid-Acts" position (C.R. Stam, Charles Baker, J.C. O'Hair, E.W. Bullinger, etc.) as well as those who held the "Acts 28" position (Charles Welch, Stuart Allen, Oscar Baker, E.W. Bullinger [yes, Bullinger is in both groups], etc.) at the same time (in 1985).

After a sufficient study for my own personal clarity, I came to see the value and weaknesses

of *both* positions. I saw that both perceived great truths that the others somehow had seemed to miss by their *fixed* positions. I came to hold a position that embraces portions of both (a similar position held by D.L. McCroskey, R.B. Shiflet, Ike Sidebottom, etc.).¹ In the following three decades I have not read anything in Scriptures, nor in the writings and studies of others that has caused an alteration of my understanding, but only made it clearer.

In this issue of the *Bible Student's Notebook* we carry my article, **THE BODY OF CHRIST: Its Beginning and Maturity**, a brief overview of this understanding. While I firmly believe that there are two administrations, not one, during Paul's ministry, I do, however, believe that there is only one, not two bodies. I trust that you will find the concise material helpful. ■

1. As a side note, Knoch, like Bullinger, wrote over a period that spanned many decades, and therefore would of necessity reflect growth and changes on topics. As best as I can glean, there appears to be clear evidence that he at least at times held a very similar understanding. See Knoch's article *Paul's Previous Epistles Need Minor Modifications* in this issue.



250 pp., PB

See order form.

Heaven's Embassy – *The Divine Plan and Purpose of the Home*

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it (Psalm 127:1).

This book represents many years of work. The author believes that it is one of the most important books that he will ever be privileged to write, simply because it concerns one of the most vital scriptural subjects that could ever be addressed.

The home is central to all of God's dealings with man throughout the course of time. It is His Divine "institution" and "organization" on the earth; for the believer, it is the *Embassy of Heaven*. An embassy is "**the residence or office of an ambassador.**" Since the believer is an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:14-21), his home is thus the *Divine Embassy* of heavenly ministry.

Pauline ministry is centered in the homes of believers. This is even the true sphere of the Body of Christ; for this reason our apostle speaks of "*church in thy house.*" This book doesn't focus on the *external* specifics of the ministry of *Heaven's Embassy* (such as *hospitality*); that will be saved for another volume. Instead, it looks at the inner-workings of the *Embassy* itself, focusing on its very nature, *internal* purpose and function.

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