

The Background For Unity

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I have long been urging that Jesus' prayer for unity among believers be viewed in the same light in which believers desire for Jesus, as our Mediator, to answer their prayers (1 Timothy 2:5). It only seems fair doesn't it? So to be clear, what Jesus actually prayed to the Father on the matter was "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21). After all, if believers don't care what Jesus prayed for, why should He care about that for which they pray? Therefore, the subject of unity among believers is very serious business.

Since we're exploring "the background for unity," notice that in the dawn of time God said that all families of the earth would be blessed, if blessed at all, through one man and his family. That one man was Abraham. The promise was, and is, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). Two impressive references to this prophecy in the New Testament appear in Stephen's speech before the Council in Acts 7:3 and from the pen of the Hebrews' writer in that great chapter of faith in Hebrews 11:8.

Three additional references will be given in order to verbally help paint the landscape of the Bible theme of unity among believers:

Psalm 133

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Ezekiel 37:22-24

"And I will make them one nation¹ in the land upon the mountains of Israel;² and one king shall be king to them all:³ and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.⁴ And David my servant shall be king over them;⁵ and they all shall have one shepherd:⁶ they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them."⁷ (In order to show the prophecy in this verse, consider the New Testament passages to which the prophet Ezekiel was by the inspiration of God pointing which the superscripted numerals in this paragraph reference: ¹1 Peter 2:9; ²Luke 24:45-47 and Acts 1-2; ³Matthew 27:37 and Acts 17:7; ⁴2 Corinthians 6:16; ⁵Acts 15:16-18; ⁶John 10:16; and ⁷Romans 11:33).

Zechariah 14:9

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

Conclusion

The church of Christ is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), and “there is one body” (Ephesians 4:4). If there is one body (Ephesians 4:4) and the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), then how many bodies are there? Answer: one. The Word of God says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).