

## The Church: A Spiritual Community (Part 8)

### *Not the Church of Your Expectations*

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Text: Revelation 7:1-12

#### Introduction

- A. When we are gathered before the throne, the church of our Lord Jesus will not look like the church of your expectations.
  - i. Revelation 5:5, 6
  - ii. Revelation 7:4-8, 9
- B. The church is a community in which racial, ethnic, social, economic barriers have been destroyed.

- B. Rather than being aghast at how Peter could possibly not understand the Gospel of grace, the real application of this text about Peter is for us to ask:
  - i. *“Am I sitting down at the table with brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of racial, ethnic, or socio-economic factors?”*
  - ii. *“Would I be too concerned about what others would think if I went out of my way to demonstrate that my poor, or culturally different, or racially different brothers and sisters in Christ and myself are not two but one?”*
  - iii. *“Am I willing to become uncomfortable as Peter once was, and as Paul almost always was, by spending my life with people not like me.”*
- C. Christ's work not only makes unity possible by breaking down every barrier to unity, it also demands it! For to do otherwise is to live contrary to the Gospel.

#### LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- As a Jewish believer shortly after Pentecost, do you think John's expectations about what the regathered people of God would look like might have looked more like Revelation 7:4-8 or 7:9?
- How does the Revelation 7 picture of the redeemed community of the Lamb both surprise and fulfill of the promise given to Abram?
- If the unity of the body of Christ was so important that Christ died in order to make the law powerless against us, then what does that say about any other obstacle that might stand in the way of our unity?
- Discuss the questions above under “III. B”. Think of other questions you could ask making application of Galatians 2 for our lives?
- Why must the church lead the way in racial reconciliation in our nation today? How might this help us fulfill our role as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation?

#### I. Christ's Work Fulfills the Promise to Abraham

- A. The Promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3)
- B. The Law (Exodus 19:5-6)
  - i. By choosing Israel, God was not relinquishing his ownership of the rest of the peoples on earth. Rather He was choosing Israel that they might mediate His revelation to the nations of the world.

- ii. Salvation will be complete only when the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is mediated to the world through the church and all nations and peoples become part of God's glorious people.

## II. Christ's Work Breaks Down Every Barrier to Unity

A. What is carried over into the restored new person? (Col. 3:11)

- i. The Gospel eliminates racial and cultural barriers.

- ii. The Gospel eliminates socio-economic barriers.

B. The work of Christ changed everything. (Gal. 3:26-29)

C. This is a primary theme in Ephesians, even *the* primary theme.

- i. Ephesians 3:6
  - a) That Gentiles, non-Jews, the uncircumcised, through faith in Jesus are heirs together with Israel of the promise given to Abraham.
  - b) *Members of one body.*
- ii. Ephesians 2:11-16
  - a) The **therefore** of v11 follows a description of our being saved by grace in vv1-10.

b) How did Christ Jesus make the two groups one?

c) How did he destroy the barrier, the divide?

- iii. If unity in the church between differing kinds of peoples (Jew and Gentile) was so important to God that Jesus Christ actually did away with the Law's power over our lives, is there any other obstacle to our unity that should stand?

Andrew Walls: *"Traditionally, observant Jewish society and Hellenistic pagan society could be viewed as distinct entities, and the distinctiveness of each was marked by the meal table. Jews ate with Jews, Gentiles with Gentiles.... One might expect ...that these would be two Christian communities, a Jewish church and a Gentile church.... The Ephesian letter is not about cultural homogeneity.... It is a celebration of the union of irreconcilable entities, the breaking down of the wall of partition, brought about by Christ's death (Eph. 2:13-18)."*

## III. Christ's Work Demands a Shared Life (Galatians 2:11-14)

A. The Galatian Problem

- i. 1:13-16 *"extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God..."*.
- ii. Initially Peter has no problem forgetting about his Jewish traditions and eating with the Gentiles.