

BECOMING ONE PEOPLE

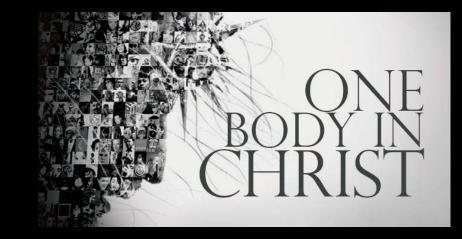


God of Nations at Thy feet, In the bonds of love we meet, Hear our voices, we entreat, God defend our free land. **Guard Pacific's triple star** From the shafts of strife and war, Make her praises heard afar, God defend New Zealand.

E Ihowā Atua, O ngā iwi mātou rā Āta whakarangona; Me aroha noa Kia hua ko te pai; Kia tau tō atawhai; Manaakitia mai Aotearoa.

O Lord, God, of all people. Listen to us, Cherish us. May good flourish; May your blessings flow; God defend Aotearoa.

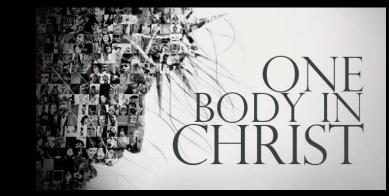
The Biblical Mandate



Genesis 12:1-3...

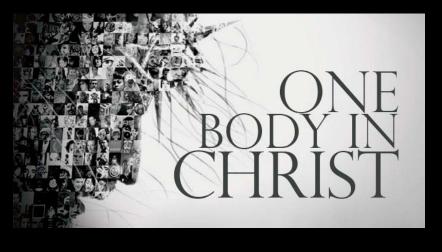
The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The Biblical Mandate



Revelation 7:9-12...

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

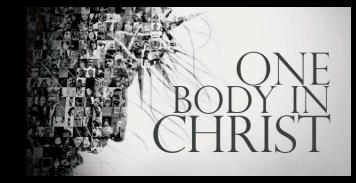


The Example of Jesus

Manuel Ortiz

Into an ethno-orientated world that isolated one from another, came a new kind of gathering place, at the centre of which was the God of heaven and earth, who made all flesh one and who revealed himself in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Example of Jesus

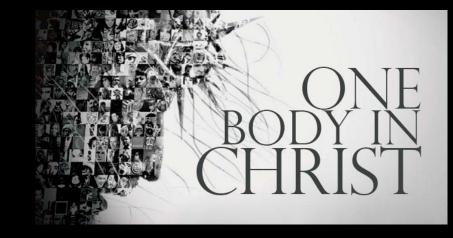


Mark 11:12-21...

Seeing in the distance a fig tree, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."

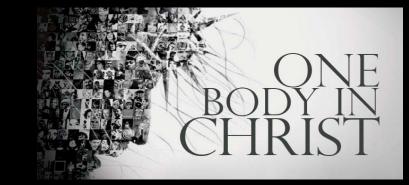
On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and he said, `My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it `a den of robbers.' The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him.

The Example of Jesus



Rene Padilla

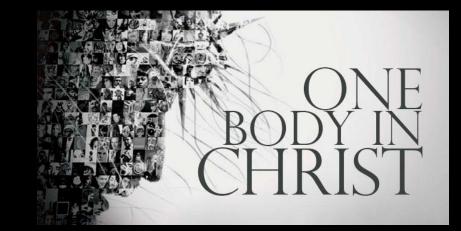
The same act that reconciles one to God simultaneously introduces the person into a community where people find their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in their race, culture, social class, or gender, and are consequently reconciled to one another. The unifier is Jesus Christ and the unifying principle is the gospel.



- Pentecost and Jerusalem
- Persecution and Scattering

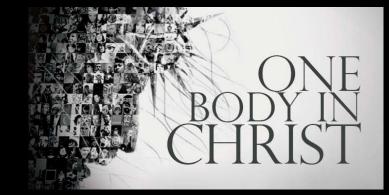
God's plan was not just that the gospel would go to all peoples, but that all peoples would be brought together through the gospel to form one people in Christ.

- Pentecost and Jerusalem
- Persecution and Scattering



- Acts 6 and first non-Jewish leader is appointed
- Acts 8 Stephen is martyred
- Acts 10 Peter and the Roman Centurion
- Acts 11 and Antioch





Acts 11:19-21...

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

- Pentecost and Jerusalem
- Persecution and Scattering
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- Acts 11 and Antioch
- Acts 15 and Peter v Paul
- Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council







He iwi tahi tatou – now we are one people.

E-Taka

He aha te mea nui o te ao? What is the most important thing in the world?

He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata It is the people, it is the people, it is the people

Maori proverb



Galatians 3:27-28



THE JOURNEY THUS FAR, EMMA

- A multicultural vision for God's people is anticipated through the OT.
- Jesus broke cultural barriers sending us out to be his witnesses to form a global church of people without cultural boundaries.
- The Jerusalem Church began as a Jewish Christian church. God broke it open to spread out through the world as a truly multicultural church.



- By Paul, from Antioch, best dated AD 46-47 (Acts 11=Gal 2).
- To the churches planted on his first Antiochian mission to Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Derbe, Iconium (Acts 13-14).
- They are being challenged by the same people referred to in Acts 15 who say:
 - Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1)—Lev 12:3: "And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."
 - It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5).
- The issue was finally resolved in AD 48 at the Jerusalem Council who ruled in favour of Paul, grace, and faith.



GAL 3:25–29: FOCAL POINT

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian [the Law], 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons and daughters of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed in Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.



- Jews: Justification is by faith in God <u>plus</u> Torah observance especially national identity markers, circumcision, Sabbath, purity, food laws, Jewish calendar, etc.
- Judaisers: Yes to Jesus but faith in Christ is <u>not enough</u>. You must also become a Jew (Judaise) to be justified and included in God's people (Gen 17)—circumcision, Sabbath and Jewish calendar, eating protocols.
- Paul the Christian: justification is by faith and <u>not</u> works of the law saved by faith and not works (Luther, Protestantism).
- But wait there is more. It is equally about culture. A dominant culture? Do we have to become Jews?



- Paul's response: MAY IT NEVER BE! Galatians; Acts 15, Romans.
- All people, Jew and Gentile, are justified by faith alone and <u>not</u> works of the Law (2:16).
 - By analogy, any works.
 - In context, a dominant culture and its laws.
- We don't have to become a Jew to be a Christian! Circumcision (2:3; 5:4); Eating laws (2:11-14); Sabbath and other Jewish calendar requirements (festivals) (4:10, cf. Col 2:16).
- God shows no partiality! No favouritism! (2:6, cf. Rom 2:11).
- By analogy, we don't have to become a European to become a Christian. Etc.



- We don't have to become a 'Presbyterian,' a 'charismatic,' conform to 'the way things are done around here' to be included ... it is BY FAITH!
- Faith is to believe the basic content of the gospel, to yield to Jesus as saviour and Lord, say "yes!" and place our trust in him. That's it folks!
- We receive the Spirit <u>by faith</u> not on the basis of doing law/works. social status, gender, race, or anything other than FAITH (3:2, 5).
- We are all children of Abraham by a faith like his! He, the father of faith for Gentiles and Jews alike (Gal 3:8-29; <u>Rom 4</u>).
- There can be no domination by a culture in God's people!



26 for in Christ Jesus <u>you</u> are <u>all</u> sons and daughters of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ [conversion/Spirit baptism] have been <u>clothed in Christ</u>.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male <u>and</u> female (Gen 1:26-27), for you are <u>all one</u> in Christ Jesus.



Contrast the Rabbinic Prayer: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast <u>not made me a gentile</u>. Blessed art Thou ... who hast <u>not made me a slave</u>. Blessed art Thou ... who hast <u>not made me a woman</u>.

William Hendriksen, "What Paul is saying, then, is that all such distinctions—be they racial-religious ("neither Jew nor Greek"), social ("neither slave nor freeman"), or sexual ("no male and female")—must be thoroughly and forever abandoned, since in Christ all are equal."



- A radical counter-cultural call to unity.
- A summons to resist the fleshly pull toward homogeneity (breaking into like groups) which opposes the pull of the Spirit and gospel toward oneness and togetherness.
- Rather than homogeneity, the trajectory of the <u>gospel</u> is toward unity, oneness—culture, sub-culture, age, gender, and so on.
- Not a repudiation of culture, gender, and even social status, these can be celebrated—but this lies <u>clothed in</u> an overriding culture, Christ, the culture of the kingdom.



- This Law is now inscribed not on slabs of stone, but on human hearts (2 Cor 3:3; Rom 2:25-30)—we live the inside outside life.
- By the Spirit with whom we are sealed by faith we live the law of laws, the law that fulfils all law, the law that sums up all laws, the royal law—'love your neighbour as yourself.'
- By the Spirit we refute the works of the flesh (e.g. Gal 5:19-21)—what is not our culture!
- What counts is not circumcision, but, 'faith working in love.' 'A new creation' (Gal 5:6; 6:15). Spirit Fruit! (Gal 5:22-25).



- Yet, in any cultural situation there must still be *lingua franca*, e.g. 1 Cor 14. But, for the sake of inclusion and mutual edification.
- We may still have homogenous groups—but for mission's sake, moving <u>to</u> oneness.
- Not unlimited unity: There <u>are</u> boundaries and exclusion, but not on the basis of gender, race, social status and the like....



- The boundaries are set by the gospel—
- Exclusion where the gospel essence is violated: e.g. Gal 4:30; 5:12.
- Exclusion where the ethics of the gospel are unrepentantly violated—1 Cor 5–6.
- Where the relationships are utterly violated (Tit 3:10-11).
- Always as a last resort, a three-fold process, see Matt 18; Tit 3.
- Otherwise inclusion and embrace—the strong serving the weak cruciform living—others-centred, service, sacrifice, humility, suffering, for the sake of the gospel and the many.
- The tragedy of past failures here.



- At the first great council of the church in AD 48 in Jerusalem it was decided that Paul was correct—it is by grace through faith.
- Yet the Gentiles were asked to compromise in the direction of Jewish concerns over blood, strangled animals, etc., for the sake of unity and mission.
- So it must be today—we cannot be satisfied with an immature people of God who do not realise the full implications of the gospel for being the one people of God.
- We cannot be satisfied with homogeneity and one-cultured churches and groups in a bi-cultural and multi-cultural context.



Eleazer S. Fernandez, "From Babel to Pentecost" who writes of Pentecost and it applies to Paul: "it is a vision that does not homogenize but allows the flourishing of various colors and narratives, a vision of the overcoming of division and the existence of communication, a vision of sharing what is on the table, and a vision of a society that builds and values the charisma of all members of the society."



BECOMING ONE PEOPLE

- How are we doing in our churches to uphold this radical gospel call to inclusion and oneness?
- Are we allowing a particular culture to dominate in our churches, unwittingly and wittingly?
- What are the implications in a nation of immigrants?
- What are the implications for our tendency for homogenous groups?
- What are the implications of this vision alongside the imperative of biculturalism?