

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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## A PLEA FOR NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

### Part Two - Seven "Ones" of the Church

#### Number 3 - "One Hope"

by Ted J. Clarke

##### INTRODUCTION

We determined previously in our study that the "one body" in Ephesians 4:4 is the "one church" which Christ built (Matthew 16:18); for which He died (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25); and of which He is the Savior (Ephesians 5:23). The "one Spirit" to whom Paul refers is the Holy Spirit given by God to the apostles and prophets to reveal and confirm His holy will for all mankind (John 14:26; 16:12-15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3). The power of the Holy Spirit is active in each conversion to Christianity as one hears the gospel preached, is influenced to believe and obey God's word through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and continues to walk in a new life (cf. Acts 2:14, 22, 36-38). As Christians, we continue to be filled with the Spirit as we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, directing us in living the new life in Christ (Ephesians 5:18-19; Col. 3:16-17; Romans 6:3-4; 8:1-2). We continue this study with a consideration of the "one hope" of Ephesians 4:4.

##### "ONE HOPE"

The meaning of the word "hope" in the Scriptures revolves around a **desire** for something, plus the **expectation** of receiving it. In Romans 8:23-25 the apostle Paul speaks of the Christian's hope as "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (v. 23 NKJV). By this Paul refers to our resurrection to an immortal body and eternal life in heaven. He points out how this hope comes and how it motivates us, saying, "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (vv. 24-25). This **desire** for eternal life in an incorruptible resurrection body, in heaven where none of the problems of this life will trouble us, cou-

pled with the **expectation** that we shall indeed receive this desire, motivates us to want to be saved and to remain in a saved condition! More on this later.

To show beyond doubt that the apostle Paul refers to this "one hope" as our resurrection from the dead and eternal life in heaven, consider the following Scriptures: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged" (Acts 23:6); "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15); "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:6-8). According to Paul, the promise that God made to the Jews regarding a coming Messiah was realized in Jesus Christ, and in His resurrection from the dead which guarantees ours. This abiding hope (1 Corinthians 13:13) is about the next life. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men of all men most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Because Christ was raised from the dead, which was Paul's major point in First Corinthians 15, we have that hope for ourselves (vv. 20-58). A bodily resurrection to eternal life in heaven is our "hope of His calling," because God "raised Him from the dead" (Ephesians 1:18, 20).

The apostle Paul told the Colossians of "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" and that their reception of that reward was dependent upon "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:5,27; 1 Timothy 1:1). Without Christ there is "no hope" of resurrection to eternal life (Ephesians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The apos-

tle Peter also notes the what of our "hope" and the location of that reward, stating that God "has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (Peter 1:3-4).

##### THE INHERITANCE "HOPED" FOR

Although the word "hope" is not found in the Book of Revelation, a description of that for which we hope is there. Whatever one chooses to make of the meaning of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, the promises there are at least typical of our inheritance we are to hope for in heaven. We are told, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these things are true and faithful'" Revelation 21:4-5). In chapter 22 there is "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb ....the tree of life... whose leaves were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse [such as began in Genesis 3:16-19], but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5). Surely every person who has lived to be conscious of pain, suffering and sorrow **desires** such an eternal inheritance in heaven before the face of God. We can only **expect** that inheritance if we have obeyed the gospel and are "in Christ." One is not in Christ, where we can properly have that "one hope," until one is "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27).

##### FALSE HOPES

We mentioned earlier that one does not hope for what one sees, but that we must faithfully wait for the object of our hope

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*(Continued from page 1)*

(Romans 8:24-25). We have "hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2; 3:7), but not in our actual possession. Passages like First John 5:13, which says John wrote "that you may know that you have eternal life," refer to the promise or prospect of that reality, not to the actual possession of it. The idea that we now literally possess eternal life has given rise to the doctrine of the impossibility of falling from God's grace so as to be eternally lost. "Once saved, always saved," we are told. "If one has eternal life then on cannot lose it, or it would not truly be eternal life," another says. However, one can reconcile what First John 5:13 says, "that you have eternal life," with what Paul says about being "in hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2; 3:7). The apostle John is speaking of the "promise" of eternal life (1 John 2:25), which he assures Christians that they "have" in prospect, as long as they "believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). The verb "believe" in this passage is in the present tense, active voice, meaning that one must literally "keep on believing in the name of the Son of God." The matter is so certain that Christians who keep on believing in Jesus as God's Son are said to "have eternal life," even though it is a promise which can only be realized when Jesus comes again. This is the only way in which John can say we

have eternal life, since Paul clearly places our resurrection with an immortal body as a hope yet to be seen in the future (Titus 1:7; 3:2; Romans 8:24-25; cf. 1 John 3:2-3). Even though our reception of eternal life is certain, as long as we keep on believing in Jesus as God's Son, one cannot say that it is impossible for a child of God to fall from God's grace so as to be lost. One who was once saved can be lost. Psalm 106 demonstrates precisely how this can happen. The psalmist tells of God's working to save Israel, noting "He saved them for His name's sake" (vv. 8, 10); "Then they believed His words; They sang His praise" (v. 12). However, "They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel...They forgot God their Savior...They did not believe His word...and did not heed the voice of the Lord" (vv. 13, 21, 24-25). Because they gave up on God, "He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness..." (v.26). Paul deals with God's final blow against Israel and the possibility of any man falling from God's grace through unbelief. Speaking of God casting off unbelieving Israel, he says, "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches [national Israel], He may not spare you [Gentiles] either. Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also [the Jews], if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again" (Romans 11:20-23). According to Paul, Christ will present Christians "holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight - if you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard" (Colossians 1:23).

Another false "hope" which religious groups like Jehovah's Witnesses promote is the idea of living here on a renewed earth, while a supposed literal number of 144,000 will go to heaven. Such hopes are false hopes because they make Paul's "one hope" into two or more. There is nothing in Scripture which, properly understood, teaches that some of God's children will go to heaven and others will stay behind on a renovated earth. Our hope is "laid up ... reserved in heaven" (Colossians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:4). That is the "one hope." Remember when there is

only "one" of something, you have no choice! If one does not have a desire and expectation of that hope, there is no hope for such people.

**CONCLUSION**

The Hebrew writer encourages us to "lay hold of the hope set before us" (6:18). That "hope" is the resurrected Christ who has gone into the Holy of Holies before God to make atonement for us as our High Priest (v. 20). "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (v.19). If our souls are not anchored in the one hope of a resurrection of an immortal body to eternal life in heaven through Christ, we do not have the "one hope" of the gospel message and our souls are adrift on the sea of uncertainty.

What hope do you have within? Could you defend what hope you have from the Scriptures? We are admonished to "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Is your hope the "one hope" of Ephesians 4:4? If not, since there is only one, you do not truly have a hope you can defend from Scripture. To embrace this hope: believe in Christ as God's son (John 8:24); repent of [turn away from] your sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31); confess Christ with your mouth (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10); and be baptized to have your sins washed away in Christ's blood (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). You can arise from your obedience to the gospel not only with the desire of eternal life in heaven, but with the expectation of receiving the same. This is the "one hope" the church of the Lord will preach. There is no other. Why not contact someone in a faithful church of Christ near you and study this matter in greater detail.

**JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD****Bible Lesson Number Two**

by Richard England

There have been many "good" men live and die. Many of them died for some cause that might well have been noble. But, none have had such an impact on the human race as did the man called Jesus. That Jesus lived and died is not denied by any reasonable person. The record of his living on the earth is neither legend, myth, fantasy nor fairy tale.

While he was alive on the earth, he had a number of followers who later wrote about him. they said he was raised from the dead. Are they correct?

There are only three possibilities concerning the witnesses of the resurrection of the man named Jesus: 1. They were deceived. 2. They were gross liars. 3. Their testimony is true.

Were they deceived? Many people have stood, fought, and died for a cause about which they were deceived. They received false testimony and believed it. But this cannot be the case with the men who testified of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Here is what they said of their source of information:

**Acts 1:1-3** *"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."*

**1 John 1:1-3** *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ."*

Having been with Jesus for a long period of time, having seen him die, and having buried him, there is no way these men could have been deceived about the identity of the one they claimed to be Jesus raised from the dead.

Were they gross liars? Their dedication to their testimony, the moral standard they taught and practiced, and the sincerity they displayed gives evidence that they certainly believed what they taught. Their willingness to die for the cause they espoused establishes their sincerity. Martyrdom does not necessarily prove the truthfulness of the testimony for which one dies, but it proves his personal conviction of its truthfulness. Not one person

who said he saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead changed his testimony, even in the face of death.

Considering the witnesses' devotion and genuineness along with the fact that they could not have been deceived, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that their testimony is true and Jesus was raised from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is proof positive that he is the Son of God.

Romans 1:1-4 "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"

#### QUESTIONS

1. What are the three possibilities concerning the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus?
2. Were the men who said they saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead deceived? Explain.
3. Did the witnesses of the resurrection have the character and personality of liars?
4. What kind of men were these that said they saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead?
5. Does martyrdom prove that what a man says is truth?
6. What does martyrdom prove?
7. Is there any record of any of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus ever changing their testimony? If so, who was it and where is the record?
8. If Jesus was raised from the dead, what conclusion must we draw?

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**Editor's Note:** This is the second in a series of Bible lessons written by Richard England, former minister at Mammoth Spring Church of Christ and former editor of FCGN. He has graciously given us permission to use these lessons for the benefit of our readers and we gladly do so. Over the coming months we will likely use all thirteen lessons he has printed in a book. These lessons are suitable for classroom use at a nominal cost. You may write to Brother England for information at the address given above. Please do not write to FCGN to order these study booklets.

## THE BLESSINGS OF TRUST

by David Macy

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). Those who trust in the Lord are blessed with a remarkable peace when they are surrounded by turmoil, strife, and anxiety. They truly enjoy a peace which passes all understanding. They are not overly concerned about the world crisis or any other crisis in this uncertain age, because their trust is in the Living God. They know He will never fail them or forsake them. "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat" (Proverbs 28:25). Trusting in the Lord leads to prosperity sooner or later. Nothing is said about the possessions of Abraham when God spoke to him where he was born and raised. But when he demonstrated his trust in God by traveling to unknown lands, he eventually was blessed with so many cattle he could not dwell in the same land with his nephew Lot. Job received twice as much as he had before because he trusted in God through many hardships. The shepherd boy, David, became king of Israel and was surrounded by luxuries because he trusted in God and not himself or his fellow men. "He that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat" because his confidence is in the source of all blessings which shall never fail, the Almighty God. He is totally dependent on the Giver of all good gifts, and he will not be disappointed. "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not" (2 Kings 18:5-7). There was never anyone like Hezekiah either before or after his reign, because he trusted in God with all his heart. He clave to the Lord (which simply means to stick or cling), and he obeyed all His commandments which were given through Moses. Because of his trust and obedience, the Lord prospered King Hezekiah wherever he went. You can also prosper wherever you go, and in anything you do which is according to God's will, if you will trust in God with all your heart, and hold onto His almighty hand by faithfully obeying all of His holy commandments.

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**CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TOWARD GREATNESS Mat. 11:11**

by Joel Wheeler

Have you ever wanted to be the greatest individual to ever live? Jesus said on one occasion "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt.11:11). Man measures greatness differently than God. Man's list of what constitutes greatness can go on and on, which really leads to low self-esteem. What does and does not constitute greatness in the eyes of God?

**WEALTH DOES NOT CONSTITUTE GREATNESS.** Jesus said "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" Luke 12:15). The rich young ruler asked what he must do to inherit eternal life (Luke 18:18), yet he would not do as Jesus directed. The rich farmer was condemned because he left God out of his plans (Luke 12:20). The poor widow who gave only two mites gave more than the others who cast much, because she gave all she had (Luke 21:3) The world looks to the rich for greatness, but God does not.

**PLEASING PEOPLE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE GREATNESS.** Some people must please the crowd to be great. A prime example of this is Herod. He killed the apostle James and tried to kill Peter because he saw it pleased the Jews (Acts 12:1-3). Herod was also gaining popularity with others when he was arrayed in royal apparel and the people called him a god. But God smote him dead with worms eating his body because he had not given Him the glory (Acts 12:23). Pilate was another who pleased the people because he allowed Jesus to be crucified (John 19:12-13). Jesus never did achieve greatness by pleasing the people. He called the pharisees children of the devil (John 8:44) and hypocrites (Matt.23). They plotted to crucify him.

**HUMILITY AND SERVITUDE CONSTITUTE GREATNESS.** Jesus said "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 23:11). Jesus taught if you exalt yourself, God will bring you low. When one humbles himself, God will exalt him. Our Lord said "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as

this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). Jesus taught his disciples humility by washing their feet. (John 13).

Jesus is the greatest example of humility and servitude. Our Lord proved His humility by being led to the cross. Jesus said "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luke 9:23). True greatness does not come by man's philosophies, but by doing God's will (Matt. 7:21-23).

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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