***The Community***

***of the Christ***

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**Part I: Ancient Origins**

The living Word of God, who would take on flesh and be named Jesus, lived before the creation of the world and was chosen by God to play the role of His ultimate Christ (anointed one).

  *Micah 5:2; John 1:1-14; John 8:58; 1 Peter 1:20*

The community that belongs to Him and bears His name was envisioned in ages past by the Father and chosen as His Son’s inheritance.

 *Ephesians 1:5,11,18; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Peter 1:2*

**Part II: The Community of Y-H (“the LORD”)**

The word “church” means “those who are called out”, and there were many who were called by God throughout the generations before Jesus’ first appearing. Ultimately, the nation of Israel became the church of Y-H, the one true God. They were called out from among the nations to bear His Name, belong to Him in a special way, live a unique lifestyle of obedience to His laws, and worship only Him. He established a covenant with them, as He had with their ancestors, to demonstrate this calling.

 *Exodus 19:5; Leviticus 20:26; Deut. 10:15 & 28:10*

**Part II: The Community of Y-H** *(cont.)*

Long before Jesus appeared in flesh to fulfill His work as the Messiah (aka Christ), God gave clear signals that He did not intend for His church community to permanently limited to the faithful people of Israel. He promised that the nations of the earth who loved and obeyed Him would have a place in His covenant community. This was first clearly stated when He promised Abraham that all nations on earth would be blessed through him **(***Genesis 12:3***)**. The promise would be carried forward into the visions of God’s prophets – from David to Malachi. Below are some of the dozens of prophetic glimpses to this effect.

***Psalm*** *2:8; 22:27-28; 45:17; 46:10; 47:9; 72:17; 82:8;*

 *86:9; 96:7; 98:2; 102:15; 117:1; 148:7 & 11;*

***Isaiah*** *2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:3;*

***Jeremiah*** *3:17; 4:2;* ***Micah*** *4:2-3;*

***Zechariah*** *8:22-23; 9:10; 14:16;* ***Malachi*** *1:11*

Jesus was sent specifically to the nation of Israel in His mortal ministry, and as a part of that ministry He made known God’s intention to include Gentiles (“the nations”) in the kingdom of God that has come.

***Matthew***  *8:11; 24:14; 29:19;* ***Mark*** *13:10;*

***Luke*** *13:29; 24:47;* ***John 10:16***

**Part II: The Community of Y-H** *(cont.)*

Paul, a Jewish disciple of Jesus who desperately loved His fellow Jews and yearned for their salvation through their Messiah (see *Romans 9:1-5 &10:1*), made it clear that the Gentiles who belong to the Jewish Messiah are fully a part of Israel. He used the image of a natural tree into which foreign branches have been grafted to illustrate the oneness of the nation after the Gentile infusion through faith in Jesus (*Romans 11:17-21*). The apostle wrote many strong statements about the full belonging and participation of the Gentiles in the blessings of the God’s chosen people:

***Romans*** *2:27-29; 3:21-31; 9:22-33; 10:11-12;*

 *15:7-19 & 27;*

***1 Corinthians*** *1:24; 7:18-19; 12:13;*

***Galatians*** *3:7-14 & 26-29; 5:6; 6:15;*

***Ephesians*** *2:11-22; 3:1-6;*

***Colossians*** *1:24-27; 3:11*

As the Scriptures above make clear, God did not create a new church or a new community when He brought about a new covenant through Jesus. Rather, He enlarged the church and community that He already had under the former covenant. The Church of the Christ has not replaced the nation of

**Part II: The Community of Y-H** *(cont.)*

Israel; the Church of the Christ is the nation of Israel made new and greater under her Messiah and Lord.

With this new covenant, much changed in God’s dealings with His people. The Law of Moses has been fulfilled and now the commands of Christ rule us. The Levitical priesthood and ceremonial worship of the former covenant have found their fulfillment in the Christ-covenant. Rather than having a select group who serve as priests, each member of the covenant community now participates in the ministry of the priesthood, with Jesus Himself as our High Priest.

***Hebrews*** *2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:6 &10; 6:20; 7:1-28*

 *(fulfilling* ***Psalm*** *110:4); 8:1; 9:11-14;*

 *10:12 & 21*

***1 Peter*** *2:5 & 9*

***Revelation*** *1:6; 5:10; 20:6*

Neither the offerings nor the Temple of the former covenant are needed. These find fulfillment in the new covenant as well: Jesus offered Himself for our atonement and we offer ourselves as living sacrifices as our worship (*see Romans 12:1*). The covenant people are now the living Temple of God, for His Spirit dwells in them (*1 Corinthians 3:16-17 & 6:19; Ephesians 2:21; 1 Peter 2:5*).