

CHURCH. In the Old and New Testament language, by the church of God is uniformly meant, the whole body of the faithful, of which Christ is the Head. The apostle to the Hebrews defines the meaning of the church, when he calls it “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” ([Heb. 12:23](#).) And the apostle John no less defines it, when he speaks of the names written in the Lamb’s book of life. ([Rev. 21:27](#).) Yea, our Lord himself fixeth the meaning, when bidding his disciples to rejoice not at the devils being subject to them, in his name, but because their names were written in heaven. ([Luke 10:20](#).) By the church therefore, is meant, the whole body of Christ both in heaven and earth, the elect of God in Christ, given by the Father to the Son, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Ghost, and called. And, although we sometimes meet with the expression of churches in the word of God, such as when it is said, the churches had rest throughout all Judea, ([Acts 9:31](#).) and again, all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks, ([Rom. 16:4](#).) yet, the whole multitude of the people, of what kindred or nation soever, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things, form but one and the same body, of which Christ is the glorious Head. Such is the church.

And it is blessed to see in the word of God how plainly and evidently this church, made up of Christ’s members, and gathered out of the world’s wide wilderness, is distinguished so as to prove whose she is, and to whom she belongs.

The Lord Jesus himself describes her

union with himself under the similitude of branches in a vine, ([John 15:1](#), &c.) and shews, as plain as words can make it, that the vine and the branches are not more closely knit together, and forming one, than is Christ and his church. Yea, the figure doth not come up to the reality; for a branch may be, and sometimes is, separated from the vine, but not so can this take place between Christ and his church, for he saith, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” ([John 14:19](#).) And his servant, the apostle Paul, describes the intimate connection of Christ with his church, under the similitude of the marriage state. ([Ephes. 5:25–32](#).) “This is a great mystery, (saith the apostle,) but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Nevertheless, even here again, this beautiful figure, tender and affectionate as it is, falls far short of the oneness and union between Christ and his church. For death puts an end to all the connections of man and wife upon earth. But in respect to Christ and his spouse, the church, the dying day of the believer is but the wedding day. It is but as an espousal, a betrothing before; but in that day the church is brought home by her all-lovely and all-loving Husband, to the marriage supper of the lamb in heaven. (See those Scriptures, [Hos. 2:19](#), [20](#). [Rev. 19:7–9](#).)

The best service, I apprehend, which I can render to the reader, under this article of the church, will be (to do what I should otherwise have done under the former, when speaking of Christ, but conceiving it might as well be noticed under this,) to bring into one view the several names which Christ and his church have, in common, in the word of God, which cer-

tainly form the highest evidence that can be desired, in proof of their union and oneness and interest in each other. Nothing, indeed, can be more lovely and delightful to the contemplation.

It will be proper to introduce this account, with first shewing some of the special and peculiar privileges the church possesseth, both in name and in interest, from her union and oneness with her Lord, and then follow this up with the view of those names and appellations Jesus and his church have in common together.

The church is distinguished, by virtue of her interest in Christ, as the body of Christ, [Ephes. 1:23](#).

Brethren of Christ, [Rom. 8:29](#). [Heb. 3:1](#).

The bride, the Lamb's wife, [Rev. 21:9](#).

Children of the kingdom, [Matt. 13:38](#).

They are called christians after Christ, [Acts 11:26](#).

The church of God, [1 Cor. 1:2](#).

Companions, [Ps. 45:14](#). [Song 1:7](#)

Complete in Christ, [Col. 2:10](#).

Daughter of the King, [Ps. 45:13](#).

Comely in Christ's comeliness, [Ezek. 16:14](#).

Election, [Rom. 9:11](#).

Family of God, [Ephes. 3:15](#).

Flock of God, [Acts 20:28](#).

Fold of Christ, [John 10:16](#).

Friends of God, [James 2:23](#).

Glory of God, [Isa. 46:13](#).

Habitation of God, [Ephes. 2:22](#).

Heritage of God, [Jer. 12:7](#). [Ps. 127:3](#). [Joel 3:2](#).

The Israel of God, [Gal. 6:16](#)

The lot of God's inheritance, [Deut. 30:2](#),
[9](#).

Members of Christ, [Ephes. 5:30](#).

Peculiar people, [1 Pet. 2:9](#).

The portion of the Lord, [Deut. 32:9](#).

The temple of God, [1 Cor. 3:16](#).

The treasure of God, [Ps. 135:4](#).

Vessels of mercy, [Rom. 9:23](#).

The vineyard of the Lord, [Isa. 5:1](#), &c.

These, with many others of the like nature, are among the distinguishing names by which the church of Christ is known in Scripture, by reason of her oneness and union with Him.

But this view of the intimate and everlasting connection between Christ and his church will be abundantly heightened, if we add to it what was proposed to shew the sameness between them, from being known under the same names, as descriptive of this union. A few examples in point will be enough. Christ condescends to be known by the name of Adam, as our first father: "As the first Adam was made a living soul, so the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit." ([1 Cor. 15:45](#).) As Christ is called a Babe, so are they said to be babes in Christ. ([Luke 2:16](#). [1 Pet 2:2](#).) As Christ is declared to be the dearly beloved of the Father, ([Jer. 12:7](#).) so the church is said to be dearly beloved also, ([1 Cor. 10:14](#). [Phil. 4:1](#). [2 Tim 1:2](#).) Is Christ the Elect, in whom JEHOVAH'S soul delighteth? so are they elect, according to the foreknowledge of God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Isa. 42:1](#). [1 Pet. 1:2](#).) Is Jesus the heir of all things? ([Heb. 1:2](#).) so are they heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, ([Rom. 8:17](#).) And when that Christ, by the spirit of prophecy, is called JEHOVAH our righteousness, the church as his wife, and entitled to every thing in him, is also called by the same

name, JEHOVAH our righteousness. (See, compared together, [Jer. 23:6](#) with [33:16](#).) Yea, in one remarkable instance, the church not only bears Christ's name, but Christ bears hers. He is called Jacob, and Israel. ([Isa. 41:8](#) and [49:3](#).)

Without enlarging this point farther, for enough, I presume, hath been advanced in proof of the thing itself, nothing can be more plain, and nothing can be more highly satisfactory, than this oneness, from union and participation between Christ and his church. And I trust, the review will be always blessed to the believer's heart, and, under the Holy Ghost's teaching, be always leading out the affections to the full enjoyment of it, agreeably to the mind and will of God.