

9 What Does It Mean To Be “In Christ”?

We are still thinking about what happens when someone is born again. We have thought about justification, adoption and sanctification. In this study we are going to concentrate on a very important aspect of salvation: our union with the Lord Jesus.

The purpose of salvation is to unite us with Christ. This is the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Someone who is born again has a real living relationship with Jesus. Jesus Himself emphasised this and Paul, in his letters, refers to it over 160 times using the words ‘in him’ or ‘in Christ.’

In Adam

Romans 5 teaches that everyone is either ‘in Adam’ or ‘in Christ’. ‘In Adam,’ that is in the natural condition we are born in, sin and death reign over us, we are under the condemnation of God and our life is marked by disobedience.

In Christ

God regarded Adam as our representative or head so what happened to him affected us all but when we became Christians, Jesus became our head and now God regards what is true of Him as being true of us.

“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

Romans 5:18 – 19

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

1 Corinthians 15:22

Chosen

In Christ you were chosen before the foundation of the world”

“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him.”

Ephesians 1:4

Crucified

When Christ died, his death was reckoned by God to be your death, so there is no longer any death for you to die as the penalty for your sin.

When Christ died, your old self was crucified.

“Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

Romans 6:6

That does not mean that you will never again be troubled by the possibility of sinning, but it does mean that you are no longer a slave to sin. It can still tempt you but it cannot compel you. So Paul goes on to say:

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.”

Romans 6:12

Alive

In the same way, when Christ rose from the dead, his resurrection was reckoned by God to be your resurrection.

“Even when we were dead in trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 2:5 – 6

Righteous

When Christ lived his perfect life on earth, that life was reckoned by God to be your life.

Blessed

The whole of your salvation depends upon the fact of your union with Christ. In Christ you have every spiritual blessing:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

Ephesians 1:3

In Christ you are brought near to God:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Ephesians 2:13

In Christ you are created anew:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

In Christ you are loved by God:

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:38 – 39

In Christ we are all one with each other and with every other believer throughout history, united as members of His body. Those who are united to Christ depend on each other like the different parts of the human body depend on each other. They serve each other and use their spiritual gifts so that all grow toward maturity (Ephesians 4:7 –16, 1 Corinthians 12:1 – 14).

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”

Romans 12:5

It Is A Mystery

The relationship we are talking about is often said to be a mystery. That means it is something we can only understand in so far as God has revealed it to us. Four illustrations are used to help us understand it.

Jesus Himself used the illustration of the relationship between a vine and its branches to describe it. Spiritual union with Him is not dead, like two boards nailed together. Like a vine, which supplies life giving nutrients to its branches, Jesus gives life to those who abide in Him so they live fruitful, prayerful, joyful lives.

We are also told that our relationship with Christ is like the relationship between a husband and wife (Ephesians 5:22 – 32). We are told to think of it as being like the relationship between the head and the body (Colossians 1:18) and we are told to think of it as being like the relationship between the building blocks of a house.

Question: What do these illustrations add to your understanding of your relationships with the Lord Jesus and with the other members of His church?

A Spiritual Relationship

Paul emphasized the spiritual nature of our union with Christ:

“The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him”

1 Corinthians 6:17

Jesus is present in each believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is the one who maintains the bond, which once formed can never be broken.

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

Romans 8:9

“... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts.”

Ephesians 3:16—17

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever —the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 14:16—17

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

1 Corinthians 12:13

Key Words

Mystical Union The relationship between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verses

- ☺ 1 Corinthians 15:22
- ☺ Ephesians 1:3
- ☺ 1 Corinthians 12:13