

INTRODUCTION

Today we examine the precious doctrine that believers are ONE WITH CHRIST, called the doctrine of UNION.

The hymn, “The Church’s One Foundation” was written by two “Samuels.” Samuel Wesley wrote the music, but Samuel Stone wrote the lyrics. And Samuel Stone wrote in the final verse: “Yet she on earth has union with God the three in one; and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won.” That’s what we’re examining today: the UNION of “mystic, sweet communion.”

But what does it mean to be “one with Christ”? What is this “mystic sweet communion”? And more, for the purpose of our “FAITH ENGAGE” with our friends, how can we help them begin to appreciate and long for this amazing relationship with God?

Most all of us know Revelation 3:20. Most likely we have used this verse in inviting others to know Jesus, or even remember this verse helping us to come to Him.

Revelation 3:20 *{Jesus:} Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*

Many of us grew up in the church hearing that we needed to “ask Jesus into our heart.” – based largely upon this verse. Wonderful! But what does it really mean to have Jesus living in me? Today, I hope to help us understand this concept and better make it transferable to our everyday conversations.

Perhaps a key verse of reference would be helpful. The apostle Paul, in Colossians 1:25-27, speaks of “the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints.” He goes on to call this “mystery among the Gentiles” as:

Colossians 1:27b *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

So let’s see if we can unravel this mystery and learn what UNION with Christ is about. God says He has revealed it, so let’s discover what it is and what it means.

FROM “WITH YOU” to “IN YOU”

From the beginning of creation through the end of Jesus’ earthly life, God was said to be “with” his followers.

- √ Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden of Eden, enjoying intimate fellowship.
- √ God was with Moses and the children of Israel through the wilderness – showing His Shekinah glory in the ark of the covenant, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud of glory by day.
- √ God was with the early kings of Israel – Saul, David and Solomon, sometimes leaving and coming upon them again.
- √ And God and His Spirit was with the disciples of Jesus. Even when they were sent out to minister apart from the earthly presence of Jesus, God was said to be with them.

But there was a change from “with you” to “in you” that happened with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus.

- √ **It was prophesied** in Jeremiah 31:33 as the “new covenant”

Jeremiah 31:33 *“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

√ **It was revealed by Jesus** to the disciples in the upper room on the night before He was to die. (John 14:16-20)

John 14:16-17, 20 *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*

√ **It occurred on the morning of Pentecost Sunday**, recorded in Acts 2

Acts 2:4 *“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ...”*

√ **It is true for all believers thereafter**

Romans 8:9 *“You are ... in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you ...”*

WHAT UNION IS NOT

1. It is NOT Pantheism – “God is in all”

Yes, we can see something of God in all of his creation, But God is not IN a tree, though He can be seen in the wonder of a tree. God is not IN us only in the sense that He can be seen in all of His creation.

2. It is NOT moral oneness – “we are one in mind and purpose”

Yes, as followers of Jesus we now share his purpose and passion. And in this sense we can say we are “one” with Him. But this is not the “mystic sweet communion” of which the Scripture teaches

3. It is NOT personality takeover – or, “invasion of the body snatchers”

When God is in us we retain our personality and individuality. We do not “lose ourselves” and “God takes over” as if we are walking spiritual “zombies.”

4. It is NOT physical transformation – by partaking of sacred sacraments

Some traditions wrongly teach that the holy sacraments of communion mystically become the body and blood of Christ, and these become our spiritual food, transforming us little by little into the image of Christ. In this sense, they say that God is in us, and we in Him. These traditions would include Catholic and Protestant Orthodox. The Scriptures teach nothing of this physical transformation.

WHAT UNION IS

1. It is a SPIRITUAL UNION

1 Corinthians 6:17 *But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

v.16 that precedes it, makes the point that a man and a prostitute become “one body” in that they have shared intimately in body. In the same sense, I and the Lord God become “one spirit” because we have shared intimately through the Holy Spirit

2. It is a LIFE UNION

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

Colossians 3:3 *For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Clearly we have not physically “died” nor have been “crucified,” but we have made the choice to lay aside our will to be absorbed by His will. It is then that the mystery of my spiritual death occurs and His spiritual life comes to dwell in me – the very eternal life of God that makes me a new creature.

3. It is an ORGANIC UNION

1 Corinthians 12:27 *Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.*

This Scripture and others (Eph. 5:30, 1 Cor. 6:15) teach us that we have a relation to God through Jesus like the relation of a body to the head. The body of Christ is like the human body and each of us are like the individual parts of the body. All exist to serve the head and the head and body must be one in order to correctly function.

4. It is a MYSTIC UNION

Ephesians 5:32 *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*

Colossians 1:25-27 *“...the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*

The mystery of the unity of a husband and wife comes close as a type to explaining the mysterious union of Christ and His church.

The Old Testament Jewish people never experienced the mystery of God in them. Only the New Testament regenerated Gentiles and Messianic Jews could experience this mystery.

PRIMARY BIBLICAL EARTHLY ANALOGIES

1. A foundation and its building

Ephesians 2:20-22 *“built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit”*

1 Peter 2:4-5 *“built up as a spiritual house “*

Christ the Cornerstone with foundation of apostles and prophets, and we the living stones become a dwelling of the Holy Spirit of God

2. A husband and his wife

Ephesians 5:31-32 *“I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church”*

Revelation 19:7 *“the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready”*

Christ is the “husband” and the church is His “bride” together in union

3. A vine and its branches

John 15:4-5 *“Abide in me, and I in you“ “I am the vine, you are the branches”*

Result here of “bearing fruit.” Emphasis more on the individual (“every branch”)

Yet “branches” would be the church

4. A head and its body

Colossians 1:18 *“He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church”*

Ephesians 1:22-23 *“[The Father] gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body”*

Christ is the head and the church is the body; we each are individual members

PRIMARY CONSEQUENCES OF UNION WITH CHRIST

- 1. Eternal Security** (blessed assurance)
- 2. Fruitfulness** (spiritual character)
- 3. Spiritual gifts for service** (a unique contribution)
- 4. Relationship (fellowship) with God** (internal God-awareness)

FAITH ENGAGE

√ RELATIONSHIP

Christianity is a relationship of union with God through Jesus

√ LIFE AND DEATH

Jesus offers the death of self and birth of God's life in you

√ PURPOSE

Faith in Jesus is the path to godly perspective and purpose