Lesson 3 - The Truth as It Is In Christ



God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to this world to be the Savior of mankind. But it was the apostle Paul that God chose to explain this good news of salvation. Paul does this by using a key phrase that runs through all his epistles. If you were to take out this phrase there would be very little left of Paul's exposition of the gospel. That phrase is “in Christ” or “in Christ Jesus.” The truth expressed by this phrase is also expressed by other similar phrases such as “in Him,” “together with Him,” “in the Beloved,” “in whom,” etc. All these phrases express the same “in Christ” idea or motif.

The truth behind this phrase was first introduced by Christ Himself when He told His disciples to “abide in Me.” These are the undergirding words of the gospel. If we do not understand what the Bible means by the expression “in Christ,” we will never be able to fully understand the good news of the gospel. Everything that the Bible offers mankind, with regard to our salvation, it does so in Christ. Outside of Him, we have nothing but sin, condemnation, and death.

The “in Christ” concept is based on Biblical solidarity, the idea that all mankind constitute or share a common life. To illustrate Biblical solidarity, let’s look at the way the writer of Hebrews applies this concept masterfully in describing how the heavenly priesthood of Christ is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood. First he establishes that Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Hebrews 7:1), and that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:2, 4). He then shows how the one who blesses is greater than the one who is blessed (Hebrews 7:7).

This is where the writer uses Biblical solidarity to make his key point. He shows that Levi met Melchizedek and paid tithes to him through Abraham when he was still in the loins (or body) of Abraham (Hebrews 7:9, 10). What the writer is showing is that Melchizedek actually blessed Levi, and that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek, the greater. Therefore, Melchizedek is greater than Levi. And since

Jesus is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11, 17, 21), His priesthood is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood!

Scripture reveals three fundamental facts that are based on Biblical solidarity. We have to accept them by faith, although we may find them hard to understand. These three facts are as follows:

1. God created all men in one man - in Adam,

2. Satan ruined all men in one man - in Adam, and

3. God redeemed all men in one man - in Christ.

It is this last fact that constitutes the good news of the gospel and gives us everlasting hope. As you study God's Word regarding the "in Christ" motif or idea, may your eyes be opened to the matchless charms of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1. In order to save mankind, in whom did God put us? 1 Corinthians 1:30

In order to qualify Christ to legally be our Savior, God had to first unite the divine life of His Son with our corporate, condemned life that needed redeeming. It is through this union that Christ qualified to be our substitute and representative. Then by His perfect life and sacrificial death, He satisfied all the demands of the law on our behalf and thus changed our legal status from condemnation to justification. In Christ, God has given humanity a new history that fully qualifies us for heaven. This is the incredible good news of the gospel!

2. Who are the two men responsible for our death and resurrection? 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

Because the human race is composed of the descendants of Adam, his sin brought death to all mankind. But thank God, in Christ we have been given the hope of the resurrection to life.

3. What were the first and the last Adam made to be? 1 Corinthians 15:45

(First Adam):

(Last Adam):

The word Adam, in Hebrew, means mankind. By his sin, the first Adam lost the Holy Spirit and introduced condemnation and death for the entire human race. God put us into Christ who became the last Adam, the second representative of the human race. This renewed the Holy Spirit, and by His obedience, Jesus reversed mankind's destiny by introducing justification and life for all mankind. As we shall see, this is the incredible good news of the gospel.



4. Because of one man's offense what passed on to all mankind? Romans 5:18a

Since the human race is the multiplication of Adam's life (see Acts 17:26), we all inherit a life that has sinned and therefore stands condemned to death. While God does not hold us responsible for Adam's sin, nevertheless, because we were in Adam when he sinned, we inherit his death sentence.

5. Because of one man's obedience what passed on to all mankind? Romans 5:18b



Just as all die because all have sinned in Adam, so also God made it possible for all to obey in Christ and stand justified to life in Him. However, what God has obtained for mankind in Christ is a "free gift." Like any gift we cannot enjoy it until we receive it by faith (see Romans 5:17). The good news of the gospel is that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

6. When did God plan our redemption in Christ? Ephesians 1:4

Even before we were created in Adam, God had already planned our salvation in Christ. God predestined all men to be adopted as His children in Christ (Ephesians 1:5), not because we were good or deserved it, but because of His unconditional love for us. The moment you accept Christ as your Savior, God looks at you as "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

7. While still dead in sins, what three things did God do for us in Christ? Ephesians 2:5, 6

These three actions are what God has accomplished in Christ for the entire human race. Together they constitute the good news of the

gospel. In Christ God has obtained salvation full and complete for all mankind. However, for these actions to become ours personally, there must be a human response. That response is our faith.

8. How do we experience this salvation obtained for all mankind in Christ? Ephesians 2:8, 9

Salvation is by grace alone in what Christ has done. This is God's supreme gift to mankind. But this grace has to be made effective through faith.

9. What is the wages of sin? Romans 6:23a

By nature, as well as by performance, we are sinners and deserve death since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

10. What is the gift of God in Christ? Romans 6:23b

While death is wages we earn, eternal life is entirely a "free gift" that comes from God through the life and death of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be saved by grace alone.

11. What gift has God given mankind in His Son? 1 John 5:11

None of us can escape death, the "grim reaper." But by faith in Christ we are able to pass from death to eternal life (see John 5:24).

12. What are the two options we have regarding this gift of life in Christ? 1 John 5:12

Because God is love, He does not force the gift of life on anyone. The choice is ours. Only those who receive Christ by faith will experience

eternal life. This includes those who through no fault of their own never heard the gospel but were faithful to the light they had. (See Romans 2:14-16).

13. What assurance does John give to those who believe in Christ? 1 John 5:13

14. By believing in Jesus Christ, what do we become? John 1:12

What a privilege, that by receiving Christ by faith we can all become sons and daughters of God (see 1 John 3:1, 2).

15. If we hear and believe God's Word, what will be the result? John 5:24

We pass from death to life by accepting Christ as our personal Savior. However, the hope of the Christian is in the resurrection, when Christ comes the second time to take believers to heaven (see 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23).

16. What does Christ become to those who believe in Him? Romans 10:4

The word "end" means something completed or fulfilled. Christ perfectly obeyed the law on our behalf when He was on this earth (see Matthew 5:17). This obedience becomes ours by faith in Him and we stand justified before God.

17. What happens when you accept the gift of Christ's righteousness? 2 Corinthians 5:17

On the cross, Christ's death brought our condemned human life to an end. Thus by His death, humanity has been redeemed from sin. In exchange, God gave humanity the life of His Son in the resurrection. When you accept Jesus by faith you become a new creation in Christ. Before you were a sinner, now you are righteous. Before you stood

condemned, now you are justified. We are told in 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 that in Christ, not only believers, but the whole world was reconciled to God. The person in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is the one who (1) by faith enters into Christ (see Lesson 6, especially Questions 3, 4, and 9-12), and (2) is baptized into Christ (see Lesson 7, especially Questions 1, 5, 6, and 8).

18. What two things did Christ accomplish by His death and resurrection? 2 Timothy 1:8-10

(verse 10):

(verse 10):

19. What two things must we do to be saved? Mark 16:15, 16

Your only hope of salvation is to believe in Christ and to be baptized into Him. (We will study what it means to be baptized into Christ in Lesson 7).

My Response to Lesson 3

• Do you believe that some 2000 years ago, God placed the entire human race into Jesus Christ, the second Adam? Do you also accept that by His perfect life and sacrificial death, He rewrote your history, changing your status from condemnation unto death to justification unto life?

Response: _____

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Lesson 3 Supplement - The Two Adams

1 The Hebrew word “Adam,” used 510 times in the Bible, is used in the majority of cases in a collective sense. Adam simply means mankind. “In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind (Hebrew - Adam) in the day they were created” (Genesis 5:1, 2).

When Adam sinned that humanity which resided in him was

imbued with the “law of sin,” the principle of self-love. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Accordingly, “through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation”. (Romans 5:18a). Refer to Lesson 1 (especially questions 2, 5, and 7-15), and to Question 2 of this lesson for further details.

2 Every human being who has ever lived came from one source - Adam: “He (God) made from one (Adam) every nation” (Acts 17:26). When Adam eventually produced offspring the only thing he could pass on to us was a life that had already sinned. We are nothing more than Adam's fallen life reproduced over and over. Hence, we are “by nature children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). It is for this reason that we need to be born again (see Lessons 6-8 for details), for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1_Corinthians 15:50).

3 As the Son of God, Christ was self-existing (John 1:1-3), sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21), and immortal (1 Timothy 1:17). Yet by an act of the Father (1 Corinthians 1:30), Christ was made “of a woman” (Galatians 4:4), made sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), and thus made mortal (Hebrews 2:14, 17). Although He was made all these things, He never ceased to be the eternal Son of God. Therefore, He was both the “Son of God” and the “Son of man” in one person. As a man He is said to have been made in the “likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3).

Just as all mankind was collectively resident in the first Adam, so

also all mankind was collectively gathered together in the body of Jesus, who is referred to as the last Adam (mankind - 1 Corinthians 15:45). Simply put, Jesus was not one man among many men, but “in Him” all men were gathered up (Ephesians 1:10). This qualified Him to be our substitute and Savior. He was God, yet He became humanity (Hebrews 10:5). By uniting Himself to

our corporate, fallen flesh, Christ became the Son of man, thus immediately placing Himself under the curse of the law (Galatians 4:4, Romans 3:19). See 5.

4 As man and our representative, Christ says of Himself, “I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10). He was “obedient to the point of death” (Philippians 2:8). By this

obedience “we have been sanctified (past tense) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10), perfected (past tense) forever (Hebrews 10:14).

By uniting Himself with mankind (see 3), Jesus suffered in the

flesh (1 Peter 4:1). While this consisted of being acquainted with our sorrows and grief (Isaiah 53:3), He primarily suffered being tempted, through enticements of the flesh (James 1:14) that He assumed. Despite a lifetime of all sorts of temptations, He lived a life without sin (Hebrews 4:15). In this way, Jesus became the antitypical “lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). See Lesson 20, especially Question 9, for further discussion.

Paul tells of our history in Christ. “When the kindness and the

love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us (past tense), through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out (past tense) on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me (us) free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). In the holy history of Christ, mankind experienced a “regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit…through (the body of) Jesus Christ.” That is, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ” actually set us free from the “law of sin.”

All glory regarding our redemption must go to God (1

Corinthians 1:31), for “God…has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ…that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them…” (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19). And the amazing fact is that He did this while we were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and even His enemies (Romans 5:6-10).

5 Spirituality of the law - The law of God is holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12). It is the foundation of God’s government, as it represents the selfless (agape) love that proceeds from the throne of God (Matthew 22:35-40). Jesus described the spirituality of the Ten Commandments as being much more than a set of rules (Matthew 5:21-47). Jesus tried to show his disciples that a man is not justified by

the law, but by faith. On one occasion a rich, young ruler asked Jesus what he could do to inherit eternal life (Luke 18:18). Jesus showed the man that in reality he was not keeping the law, despite his outward law keeping. When the disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus shifted their focus from man to God (Luke 18:26, 27).

In a similar way, Jesus showed that if someone wanted to enter

the kingdom of heaven by keeping the law, that person’s righteousness would have to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). Their righteousness would have to be even as perfect as that of God (Matthew 5:48).

Purpose of the law - "What purpose then does the law serve? It

was added because of transgressions, till the Seed (Jesus) should come…" (Galatians 3:19). It was to be a witness against all who have sinned (Romans 5:12, 13), which includes everyone. It was to stop every boastful claim of self-righteousness, give a knowledge of sin, and declare the entire world guilty before God (Romans 3:19, 20). James showed that if someone should stumble in one point of the law, he is guilty of the whole law (James 2:10). Paul settled the matter by declaring that there is none righteous, and that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10, 23). He included himself in these universal statements, despite his previous self-assessment (while being a Pharisee) as to being blameless concerning the law (Philippians 3:5, 6).

That the law was not given that we might attain eternal life is also

clarified by Paul, "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." Instead, "the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." And now that "faith (Jesus) has come, we are no longer under a tutor (i.e., the law)" (Galatians 3:21-25).

What does the law have to do with how God saved us in

Christ? The law has positive demands, "The man who does them shall live by them" Galatians 3:12. It also has negative consequences, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10). By assuming us, and thus becoming our substitute (see 3), Christ was in a position to rewrite our history. He met the positive demands of the law (see 4), and He faced the full negative consequences of the law (see 6). In so doing, He reversed the judgment of condemnation for all men and declared all men righteous in Him (Romans 5:16, 18).

6 "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the

wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18:20). Similarly, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16).

As this principle also applies to Christ, if He were to have died a

vicarious death (one man dying instead of all men) that would contradict His own law. Why? Because the law of God demands your death and my death. Christ is not the sinner; we are the sinners. And "without shedding of (our) blood there is no remission (forgiveness)" (Hebrews 9:22). On the contrary, God handled this situation ethically, in that Christ "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

In order for Christ to bear our "sins in His own body," He had to

bear us. The great news of the gospel is that He did just that. God reconciled the entire human race in the holy history of Jesus Christ, the last Adam. He is the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), and is thus referred to as the Savior of all men (1 Timothy 4:10), or the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). In His humanity, Christ did not become our substitute vicariously, but rather in actuality. Thus, when He tasted death, He did so for all men (Hebrews 2:9). And when He died, all died (2 Corinthians 5:14).

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having

become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13, 14). For further study on how Christ became a curse for us, see Lesson 4, especially Questions 9, 12, 17, and the conclusion to that lesson. See also Lesson 21 for how Jesus, our Advocate, defends us in the judgment.

When we thus died to the law in the body of Christ, we were

delivered from the law's dominion (or lordship), including its curse, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:1-6). We are no longer under law but under grace (Romans 6:14), and for this reason there is no condemnation to the believer (Romans 8:1). See Lessons 6-8 regarding our response to this great news.

7 Near the end of Good Friday (the 6th day), right before He gave up His spirit, Jesus said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). This was a significant proclamation, because it indicated that His work of redeeming mankind was complete. He would rest in the grave on the 7th day because of this fact, just like He did when He was finished with His perfect work of creation (Genesis 1:31-2:2). See Lesson 15 to see what the Bible teaches regarding entering God's rest as part of

the New Covenant of salvation by grace alone in the redemption that is ours in Christ.

8 When Jesus was resurrected He continued to be the last Adam or mankind. However, having cleansed us, upon his ascension into

heaven, He brought a newly created mankind with Him. Paul stated that those whom God justified, He also glorified (past tense - Romans 8:30). That is, God "raised (past tense) us up together, and made (past tense) us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). He has "blessed us (past tense) with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Consequently, "we know that if our earthly house (our earthly bodies), this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house (glorified body) not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:20, 21).

We can thus "have boldness to enter the Holiest (the very

presence of God) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and…let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22). For additional fulfillment of Old Testament sanctuary symbols in Christ, see Lesson 20.

Summary

Items 3-8 depict the gospel, the gift of justification of life for all men in Christ. It is universal good news for all men and can be referred to as the objective facts of the gospel. However, just like any gift, it must be received to be enjoyed.

We receive the life of Adam automatically when we are conceived. All that Adam's life has to offer is what became of it after the Fall - the promise of toil, hardship, slavery to sin, and death.

What God accomplishes in the believers through the Holy Spirit does not add to the gospel, but makes real in experience what God has already obtained for mankind in Christ. This living experience is the fruits of the gospel, or Christ in you (And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness - Romans 8:10).

Our status as children of God is not automatic, because God will not force salvation upon us against our will. Christ received humanity unto Himself at the incarnation, and we must likewise receive Christ by faith. Faith identifies the believer with Christ and Him crucified, which involves saying goodbye forever to our old life of sin that we

inherited from Adam. We become one with Christ so that His righteousness is counted as our righteousness and His power is made available to us. We then experience what is already true of us in Christ.

Experiencing the Gospel is Conditional

• Faith is the condition for accepting justification, the fruit of which is peace with God, because there is no condemnation. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1), and "There is...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Justification by faith is God declaring us positively righteous by what Christ did in our humanity approximately 2,000 years ago. See Lesson 6 for a more in-depth study of Justification by Faith, and Lesson 8 regarding the new birth in which the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the believer;

• Sanctification is the result of accepting a full and complete salvation in Christ and learning to walk in the Spirit. Having no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3), Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). We

experience holiness of living in proportion to our faith, and fruit is born "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23). See Lesson 9 for additional insight on walking in the Spirit; and

• The believer's faith must endure to the end to receive a glorified body, which is his in Christ now. "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). See Lesson 12 for more information regarding this final stage of salvation.

Experiencing the gospel in this way is referred to as obeying the gospel. It is what constitutes righteousness by faith. For more on obeying the gospel, see the subjective application (i.e., in green) of the courtyard experience in the Lesson 20 supplement (page 4).

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