

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN CHRIST

PART 1

I AM IN CHRIST AND HE IS IN ME

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the
Godhead bodily; and you are complete
in Him, who is the head of all
principality and power.

Col. 2:9-10 NKJV



Review of Study 3

God had a purpose in mind for us before creation, and that purpose was to save and bless us. He chose a plan for our salvation, which allows any of us to make a free-will choice to be saved. He chose *how* people would be saved, not *who* would be saved; thus, He did not predestine certain people to salvation and others to damnation. If He chose individuals, the issue of a fair, unbiased, and loving God comes into question. Instead, God predetermined how salvation would occur and that everyone could participate. The plan of Salvation for our Age is based upon being in Christ; being in Christ is a characteristic of the Age of Grace. When we believe in Christ as Savior, we are *in Him*.

Introduction

The previous three studies discussed the issue of election, free-will, and grace truth. The plan of salvation God predestined (predetermined), before the world began, is based upon *being in Christ*. Once we realize we must be in Christ, the question becomes "What exactly does that mean?" Being in Christ may be complicated by the fact the Bible uses various expressions to teach similar things. For example, the Bible teaches we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, while also teaching we are in Him. We wonder: "Is Christ in me, am I in Him, or is the Holy Spirit in me?" We can find Bible verses to answer each question affirmatively, so what are we to believe? Thankfully, the issue is almost as easy to understand as a strawberry being in a cupcake, as shown above.

BIBLE TRUTH

The relationship between the believer and the entire Godhead has become closer and more intimate as time passes. This advancement in our relationship helps us understand the issues of: the indwelling Holy Spirit,

Christ being in the believer, and the believer being in Him. To gain a better understanding of our relationship with God, we will briefly look at Old Testament times, Gospel times, and finally our Age.

In Old Testament Times

In the Old Testament, the believer's faith was primarily in God the Father. Belief in Christ was basically related to the realm of the coming Messiah, to which many things in the Old Testament pointed, but only the more spiritual people could grasp this concept. In Old Testament times, only a few people were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Certain individuals did receive the Spirit for a specific purpose and for a limited time, but the Spirit did not come to most believers. After the specific purpose was completed, the Spirit would leave (1 Sam. 11:6, 16:14). David understood this and did not want the Spirit to leave, so he prayed, "...**And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me**" (Psa. 51:11b).

The believers also were given a promise of a future time during which the Holy Spirit would be within them (Ezek. 36:26-27, 37:14). This promise was fantastic because it meant they would someday have the closest relationship possible. The future time in which believers would get the indwelling Holy Spirit would be in the 1000-year kingdom (after the Second Coming of Christ). That promise, as good as it was, was a long way off—many thousands of years away.

Discuss: The promise of the indwelling Spirit was a long way off. The people were wrestling with Who God was and just beginning to learn about the coming Messiah; it is understandable they would have to wait for an intimate relationship to develop with the Holy Spirit.

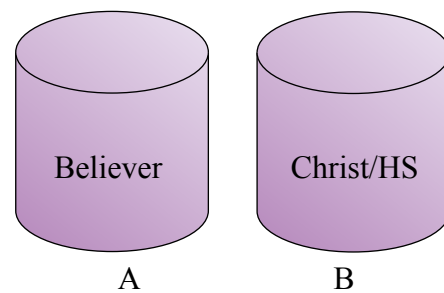
In Gospel Times

The Gospels present the life of Christ, teaching that He was the focus of a person's belief. While the focus, Jesus was careful to make sure we did not forget the Godhead was inseparable. The Godhead consists of three persons (Trinity) in one (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), often discussed as separate persons to help us understand. Jesus and the Bible emphasized the unity of the Godhead: "**Believe Me that I am in the Father and Father in Me...**" (Jn. 14:11a); "**I and My Father are one**" (Jn. 10:30); and "**That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh...**" (Acts 2:17a).

The Gospel times offered an advancement in the relationship with the Holy Spirit (a closer, more intimate relationship). After Christ's ascension to heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent; Jesus said, "**And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper (comforter), that He may abide with you forever**" (Jn.14:16, parentheses added). The Helper is the Holy Spirit, and Helper means *one who comes along side*. The Spirit's presence (where He was) was close by and alongside the believer, but not within. Every believer would have the Spirit close by, and He would remain with him or her. This new relationship was wonderful news because it assured a closer divine presence than at any time in the past.

In the diagram below, the believer's relationship with the Holy Spirit in Gospel times is represented by two cups. Cup A represents the believer and cup B represents Christ/Holy Spirit/God (since they are inseparable parts of the Trinity). The two cups are as close as possible, at least it seems so. In the Gospel record, believers did not have the Holy Spirit *within* them. The Holy Spirit was along-side the believer. This was a great advancement and the people were genuinely thankful.

In Gospel Times



Near the end of the Gospel period, there was yet another step toward a deeper intimacy. The Spirit came *upon* the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2). The word *upon* refers to His coming even closer to the believer than being alongside. When He came *upon* believers, He gave them special, miraculous powers. The Spirit was on the outside, but even closer than before; He was now

touching the believer. As an example of the Holy Spirit's presence, when you put on a coat, the coat is upon you and touching you; but the coat is not within you. Similarly, in Gospel times the Spirit was alongside and upon the believer. When the Spirit came upon people, the Bible speaks of them being filled with the Spirit. He was still on the outside; however, being filled with the Spirit is a reference to being completely under the control of the Spirit, that is, filled with His power. In those days believers experienced miraculous powers, but the days of receiving these powers were short-lived and soon passed away (1 Cor. 13:8). This special Pentecostal event, when the Spirit came upon believers, was referred to as the baptism of the Spirit (Jn. 1:33).

Discuss: Many Christians today wish for the special, miraculous gifts the believers received at Pentecost, such as, healing, speaking in unknown languages, prophecy.... Since that time there has been an advancement in the Spirit's presence and intimacy, and that includes an advancement in what He does for the believer. What the Spirit does in the believer today is even better. Discuss what that might be. (The next *Discuss* helps answer this.)

In the Age of Grace

The Holy Spirit comes within each believer today, "**Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you**" (1 Cor. 3:16)? The believer today has the closest and most intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit possible. The Holy Spirit is no longer alongside or upon us; the Spirit is now within the believer. This advancement in our relationship can help us understand the issues of Christ being in the believer, and the believer being in Him. The Spirit dwelling inside of us is referred to as the *indwelling* Spirit. Since the believer has the Holy Spirit within him or her, by extension that includes all three persons of the Godhead. Thus, the indwelling Holy Spirit means Christ and God are also in the believer.

Today we experience a whole new advancement in the relationship with the Holy Spirit. Not only is He within

us, but He will not leave us. This is all according to God's plan, and so incredible He interrupted the long-promised plan for an earthly kingdom in order to give it to us earlier than prophesied. God secretly planned that those living in the Age of Grace (first century until now) would get the indwelling Spirit earlier than prophesied in the Bible (in the Kingdom Age). The indwelling Spirit is our seal holding us into Christ (Eph. 1:13); we cannot fall out!

Discuss: Now that the Holy Spirit is within us, He works from the inside of us to change us, so we are more like His Son, that is, to conform us to the image of Christ. This is the transforming work of the Spirit in our lives, making us Christ-like. This is more endearing to God than having special gifts. Another advancement is that the Spirit is producing His "fruit" within us (Gal. 5:22).

Christ possesses the fullness (completeness) of the Godhead, "**For in Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power**" (Col. 2:9-10, parentheses added). The fullness of the Godhead means all three persons of the Godhead exist in Christ, with all their respective attributes and characteristics. In Christ, we get the entire Godhead. When the Holy Spirit indwells us, we also get the entire Godhead. The Godhead really is inseparable.

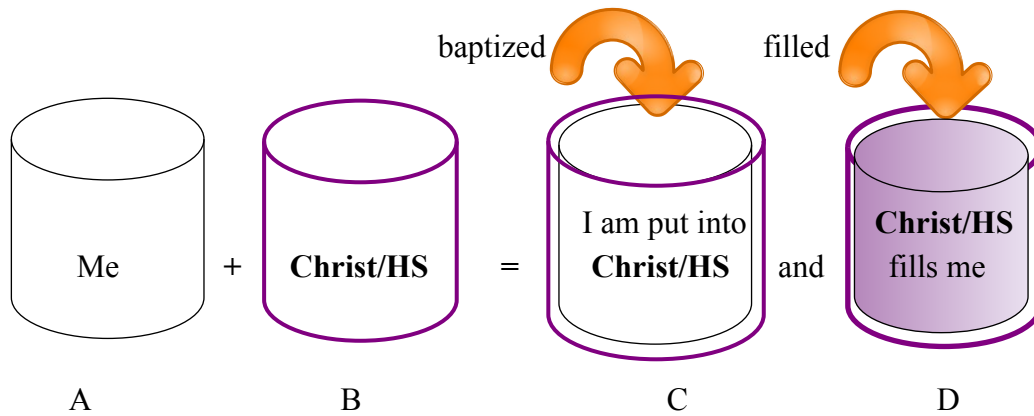
We can help demonstrate this biblical teaching by continuing the cup analogy for our Age. Cup A represents the believer (Me) and cup B represents Christ/Holy Spirit. Notice that cup A can be put inside cup B, resulting in the arrangement shown in C. Cup C is a pictorial representation of *I am in Christ*. We do not get into Christ by our own efforts or religious practices; we have to be put there. So, how do we get put into Christ? Each person is put into Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit, who baptizes (more on this non-water baptism in the next study) the believer into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

Simultaneously with being baptized into Christ, cup C, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (which includes Christ). The inner cup (Me) is filled to the brim with the "fullness of Christ," cup D (Col. 2:9-10, above). The baptism and filling take place immediately upon belief in Jesus Christ. Cup D shows how it is possible to say, **I am in Christ and Christ is in me**. This relationship is as close and as intimate as possible indeed, the believer and Christ become one.

Your Thoughts: Do we need to worry about the Holy Spirit leaving us if we sin? (Answer: No.)

In the Age of Grace

I am baptized into Christ, and filled with His perfection



Our salvation requires the action of each person of the Godhead. Briefly, here is what each Person of the Godhead does.

1. The Father forgives us, based upon His grace and our belief in the Son,
2. The Son gave His life for us, and
3. The Holy Spirit indwells us and places us into Christ, so we become one with Him.

Discuss: Discuss cup D and what it means to be in Christ and He in us.

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

The relationship between the believer and God (all three persons) has become closer and more intimate as we progress through the Bible. The believer today has the closest and most intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit possible. The Holy Spirit is no longer alongside or upon us; the Spirit is now within the believer, He will not leave us, and He is the seal holding us into Christ. The believer is said to be in Christ, but exactly how does that happen? The Holy Spirit put us into Christ by means of a special, spiritual baptism (1 Cor. 12:13); in addition, He comes within us upon belief. The Godhead is a Unity, so when the Holy Spirit comes within us, He brings the fullness of the Godhead with Him. Thus, we are in Christ and He is in us. The spiritual baptism we receive identifies us with Christ, making us one with Him. The believer is so totally united with Christ that His life becomes ours; thus, we are circumcised, dead, buried, raised, seated in heaven ... with Christ.

Gospel

"For in Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:9-10, parentheses added). God has established the plan for our salvation and has done all the work; all we are asked

to do is believe in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Upon belief, the Holy Spirit/Christ brings the fullness of the Godhead into our relationship. We are complete in Him, and that means there is nothing missing or lacking; we have the fullness of Christ.

Encouragement

The believer gets all of the Holy Spirit upon belief; there is no partial filling now and then more sometime later. There is nothing to add to our salvation, it is complete. The moment we believe, we are presented to God as perfect, because *we are in the Perfect One*. All the wonderful blessings we receive upon belief are due to His grace. His grace will never run out, no matter what we do. Remember all the blessings we have from Him are spiritual in nature, so you may not feel complete or perfect, but you can believe it. On other levels (physical, emotional, social, relational, etc.), we will have struggles in this life. God cares and helps us in these areas of our lives, but completeness and perfection in these areas wait for the day when He takes us to Heaven. We can live in confidence knowing what lies ahead: **"For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us"** (Rom. 8:18).