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BELOVED FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS IN THE GOSPEL,

WE WILL BE SORRY TO LEAVE SOUTHERN ALABAMA. IT HAS BECOME A HOME AWAY FROM HOME. WE HAVE FOUND MANY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS DOWN HERE. PLUS THE FACT, WE HAVE BEEN MINISTERING JUST ABOUT EVERY SUNDAY IN DIFFERENT CHURCHES AND ONCE IN AWHILE DURING THE WEEK.

THE LOCATION HAS AFFORDED US TIME FOR WRITING, AND I THINK I HAVE AVERAGED ONE BOOK EVERY WINTER. SHIRLEY STILL COMPOSES HER WEEKLY "SOLILOQUIES" AND HAS HAD A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN RECIPIENTS. IT IS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO HAS AN EMAIL ADDRESS. LET US HEAR FROM YOU AND WE WOULD BE GLAD TO ADD YOUR NAME. IT IS ALWAYS A JOY TO READ THE RESPONSES FROM THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BLEST. AS TO THIS WINTER'S BOOK, "NEW LIFE IN CHRIST," ODDLY ENOUGH I STRUGGLED WITH IT. FOR WHATEVER REASON MY MIND KEPT RUNNING INTO A CUL-DE-SAC. MAYBE IT WAS THE VERY SUBJECT ITSELF. THERE ARE 164 OCCURENCES OF THE PHRASE IN PAUL'S EPISTLES ALONE. OR PERHAPS, IT WAS THE DISCOVERY THAT THE PHRASE HAS NOT ONLY SUCH AN EXTENSIVE BREADTH, BUT ALSO SUCH A PROFOUND DEPTH. IT IS A SUBJECT THAT OPENS UP THE WORD AND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF GOD FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION, AND YET A SUBJECT THAT TAKES THE SINCERE BELIEVER TO WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD, AS FAR AS THE TERRITORY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IS CONCERNED. MY READER WILL GET A TASTE OF WHAT I AM SAYING IN READING THE FOLLOWING PREFACE AND FIRST CHAPTER. I WELCOME ANY INSIGHTFUL RESPONSES. THE MSS., AT THE MOMENT, EXCEEDS 500 PAGES. IT IS ALSO A SUBJECT THAT WILL CAUSE MY DEAR DISJUNCTIVE/DISINTEGRATIVE DISPENSATIONAL COLLEAGUES TO DO SOME SERIOUS REFLECTION ON THEIR A PRIORI PREMISES. IT MIGHT HELP TURN THEM INTO GENUINE CONSCIENTIOUS BEREANS (aCTS 17:11). ONE OTHER THING: WE DID ENJOY OUR MANY VISITORS. SHOULD THE LORD BRING US BACK AGAIN NEXT YEAR, OUR INVITATION STANDS. UNFORTUNATELY WE HAVE LIMITED SPACE, SINCE WE ARE NOW IN A MOBILE HOME, BUT ACCOMODATIONS IN FOLEY/GULF SHORES ARE MUCH CHEAPER THAN FLORIDA. GIVE IT SOME PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION. OUR DAUGHTER LINDA LIKES IT DOWN HERE SO MUCH SHE HAS DECIDED TO LIVE AND WORK HERE.

WE HAVE HAD SOME WONDERFUL EXPERIENCES THIS WINTER AND PRAISE AND THANK THE LORD FOR EACH ONE OF THEM. PLEASE KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS. WE WILL BE HEADING HOME TO MICHIGAN IN TWO WEEKS. ON OUR JOURNEY WE WILL BE PREACHING IN KENTUCKY, AND STOPPING IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE TO MAKE A VIDEO RECORDING, NO! NOT SINGING, BUT ONE DEALING WITH SUBJECT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PAPACY. IT WILL BE SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF MY BOOK: "THE PAPACY: ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT." WE WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE. MAY GOD'S RICHEST BLESSINGS BE ON YOU, AND MAY THE LORD JESUS BE SEEN IN YOU.

YOURS BECAUSE HIS, HENRY AND SHIRLEY. JOHN 3:30

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NEW LIFE

"IN CHRIST"

by

Henry T. Hudson

PREFACE

At least 164 times in his epistles the apostle Paul used the phrase "**IN CHRIST**." If repetition be a mark of importance then it is apparent that the expression is of great significance. Consider the statement that, "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself . . .*" (2 Cor. 5:19). What does it mean? Two verses before this statement, Paul also declared, "*. . . if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" God was in Christ and now, according to the Apostle Paul, men can be in Christ. What can the phrase mean? Somehow or other, the preposition "*in*" conveys the primary idea of an identification, or an association. The *New Living Translation*, paraphrases the words: "*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person, The old life is gone, a new life has begun!*" The implication here is clearly one that projects the image of a new relationship. Dana and Mantey, in their *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* have a diagram of the functions of the various prepositions, and significantly place *en* right in the middle.

DIAGRAM FOUND ON PAGE 113 OF DANA & MANTEY.

Arndt and Gingrich, in their *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* take up some six columns to discuss the meaning of this preposition. They begin by saying that, "The uses of this prep. are so many-sided , and oft, so easily confused, that a strictly systematic treatment is impossible (p. 257). Nevertheless, as I read their analysis, the main point that comes across is that the pre-position, at least as related to the subject of these present studies, is one that essentially designates some kind of close relationship.

In the following pages, this basic thought will be explored from a number of different perspectives. These perspectives bring into purview many different aspects of this relationship. However, overall, while there are differences, there exists one unifying theme that ties them all together. That theme can be found in the doctrine of salvation, which is inextricably associated with the person of Jesus Christ. In certain cases, some of what follows, particularly in the closing chapter, might strike some readers as being unusual and might even judge them as having little or nothing to do with what has preceded, but I personally think that it has a great deal to do with what has preceded. However, for the moment I ask the reader to keep in mind that it is my conviction that the biblical teaching of being "in Christ" is a subject that is at the heart of the doctrine of salvation. But let there be no misunderstanding, it is nonetheless a doctrine also related to the here and now before the then and there of the full realization of the hope of salvation. And, what might come as a surprise to some theological students, it also bears on certain questions that have plagued theologians for centuries.

These questions concern such matters as (1) When did the Christian Church begin? and (2) Who

founded Christianity? And (3) Even On the doctrine of predestination. What theologian, worth his salt, has not experienced some mental anguish over this doctrine? It is a biblical doctrine, but methinks that theologians have tended to approach it guided by preunderstood theological premises, rather than by face value exegetical considerations. But, first things first! I think it the better part of wisdom to begin at the beginning, and explore the meaning of the phrase itself. What does it mean to be "in Christ?" And, how does the biblical teaching impact my life "here and now?"

"IN CHRIST"

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Some commentators seem to think that the phrase is ex-hausted in the thought of being a disciple of Christ? Apparently, they understand it in the sense of merely being associated with Christ in a manner as though they were card carrying members of a club or a political party? Such a concept may have been part of the intention when the word 'Christian' was first introduced. In Acts 11:26, the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. The word appears again in Acts 26:28 and in 1 Peter 4:14-16. Its first historical usage suggests that the early believers were identified as belonging to a particular religious group, that is, they were partisans with regard to Christ. But surely being "in Christ" means more than this. Some commentators think that the phrase bears a metaphysical significance? Are we in Christ as we are in the air we breathe? Does the phrase have a mystical meaning something akin to how a husband and wife are viewed as being one? In other words, is it a consciousness that is akin to a psychological bond? Or, could it simply mean, as has already been suggested, 'to be of Christ,' in the sense of belonging to him, and to all that is wrapped up in his name?

This last association could be something similiar to the manner in which Gentile believers are considered as being related to Abraham? Clearly, according to the New Testament, though they are not physical descendents, they are nonetheless related to him in some patrilineal way. I am often puzzled when I run into that peculiar quality of mind among Gentile Christians that will not accept any identification or relationship with Abraham. I cannot help but think that this negative reaction has become a conditioned response, which is particularly prevalent among those believers that have bought into a disintegrative dispensational approach to understanding the Bible. It can be summarized in the contention that: "Israel is Israel and the church is the church, and never the twain shall meet." In other words, Jews, and Jews only, are to be viewed as being the children of Abraham, regardless of the fact that the Bible states otherwise (Rom.4:16; Gal.3:29). This response is a prime example of the facetious aphorism: "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts!" The disintegrative effect of this kind of thinking winds up with two different churches of God, two different kingdoms of God, two different gospels, and, believe it or not, two different Jesus Christs. On more than one occasion, I have heard a Bible teacher speak freely of the earthly Christ, and also of the heavenly Christ.

Of course, there is more here than at first meets the eye, but the fact does remain, that according to the apostle Paul, Gentile believers are viewed as being the children of Abraham. They are identified as being "*Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*" (Gal. 3:29). The context of these words speaks also of being, "*being baptized into Christ,*" and of putting on Christ. The application is to all who are in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28). What needs to be noted here is that they are Abraham's seed because they belong to Christ. Self evidently, the phrase is not speaking of a literal physical relationship. However, it is nonetheless speaking of a relationship, for some form of patrilineal descent to Abraham is clearly involved. Incidentally, when this is pondered, it introduces a number of second thoughts about the issue that Christianity had its historical beginning with Christ, or with Paul. This will be dealt with in more detail in a later chapter. I can only begin to imagine how disintegrationistic dispensationalists would respond to the title of David Flusser's book, *Christianity A Jewish Religion*. He cer-tainly has a point, for the historical record of the apostolic period leaves no room for the common thought that Christianity came into existence as a separate religion.

If my reader doesn't already know it, there are extremes in Christian theological thinking. Usually, as already suggested, they result from presuppositional prejudices and not from careful biblical exegesis. For example, those who are guided by the afore-mentioned disintegrative mindset in interpreting Holy Scripture are often disposed to such extremes in their dealing with the question of unity among all the people of God. They contend that there were two major distinct groups each having their own salvific hope: (1) Adam to Paul, and (2) Paul till today. Why they do not make a third departmentalization: Adam to Abraham (introducing a third category), I cannot say. Thus they would have three distinct groups instead of two. Maybe, the reason is because such would cloud their neat dichotomy between Israel and the Church.

NEED FOR DEFINITIONAL REFINEMENT

I think that the notion that an entirely new and separate people of God began with the apostle Paul is one that is in need of refinement. Speaking of "a kingdom of God church," and con-tracting it with "a Body of Christ church," and then by deductive reasoning, concluding that therefore there are now two different Christs and two entirely different salvific hopes creates a system of theology that goes beyond what is taught in Holy Scripture. Soon after my conversion to Christ I was taught and came to believe and teach this system. Then, in consequence of further study, I dis-covered that such disintegrative thinking results primarily from logic based on a false premise, rather than from solid exegesis of Scripture. Rather than solve supposed problems, it compounded them. For example, on the question of two different churches, I might ask: Were believers before Paul left in an already existing church of God, or did they become members of a new church of God? There were understandably new developments, because the door of faith was now wide open to the Gentiles, but was it a doorway into an already existing church of God, or a doorway into an entirely new and different church of God.

Those familiar with the ramifications of this kind of *a priori* thinking will be well aware of how it has produced some fascinating eisegetical armchair gymnastics. As far as Paul himself was concerned the human race could be divided into a threefold departmentalization: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God (1 Cor. 10:32). Before his conversion, Paul persecuted this church of God, then later as an apostle, he wrote to it. There was, at least so it would seem, only one church of God, not two entirely different churches? By the way, the word "church," from the Greek *ekklesia*, is a non technical word and would be better translated: "assembly," or "congregation."

The church (assembly) of God that Paul persecuted was made up primarily of Jewish believers, but after his conversion and commission the membership was expanded to include Gentiles. This would of course bring about some degree of difference, but to contend that because of this expansion, it meant an entirely new and different church (assembly) of God, with a new and entirely distinctive salvation hope, might appear to be logical to some, but it becomes a *non sequitor* as far as solid exegesis is concerned. Certainly, dispensational changes were taking place, but did these changes mean that there now entered an entirely new and separate assembly of God's people? What about those believers before Abraham? By the way, they were all Gentiles. And now once again, under Paul's ministry, the significant change that took place was one primarily connected with Gentiles. These Gentiles were now being incorporated into the church of God as co-equal members. In no way were they second class members, for they became sons of God by their faith in Christ Jesus. Paul described these saved Gentiles as obtaining, in **the** Christ, the hope of **the** adoption, that is, the hope of the full standing as sons of God. They can now look forward with assurance to the glorious inheritance that at one time had been promised to the physical children of Abraham (Gal. 4: 6, 7; Rom. 8:14-17; 9:3-6; Eph. 1:5-11).

In Galatians 3:7, it states that those who are "out of the faith" of Abraham' (*hoi ek pisteos*), they are the sons of Abraham. In Romans 4:13-16 this is expanded and it is stated that the promise to Abraham that he would inherit the world was one that potentially included all his descendents. It was a promise that did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. In other words, it was dependent on faith in order that it might rest on grace, and thus be guaranteed to all the descendents and "not only to the adherents of the law, but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all." (Rom. 4:16). The words are quite clear. The patrilineal line of this promise was not only to those who were out of the law (*to ek tou nomou*), but to those who were out of the faithfulness of Abraham (*to ek pisteos Abraam*). The Greek preposition *ek* conveys

the thought, 'come out of, spring from, or originate from.' Thus in Paul's argument, those who are 'in Christ' (belong to Christ), regardless of what any dispensationalist system might teach, they are designated as being the seed of Abraham, albeit spiritual seed, and are therefore heirs according to the promise that had been given to Abraham.

Something of what this means might be deduced from the Scripture where God promised that the nations would be blessed in Abraham (Gal. 3:8. Cf. also Gen. 26:4; 28:13, 14). It is also implied in Romans 4:9-6. Although, let my reader be careful here, because while it is apparent that Gentiles were never excluded from God's promise of salvation, the thought of co-quality was never predicted. This truth was a secret, "hidden in God," that was not revealed till the apostle Paul. The very heart of this secret is that believing Gentiles can now become co-equal heirs of God's promises along with believing Jews (Eph. 3:6).

So, following a simple face-value approach to interpreting Holy Scripture, it can be seen that believing Gentiles can now become co-equal heirs in the promises of God and by their faith in Jesus Christ can thus be called the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29). In short, because they are in Christ, they also can be considered as being the seed of Abraham.

IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST

Another stated and significant fact in this connection, is that their faith in Jesus Christ brought about their "baptism into" Christ. I pause to wave a warning flag. In a psychological word association test, probably 99 out of 100 Christians would assume that this has a reference to some water baptism ceremony. Few seem to be aware of the fact that there at least 12 different baptisms in the Bible with 7 having no references to the ritual of water baptism. The Greek preposition "into" (eis), is found over 1700 times in the New Testament and usually conveys the ideas of "into, unto, to, and for." Those baptized into Christ are thus "in Christ." Dare I ask the question: is it water baptism that places a person in Christ? What kind of water baptism? There are at least 20 different forms practiced among Christians. How then could this be speaking of a watery sacrament? Asking the question, could open up a Pandora's box, but it could nonetheless, exhibit how foolish would be an affirmative answer.

Here the student once again runs into one of those odd occasions when a Greek word has been transliterated and not translated. This failure on the part of translators to translate the word *baptizein* has contributed over the centuries to the conditioning of minds to accept sacramental ideas whenever the word baptism is used. I do not want to digress into the nooks and crannies of the multifaceted nature of the controversy that has come to be called 'the baptismal headache.' In my own case it led me to write a book entitled "*Baptism in the Bible*." I intended to write a companion volume which was to be called "*Baptism in Church History*," but my research became so disturbing I was obliged to file my notes in a wastepaper basket. There can be little doubt that water baptism is one of the most devious doctrines among Christians. Little wonder John Nelson Darby, when asked what he held concerning water baptism was known to have come forth with the answer: "MY Tongue!"

When Paul wrote to the saints in the city of Philippi he was writing to those who were "in Christ Jesus." Was he writing exclusively to those who had been, "buried in water?" Was Christ ever buried in water? No doubt my words might sting some sensitive souls, who have been led to embrace these notions. They have heard certain concepts repeated over and over and have made them synonymous with what they think is the basic teaching of the New Testament. Little does the average church-going Christian know about the controversies over this doctrine. Even during the early centuries of Church history the logomachy raged. Then from the sixteenth till the eighteenth centuries it raged once again. In fact, many Christians have inadvertently taken the word "baptize" itself and made it synonymous with the word 'water,' even though, as was just said, there are at least seven baptisms in the Bible that have nothing to do with water.

What I have just written causes me to ask the simple question: "What does the Greek word *baptizein* really mean? I. Howard Marshall cautioned that a translation of *baptizein* that is locked into the idea of dipping and immersion is one which stands in need of revision (*Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. XLV, # 3., p. 137). In my book:

The Bible and Baptism, I came to the conclusion that the word and its usage can better be understood if the thought of “identification” be kept in mind. Like the baptism of the children of Israel into Moses when they crossed the Red Sea (*not a drop of water touched them*), the significance is clearly one that suggests a change in which privilege, blessing, and leadership are conveyed to those that were delivered out of Egypt and who became identified with Moses.

In like manner believers are identified with Jesus Christ. Here once again is the thought of relationship. They became sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and look forward to an inheritance that will be fully realized at the time when Christ returns and establishes God's kingdom on the earth. All believers, be they Jewish or Gentile, are thus identified with Christ and possess this hope (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4). It is theirs because they are “in Christ,” that is, they are identified with him, and associated with him in both a positional and experiential relationship. Like the analogy of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, in God's reckoning, they have passed over into a new and dynamic association with Christ, and can look forward with confident expectation to an inheritance with him in the kingdom of God.

Much of what I have thus far written might smack of mere intellectual and theological verbosity. It is much more than that. When I think about my conversion to Christ, and how I came to be “in Him” I cannot hold back the smile that creeps across my face. I was 17 years old. I lived in a so-called Christian country, and yet I knew little or nothing about the truth of the Gospel, or what it really meant to be a Christian. Hence, I knew nothing of the controversies mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. I was, in so many words, totally ignorant of the sub-cultural vocabulary of fundamental Christianity. What happened was that I had been in an accident and was admitted into the Mildmay Mission Hospital which was located in Shoreditch, in the East side of London.

It was an unusual hospital because the entire staff: medical, administrative, and custodial were all professing Christians. The walls in every room had biblical verses in large letters, and there was a verse above every bed in each of the three main wards. Anyway, before being discharged, I had the blessed experience of being converted to Jesus Christ. **I became a Christian!** In a person to person dialogue, Sister Murial Jamison, head of the Men's Ward, shared with me “the old old story of Jesus and his love.” While she was telling me this story, a struggle was taking place in my soul. I wanted to believe, but I thought of a hundred excuses why I should not. Here she was telling me about God's love and gracious gift of salvation and I was resisting her pleadings. I have been forever grateful that she persisted, and eventually I did acknowledge myself to be a sinner and that Jesus had died to save me from the penalty of my sin. Since that day, I have not for a single moment regretted that decision. It was some sixty odd years ago. I knew only one thing, I was a sinner and Jesus was my Savior. I did not know anything about the biblical teaching of being baptized into Christ, but I was nonetheless, somehow or other, conscious that I was entering into an experiential relationship with him. Moreover, as I soon discovered, the relationship became practical, and over the years became increasingly sweeter, to the degree that I came to know what the hymnwriter had in mind when he wrote: “Sweeter as the years go by,” The relationship brought into my life blessings beyond my wildest dreams and introduced my soul to a peace and joy that I did not know were even possible.

I have shared the preceding brief testimony, because even if I fail to explain all the ramifications of what it actually means to be “in Christ” I can at least illustrate to my reader that it means far more than a religious ceremony, or becoming a member of some ecclesiastical denomination. In fact, when I entered into my relationship with Christ, I was not, a church goer. My last visit to a church service had been at my christening as a baby. In those days, most babies in England went through a traditional ritual that was actually called a baptism. Of course, I do not remember the occasion, but I do remember quite vividly seventeen years later when I entered into a spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ.

Alas, too many people confuse mere earthly membership with some denominational organization, as the means of making them a Christian, and they consequently miss the experiential truth of what it really means to be related to, yea, to be identified with Jesus Christ. Paradoxically, I remember that I had always thought of myself as being a Christian because, as it happened, I was an Englishman. Did I not live in a Christian country? I would have been offended if anyone would have called me anything but a Christian.

PAUL'S USE OF THE PHRASE

Let me return to the apostle's use of the phrase "in Christ." As was stated in the Preface, Paul used the phrase no less than 164 times. Perhaps it is because he used the phrase so prolifically that it is not easy to know exactly where and how to begin in trying to better understand its significance. However, it is quite evident that its meaning is of great importance, especially since Holy Scripture makes it clear that a person's present life and destiny are involved.

With this in mind, I have chosen to begin my quest to better understand the phrase with a consideration of 1 Corinthians 15:20-24. What I am about to do might seem to be more than a little sacriligious to a few of my dear friends, but I want to attempt a literal translation of the Greek text with a view to getting closer to the original sense of what Paul was saying. Why would these friends be troubled by such an objective? The reason is because they are persuaded that the 1611 Authorized Version (The King James Version) is the one and only infallible translation of the Bible in English. Therefore, in their minds, there is no need to turn to any other translation, let alone to the supposed 'original' Greek manuscripts. What they seem to forget is that it is not the 1611 version they hold in their hands, but rather the sixth revision of that version, which was accomplished and republished in 1769. If they really think they hold the 1611 version, then let them turn to Ruth 3:15. If it reads "he" rather than "she" then they do hold the first edition, and if they do, it is worth quite a bit of money.

GOD FORBID that my purpose should ever be misconstrued. I am not attempting to alter and correct the Word of God. I am persuaded, as was John Eadie, that "The vehicle may rock, and the oxen may stumble, but the ark is safe, and Uzzah does not need in wanton and faithless temerity to put forth his hand to steady it." (*The English Bible*, Vol. II p. 341). Was it not the avowed intention of those 54 KJV scholars to make a good translation better? According to the "Preface of the Translators," which appeared in the 1611 edition, their intent was not to make a new translation, but rather to "make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one " Anyway, what is clear in their revising work, is that it was not an entirely new translation, nor did anyone at that time view or claim that it would be the final absolute infallible work for the English speaking world for all generations.

Thus, having raised my head above the parapets, let me share what could be construed as being a more literal translation of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:20-24. According to Eugene Nida, a good translation, "consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style." (Sakae Kubo & Walter Specht, *So Many Versions?* p. 206). Hence, a literal translation is not always the best, but it can help to broaden understanding and perhaps share some shades of meaning that were present in the original writer's mind when he put pen to paper. Those who have engaged in translating work will know what I am trying to say on this point. With regard to 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, I would offer the following:

But now Christ (Messiah) has been raised out from the dead first fruit of the ones who have fallen asleep (who have died). For since through a man death, also through a man, resurrection of dead persons. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ (the Christ, the Messiah) all will be made alive. But each in his own order first fruit Christ (Messiah), then those who are Christ's (of the Christ, of the Messiah) at or in his coming. Then the end when he delivers the kingdom to God even the Father."

The immediate context of this passage is focused on the doctrine of the resurrection. There were those present in Paul's day, as there are today, who like the Sadducees, doubted this doctrine. (Mk. 12:18). The bottom line of what Paul was teaching in this context is that Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of the resurrection of all believers. His resurrection was the first fruit that gave promise that those who belong to him will be raised at his coming. Then, Christ will reign until all enemies are subject to him, and then when this is accomplished, he will deliver the kingdom to the Father.

It might be noted in my rendering of Paul's words that I deliberately tried to call the reader's attention to the fact that the Greek word *Christos* should be translated by the word Messiah. Here is another occasion where there is a transliteration and not a translation. If it were consistently translated, it would no doubt help many readers to grasp the fact that the word "Messiah" signifies that the hope of the coming kingdom of God is in some way inextricably involved with Jesus, who is the Christ (Mat. 16:13-19). Why, did the 1611 translators

transliterate *Christos* rather than translate it? More than likely it was because of a propensity to play down any thing that sounds Jewish, and perhaps was a reflection of the very problem that manifested itself at Thessalonica. For Paul to preach that Jesus was "the king," "the annointed one," could be considered a very dangerous venture, because it could be construed as treason in that it would be contrary to the decrees of Caesar (Acts 17:7).

Frequently, the definite article appears before *Christos*. In short, rather than coming across as a proper name, it is an epithet that belongs to Jesus indicating that he is the true long-awaited-for Messiah; the One annointed by God to rule over the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 11:15). The reader might want to take the time to look at Matthew 2:4; 16:16; 24:23; 26:63; Mark 14:61, and Luke 3:15. In other words, Jesus was the One promised in the Old Testa-ment and therefore the one who was to reign on the throne of king David (Lk. 1:30-33; Acts 2:30, 31, 36).

The preceding references leave no doubt that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. Moreover, as was just noted, in our present context, mention is made of the coming kingdom of God. In fact, toward the end of the chapter, there is a distinction made between those who will inherit and those who will not inherit the kingdom. In this context, Paul tied the resurrection of all believers together with the sounding of the last trumpet and with a prophecy found in Isaiah (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-55, Cf. Also Rev. 11:15-18). So it is with those who are in the Christ, i.e. in the Messiah (those related to him), they will inherit the kingdom. Hence, essentially, as I have already stated, the phrase "in Christ" conveys a relation-ship, and it is a relationship with blessed consequences. Destiny is involved, and it is a destiny related to an inheritance which will be realized at the time when the Messiah returns and establishes the kingdom of God on the earth.

Having said this, let me add that it courts a serious error to interpret Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:20-24 as though they taught the hope of universal salvation. Such is clearly not the case. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:18 he stated that "*the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*" Yes, "*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" (Rom. 1:16).

OTHER REFERENCES

In association with what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, and 51-54, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 comes to mind.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ (Messiah) shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Clearly, Paul was telling those to whom he was writing that those believers from their number who had already died will not miss out on the promised blessing of the resurrection. The refe-rence here, with regard to the archangel and to the resurrection, also calls Daniel 12:1-3 to mind. I am well aware that this passage in Daniel was concerned with the nation of Israel in "the time of the end," but, I would hasten to add that there is such a thing as progressive revelational development, and later divine revelations can add new dimensions to earlier truth. This phenomenon is frequently overlooked by disintegrative dispensationalists, even though they pay lip service to it.

Perhaps it should be asked: Who is this archangel in 1 Thessalonians? It does not say, but it could be Michael, just as it could be Gabriel. Whoever he might be, he is involved in the deliverance of the people of God. And let it be noted that these people of God, here in Thessalonica involve Gentiles. Moreover, in this resurrection, the saints of God will enter into eternal life and will shine as the brightness of the stars. Paul also used a similar image when he spoke of the mortal bodies of believers taking on immortality and shining as the glory of the stars (1 Cor. 15:41). Incidentally, the Lord Jesus also spoke of the righteous shining forth as the sun when the kingdom arrives (Mat. 13:41-43). But let it be noted that these promises belong, as other references make pellucidly clear, to those who are in Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

Looking at a few other references (in their chronological order) I turn to Galatians 1:22. Here Paul spoke of "*the churches of Judea which were in Christ (Messiah).*" These churches in Judea would have no problem understanding the title "Christ" (*Christos*). It would speak to them of the promised Messiah. Moreover, these

churches would be in existence before Paul's conversion and commission. As has already been mentioned, there were believers who were in Christ before Paul (Rom. 16:7). These churches did not know Paul personally, but they did know "*That he (Paul) which persecutest us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.*" (Gal.1:23). So much for that theory that contends that Paul was preaching a message that was entirely different from the other apostles. The record in the Acts also tells the reader that after his conversion, Paul straightway preached that Jesus was the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of God (Acts 9:20-22). The main theme once again is one that highlights the thought of a relationship with the Messiah. Paul did not enter into this particular relationship till his experiential encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road. Here, the thought is not only individuals, but also whole churches can be identified with Christ (the Messiah).

In First Thessalonians there is a similar reference to the churches in Judea. In chapter 2:14-16 it is stated: "*For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus, for ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*" The fact found here is that there were Jews who were in Christ, and there were Jews who were not in Christ. Like Paul wrote in Romans, "*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew who is one inwardly . . .*" He stated later in this epistle, "*For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.*" Rom. 2:28; 9:6). But there is an Israel of God that has received the truth of the gospel, and those belonging to this Israel are the ones who are in Christ, that is, they are identified with the Messiah and they have the hope of entering the kingdom of God. It should be mentioned once again that Paul preached this same hope even to the Gentiles (Acts 14:22; 20:24, 25; 28:30, 31).

More references about being in Christ can be found in Paul's letter to the Romans. For example, in chapter 16, no less than nine times Paul spoke of certain saints who were in Christ. What would it mean to be a helper, or a worker in Christ (16:3, 9)? Would it not touch on the thought that was shared at the beginning: *i.e.* submission to "the" Christ involves being identified with him in helping to bring about the eventual establishment of the kingdom of God? Such a thought might at first sound somewhat preposterous. But Paul did speak of certain Jewish disciples who were his fellow workers unto the kingdom of God (Col. 4:11). Then there is the notion of being "first fruit" unto Christ. This would incorporate the idea of being among the first converts to Christ, who would be living in expectation of inheriting the kingdom of God. Then, there is the notion of being "approved" in Christ? This could be the thought of as living a life consistent with the ideals of those who are the heirs of this coming kingdom (Cf. Mat. 5:1-10; 1 Thess. 2: 12).

It is stated in 1 Corinthians 4:17 that Paul's ways and his teachings were in Christ. In other words, they were related, or associated with all that is implied in the very name of Christ. He had been commissioned by Christ and his mission had a special application to the Gentiles. It was to "*open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (i.e. in the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 26:18).*" Let it be constantly kept in mind that Paul's mission was based on the revelation of a secret that centered on the fact that Gentiles could now become: joint-heirs with believing Jews; a joint-body with believing Jews, and joint-partakers with believing Jews. This involved a joint inheritance of God's promise in Christ through the gospel (Eph. 3:6). Paul's ways in Christ and his teaching were to this end, and they had the purpose of introducing every man, that is, both Jew and Gentile, to the confident expectation of the future glory that Christ, having been among them, had made possible. (Col. 1:24-29). In fact, as the Epistle to the Romans testifies, those who are in Christ (Messiah) Jesus (Savior) are justified before God, and are predestinated to be conformed to image of Jesus Christ in order that he might be the prince and the Lord among many brethren. Everything in God's plan works together for their good (Rom. 5:1; 8:1, 28-29).

The word "perfect," found in the KJV of Colossians 1:28, might disturb some readers. However, 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; Philippians 3:20,21; and 1 John 3:1-3 lets the reader know that when Jesus Christ does return, the children of God will undergo a wonderful transformation. But even on the practical, 'rubber-meeting-the-road' side of perfection, it is not a matter of sinless perfection that is intended. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *tam* has the implication of being blameless in the sense of a godly character, or of moral integrity (Cf. Job 1: 1, 8; 2:3; 9:21). Another Hebrew word is *shalem* and it usually signifies being at peace, to make whole, or complete. In other words, a heart that is wholly true, or blameless in its devotion to the Lord (Cf. 1 Kgs. 8:61; 11:4; 2 Kgs. 20:3, *et. al.*). Let me call attention to a passage in the Psalms where the poetic form of

parallelism might help illustrate what it means to be perfect. The verse is found in Psalm 37:37. “*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.*” As the passage continues, there is a contrast with the transgressors, and the wicked. Such will be destroyed. Their end is judgment, they “*shall be cut off.*” The perfect man is an upright man. He is a righteous man and he will be delivered from judgment and eventually enter into an inheritance. He is a man that can look forward to the full realization of salvation because he trusts in Jehovah God. In the light of the context, the perfect and upright man is a man who does not envy the man who becomes wealthy by his evil works. He knows what will happen to such a man. The upright man is a man who delights in the LORD, who commits his way unto the LORD, and who rests in the LORD. He is not a sinless man, but you can be sure that his devotion to the LORD is causing him to sin less and less in his walk of faith.

In the New Testament, the word perfect (Greek, *teleios*) in passages such as Matthew 19:21, carries the idea of aligning oneself to whatever be God's will. The verb form can project the image of being made perfect in the sense of being complete, or accomplished, mature, and fulfilled. I mention this because of what Paul teaches in Phillippians 3:7-16. This passage takes the mind back once again to what is stated in the first verse of this epistle. The believers were in Philippi, but they were in Christ. They were located in Philippi but were identified with the Messiah. Their relationship with Christ classified them as being “saints.” They were members of God's church and possessed a citizenship which existed even now in heaven from whence they were looking for the return of their Savior who, when he does return, will change their bodies like unto his glorious body. Their behavior was expected to reflect their heavenly citizenship. Paul's preaching of the mystery that had been revealed to him from God was directed at achieving this very objective. He wanted to present “*every man perfect in Christ.*” (Col. 1:28).

CONCLUDING THIS STUDY

In bringing this first study to a conclusion, let me return to the original question: “What does it mean to be **in Christ?**” My answer would begin by highlighting the concept of a relationship. But this relationship is much more than might be associated with a mere 'card carrying' type of visible church membership. It involves special promises and privileges that God bestows on all who have become his children through their faith in Christ. As was noted earlier, the translation of the Greek word *Christos* by the word Messiah, in itself, helps to broaden the meaning of being 'in Christ.' It clearly suggests that those who do believe in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, have a inheritance in the kingdom of God. This inheritance may at one time have been promised to believing Jews, but since the ministry of the apostle Paul it has now been granted also to believing Gentiles. They can now become co-equal heirs by their faith in Jesus the Messiah. How-ever, it is not mere 'pie in the sky by and by.' The life which they live in the flesh in the here and now is one in which, while they are in Christ, he is also living in them, and they are expected to live a quality of life that truly honors and glorifies God (Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:6, 3:17, 23; 1 Thess. 2:12, *et. al.*)

If I might add one final word, it would be one that chal-lenges my disintegrative dispensational colleagues. If they have been led to think that somehow or other this co-equality of believing Gentiles with believing Jews has somehow or other pro-duced unique and distinctive blessings for Gentiles (which presents a contradiction in terms), I would counsel them to adjust their pre-suppositional blinders and allow the principle of progressive reve-lational development to refine their thinking. They might want to start by reading and studying such passages as Ephesians 3:1-12, and Galations 3:26-29. I intend to add an appendix that provides a careful study of the Ephesian passage. In the meantime, my goal remains as stated in the preface, namely, to deal with the biblical and theological ramifications of what it means to be "in Christ", and at the same time, to bring the discussion into the territory of Christian experience so that the new life that belongs to all who belong to Christ can reach its full potential even in the here and now, before the then and there of its full realization.