

1. THE ALL *IN* CHRIST

In our quest to understand the purpose of the eons, we must be ever mindful of the fact that the Son of God, Christ Jesus, our Lord, is the Origin and the Consummation of the eons. The eons began in Him and will end in Him. Christ will head up all, but He is also the sum of all. He is like a great magnet that will draw all in heaven and on earth unto Himself. All creation and all that God has purposed and planned will be summed up and headed up *in* Christ to the glory of God, the Father of all.

Now, for those who believe in Jesus in this present eon, righteousness, justification, reconciliation, resurrection, ascension and glorification, along with eonian life and immortality, all come forth from the finished work of Christ. These are the pillars of the truth upon which our faith and hope rest. These are not simply terms that stand apart from the One who has paid the price to make them a reality to believers. *In* Christ and *through* Christ, believers find **righteousness, justification, reconciliation** and, eventually, **resurrection, transfiguration and glorification**. Or, another way of stating these truths is that **Christ is our redemption; Christ is our righteousness; Christ is our sanctification; Christ is our resurrection and life; Christ is our glorification**. Because of Christ, believers are a new creation *in* Christ, destined for eonian life and immortality. Believers are members of the ecclesia, which is Christ's body that is destined to reign with Christ among the celestials in the coming eons and beyond.

Can you think or imagine of anything greater than what God's Son has accomplished on the cross for those who have been called and chosen from before the disruption of the world?

Through Paul, the apostle of the nations, we see Christ as all in all. Christ is the very foundation and, we could say, superstructure of the evangel presented to us by Paul. Christ Jesus, our Lord, is central and preeminent in the evangel that was given to Paul by revelation directly from the Lord Jesus. Remove Christ from this evangel and there is no good news. This evangel begins with the cross of Calvary, for this is where the old humanity was crucified *with* Christ and a new humanity was brought forth *in* Christ.

Unfortunately, many believers seem to see their salvation as simply being saved from their sins and one day going to heaven. In other words, they have been saved from something. Of course, some erroneously believe they have been saved from Christendom's hell (an eternal torture chamber), which, as has been stressed, does not exist. We are saved from the wrath of God, which is an entirely different matter, for it refers to the judgment that will be poured out on an unbelieving world at the end of the present eon and, possibly, the great white throne judgment that leads to the second death at the end of the next eon.

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There is nothing wrong with thanking Jesus for saving us. We need to praise Him. Praise God for His people who simply praise and worship Jesus for saving them. But let us take our praise and worship to the heights of glory.

What is so often sadly missed is what believers are saved *into*. It is good to be saved from sin and the wrath of God, but if this is all that salvation means to us, then we have come way short of God's purpose for saving us, which is a vital part of the purpose of the eons.

We who believe in this eon are saved into something so glorious that it should bring adoration, praise and worship from our hearts each and every day of our life until Jesus comes for us at His presence. In that glorious day, we will worship Him and never stop worshipping Him for who He is and what He has accomplished, not only for us but for all mankind and creation.

We are saved *in* Christ and saved into His destiny to head up all in the heavens and on the earth. We are to be His complement. When we believe, we are placed *in* Christ, forever secure in the One who alone has immortality today, as we wait for the day when He brings His entire body into immortality and eventually all mankind, to the glory of God. Oh, we need the eyes of our heart enlightened by the spirit of God so that we can see more clearly the glory of Christ.

The word *in* is so small and seems so insignificant but when it is seen in the light of Christ, it becomes a mighty word.

In Christ.

One of Paul's most often used expressions is *in Christ*. Peter was the only other one to use this exact expression and he used it three times in his first epistle. Depending on the translation, the expression *in Christ* was used by Paul over eighty times, which places a great deal of emphasis on being *in* Christ. If we include the expression *in* Him, there are well over one hundred references in Paul's epistles.

The fact of the matter is that *in* Christ is the foundation of Paul's evangel. Paul saw *all in Christ!* It starts with those who believe in Jesus and eventually will extend to all mankind and creation itself—*Christ all in all*.

By God's own doing you (believers) are in Christ (1 Corinthians 1.30). *In* Christ is a positional statement of fact. All that we are and all that we will be is based on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of Him and Him alone that we have life and hope for a glorious destiny. Miss this fact and you will miss the glory of Paul's evangel to the nations.

To prove this point, the following is a list of *in* Christ expressions given to us by Paul. In these verses, we discover the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of all that is *in* Christ, for all mankind but especially for believers.

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The purpose of the eons is carried out *in* Christ (Ephesians 3.11).
All will be headed up *in* Christ (Ephesians 1.10).
The entire creation of God is *in* Christ (Colossians 1.16).
All has its cohesion *in* Christ (Colossians 1.17).
God conciliated the world to Himself *in* Christ (2 Corinthians 5.19).
The promises of God are *in* Christ (2 Corinthians 1.20).
Redemption is *in* Christ (Romans 3.24; 1 Corinthians 1.30; Ephesians 1.7).
Salvation is *in* Christ (1 Corinthians 1.30; 2 Timothy 2.10).
Grace is *in* Christ and granted *in* Christ (2 Timothy 1.9; 2.1).
Life is *in* Christ (Romans 6.11; Colossians 3.4; 2 Timothy 1.1).
The gracious gift of eonian life is *in* Christ (Romans 6.23).
Faith and love are *in* Christ (2 Timothy 1.13).
Righteousness is *in* Christ (1 Corinthians 1.30; 2 Corinthians 5.21).
Justification by faith is *in* Christ (Galatians 2.16-17).
Sanctification is *in* Christ (1 Corinthians 1.30).
Freedom from the law of sin and death is *in* Christ Jesus (Romans 8.2).
The ecclesias are *in* Christ (1 Thessalonians 2.14).
The new creation is *in* Christ (2 Corinthians 5.17; Galatians 6.15).
Being called and chosen of God is *in* Him (Christ) (Ephesians 1.4).
The one body is *in* Christ (Romans 12.5).
There is no condemnation for those who are *in* Christ (Romans 8.1).
Saints are *in* Christ (Ephesians 1.1; Philippians 1.1; Colossians 1.2).
Faithfulness is *in* Christ (Ephesians 1.1; Colossians 1.2).
Nothing can separate us from the love of God *in* Christ (Romans 8.39).
The upward call of God is *in* Christ (Philippians 3.14).
God's will is *in* Christ (1 Thessalonians 5.18).
The peace of God guards hearts and minds *in* Christ (Philippians 4.7).
Confidence is *in* Christ (Philemon 1.8).
Approval is *in* Christ (Romans 16.10).
Hope is *in* Christ (1 Corinthians 15.19; 1 Timothy 1.1).
Death for believers is *in* Christ (1 Corinthians 15.18; 1 Thessalonians 4.15-16).
Triumph is *in* Christ (2 Corinthians 2.14).
God's workmanship is created *in* Christ (Ephesians 2.10).
Being raised up and seated among the celestials is *in* Christ (Ephesians 2.6).
Every spiritual blessing among the celestials is *in* Christ (Ephesians 1.3).
Fellow partakers of the promise are *in* Christ (Ephesians 3.6).
Encouragement is *in* Christ (Philippians 2.1).
Ways are *in* Christ (1 Corinthians 4.17).
The truth is *in* Christ (2 Corinthians 11.10).
Completeness (fullness) is *in* Christ (Colossians 2.10).

Is it any wonder that our boast is *in* Christ Jesus, our Lord?

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Of course, much could be written about each verse, but let us look at one in particular.

Complete in Christ.

According to Paul, we who believe are complete *in* Christ! Notice that in the two translations of the same verse this is not a future tense, as if we *will* be complete. We *are* complete!

For in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily. And **you are complete in Him....** (Colossians 2.9-10 *CV*)

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him **ye are made full....** (Colossians 2.9-10 *ASV*)

First, we must see that the entire complement or fullness of the Deity dwells *in* Christ. What does this mean? It means that if we see Christ, we see God. The Son of God is the complement or the exact image or reflection of His Father. The full expression of the Deity is dwelling bodily *in* Christ. Christ Jesus is the full Man; He is the complete Man. He is the Man after God's heart who is the Head of every sovereignty and authority.

Second, Christ is the Man who has brought forth an entirely new creation that is His complement. *In* Christ, believers are made full or complete. In other words, there is nothing partial for those who are *in* Christ. His body is not part old humanity and part new humanity. His body is and will be an entirely new creation in Christ, filled with Christ. Absolutely nothing is lacking in those who believe *in* Christ, for everything of Christ has been given to the ecclesia, which is His body. By God's own doing the body is fully and completely *in* Christ and filled with all that is *in* Christ. This is why Paul declared that Christ is *Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all* (Ephesians 1.22b-23 *CV*). This work of completing the all in all begins with His body that has been made complete *in* Him. If we could see the body that Christ sees today, we would see the complement of Christ, a body that is filled with His life.

Today, it seems as if we see everything but His complement; fear not, for it is not what we see but what He sees that matters.

In his Colossians epistle, Paul continued to unveil this great truth.

Who is the Head of every sovereignty and authority, in Whom you were circumcised also with a circumcision not made by hands, in the stripping off of the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ. Being entombed together with Him in baptism, in Whom you were roused together also through faith in the operation of God, Who rouses Him from among the dead, you also being dead to the offenses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He vivifies

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us together jointly with Him, dealing graciously with all our offenses, erasing the handwriting of the decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it away out of the midst, nailing it to the cross, stripping off the sovereignties and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2.10b-15 cv)

Christ is the fulfillment of the law and the end of all religion. Judaism had its purpose, but it was a shadow of what is accomplished through God's Son. The shed blood of Christ has done away with decrees and shadows. Believers in His finished work have been released from religion and brought into a glorious relationship *in* Christ.

All who believe have been identified with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Circumcision, which signifies Christ's death, is the cutting off of the flesh. Baptism signifies both Christ's burial and resurrection. Christ has done all the work, and believers, as His complement, are identified with Christ's circumcision, baptism and resurrection. Everything that stood against us and was hostile to us has been taken out of the way *in* Christ and the way has been made for every believer to be complete *in* Christ, to be completely full *of* Christ, to be His complement through and through. What tremendous good news we are given through Paul!

Let us not stop at this point, for Paul not only used the expression *in* Christ but he also used the expressions *with* Christ, *of* Christ, *by* Christ, *for* Christ and *through* Christ. It is as if Paul sought to exhaust every expression he could to reveal Christ.

With Christ.

Not only are believers *in* Christ but they are *with* Christ.

Those who believe in Christ in this eon have died and their lives are hidden *with* Christ in God (Colossians 3.3); have been crucified *with* Christ (Galatians 2.20); have died *with* Christ to the elementary principles of the world (Colossians 2.20); have been made alive together *with* Christ (Ephesians 2.5); have been raised up *with* Christ (Colossians 3.1); are clothed *with* Christ (Galatians 3.27); shall live *with* Christ (Romans 6.8); will be *with* Christ in the resurrection (Philippians 1.23); are fellow heirs *with* Christ (Romans 8.17).

Notice that we are *with* Christ from death to resurrection life.

Of Christ.

Everything in Paul's life was connected to Christ in some manner. He saw himself and others as servants *of* Christ (1 Corinthians 4.1), members *of* Christ's body (1 Corinthians 6.15), a fragrance *of* Christ to God (2 Corinthians 2.15), imitators *of* Christ (1 Corinthians 11.1), even prisoners *of* Christ, if necessary to bring glory to

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God (Ephesians 3.1). The love *of* Christ controlled or constrained Paul (2 Corinthians 5.14).

By Christ.

For *by* Christ all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities (Colossians 1.16). Paul was laid hold of by Christ (Philippians 3.12).

For Christ.

Christ died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but *for* Him (Christ) who died and rose again on their behalf (2 Corinthians 5.15). Living for Christ means we are to be ambassadors *for* Christ (2 Corinthians 5.20).

Through Christ.

There is only one Lord, by whom are all things, and we exist *through* Christ (1 Corinthians 8.6). We have been reconciled to God *through* Christ (2 Corinthians 5.18; Colossians 1.20). We have access to God *through* Christ (Ephesians 2.18). We can do all things *through* Christ (Philippians 4.13). We overwhelmingly conquer *through* Christ (Romans 8.37). We are saved from the wrath of God *through* Christ (Romans 5.9). God will judge the secrets of men *through* Christ (Romans 2.16).

Of course, these are only lists, partial ones at best, of what Scripture reveals about the finished work of Christ and what Christ means to those who believe. Do you see the significance of Christ for your salvation, for your life while in a body of humiliation and for your destiny? He is not merely a figure who died on a cross and is now seated in heaven. He is far more than this, for God has set Him over all that He might be all in all. Everything of value to God is in His beloved Son, and everything of value to us in this eon and for all the eons to follow is in His Son. We must not separate ourselves or anything we do from Christ. The fact of the matter is that we have no work apart from Christ; we have no life apart from Christ; and we have no destiny apart from Christ. We have everything pertaining to God *in* Christ.

Absolute security.

Do you grasp the greatness of this little expression *in* Christ? We could say that all the other expressions are summed up *in* Christ. Everything that we are or will be is found *in* Christ. Remove Christ from our life and we are nothing but dead men walking. Praise God; once we are *in* Christ, nothing, absolutely nothing can remove us from this secure place.

Today, the world is in much turmoil and many live in fear and great uncertainty of the future. Jesus said it would be this way as our present eon comes to an end

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and He arrives for His people. However, let us not be insecure in these days of darkness. *In Christ* is the most secure place in the entire universe. *In Christ* is as secure as the throne of God is secure. *In Christ* is as secure as the unshakeable kingdom of God is secure. We never have to fear failure or disappointment once we are *in Christ*. Jesus never fails and never disappoints, to the glory of God. We can go through any trial, tribulation, suffering, or great uncertainty knowing that we are *in Christ* and that all is being worked out according to the purpose of God. All that has been purposed *in Christ* will come to God's end and be in accord with God's purpose.

Positional truth.

In Christ is what could be called a positional truth, which means that believers are afforded the highest and grandest advantage before God, not that they have anything to offer God or that they have done anything to deserve such advantage. It is all by grace; all because of God's Son, who He is, and what He has done.

In Christ is not something mystical or even mysterious. It is simply how God sees things. When He sees the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, He sees His Son. All the advantages of the Son become the advantages of His body. At the consummation of the eons when all is headed up in Christ, God the Father will see His Son who fills all.

Objective and absolute truth.¹

In Christ is what also could be called an objective and absolute truth. Objective and absolute truth is essential in these last days of darkness and systematic deception. Putting on the panoply of God in our spiritual battle with the powers of darkness among the celestials requires that we gird our loins with truth (Ephesians 6.14). We must hold to the truth by faith. We must believe it in the absence of any confirmation and in the midst of great trial and battle that would say otherwise.

Unfortunately, in our current day, truth is not considered objective or absolute. Instead, truth is subjective and relative. Truth is what one thinks truth should be, based on one's own experience and interpretation, and on what one wants it to be. Sadly, this same thinking has crept into the minds of many believers of our day. The result is that, apart from some basic truths, Scripture is often interpreted as one sees fit. When a believer comes along and declares that God's word contains the objective and absolute truth of God, the person is chided for holding to such a belief. The objection is raised: "How can you say that what you believe is the objective and absolute truth of God when there are so many other interpretations of Scripture by so many good men of God? Surely, everyone else cannot be wrong!" I wonder how Paul would answer such a charge if he were alive

¹ In this context, *objective truth* refers to a truth that is independent of the mind. It is from God alone. *Absolute truth* refers to the actual and real truth from God. It is the complete truth to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken.

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today. Surely, in his mind, the truth of the word of God was objective and absolute.

There is another danger regarding truth; it can remain merely head knowledge that does not produce a change in our lives. Yes, we are saved by grace through faith, and by God's own doing we have been placed *in* Christ. However, as great as the truth of *in* Christ is, if we are not careful, this expression can become like so many other expressions and thoughts contained in Scripture. We can memorize them, recite them, and add them to our growing list of truths, and yet never come into the reality of what they truly mean. Do they produce change in our lives?

I can honestly state that when I first saw that I was *in* Christ, it changed my life. I can also state that coming into an understanding of the purpose of the eons and the eventual reconciliation of all mankind has been life-changing for me by bringing me into the freedom *of* Christ as I have never known it in nearly twenty-five years. The truth will make you free (John 8.32) is the promise of our Lord. For freedom Christ set us free (Galatians 5.1). This is not freedom for licentiousness or sin. No; it is freedom to love Jesus, to live for Jesus, to long for Jesus, to serve Jesus, to be passionate for Jesus, and to love all mankind.

Once we believers see the objective and absolute truth of God, we can tenaciously hold to it without wavering and without doubt. We can stand in it and be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. When the enemy throws accusations our way to try to convince us that we are not the Lord's, or that we are not saved, or that we might be rejected by God, we can stand up to these lies and declare without hesitation that we are *in* Christ, the most secure place in all the universe. When we are confronted with the vilest sinner on the face of the earth and are tempted to write the person off as if there is no hope, we can declare that *in* Christ God is not reckoning his offenses to him and that one day even this one will willingly bow his knee and confess with his tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father. Even this one will be *in* Christ, even if it is thousands of years into the future at the consummation of the eons.

Praise God!

In conclusion, the purpose of the eons is carried out *in* Christ Jesus our Lord as all in heaven and on earth are headed up *in* Christ so that God may be *All* in all. The eons were made *through* Christ (Hebrews 1.2) to accomplish God's purpose. If we want to understand the eons, we must apprehend Christ. The purpose of the eons will be achieved when *all* is *in* Christ.

May we give God the glory for what He is accomplishing *in* Christ Jesus, His Son and our Lord!