

United (Joined as One) to Christ



SABBATH—DECEMBER 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 5:19; Romans 6:3–6; Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone! The new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: To show that Christ's work as our High Priest continues as He calls us to become members of His new family.

CHRIST'S DEATH GIVES ALL THAT WE NEED TO BE SAVED. This includes the permanent (lasting forever) union with Him as Savior and Lord. We join with Christ through baptism.¹ Through baptism we take part in His death and resurrection.² This is our way of recognizing that His death is our death because He died as our substitute.³ So, we become united (joined together as one) with Him. In this unity,⁴ we accept all the benefits (the good things we receive; rewards) of His sacrifice⁵ and also become members of His new family. This union with Christ is represented by our joining the church as the body of Christ. By joining with Christ, we have fellowship with Him and are united to one another in His church.

1. baptism—when a person is put completely under water and brought back up out of it. This shows that God through Jesus has completely washed away this person's sins and given him or her a new life.

2. resurrection—Jesus' return to life from the dead after dying on the cross.

3. substitute—someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

4. unity—when two or more people or things are joined together as one; when two or more people are in agreement in ideas, feelings, and so on.

5. sacrifice—the act of giving up something of value, such as a life, to save or help someone or something.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 14**THE TWO GROUPS OF PEOPLE**

Study the comparisons and differences below. Summarize the nature⁶ of the human⁷ group made sinful by Adam and the new kind of humans made by Christ.

ADAM	CHRIST
1. Son of God (Luke 3:38)	1. Son of God (Luke 3:22)
2. Was disobedient (Romans 5:19)	2. Was obedient (Romans 5:19)
3. Introduced sin (Romans 5:12)	3. Brought grace⁸ for all (Romans 5:20–22)
4. Introduced rule of death (Romans 5:19)	4. Made possible the rule of life (Romans 5:17)
5. All his future children are sinners (Romans 5:19)	5. Through Him many will be made righteous (holy) (Romans 5:19)
6. Brought penalty (punishment) (Romans 5:18)	6. Brought justification (forgiveness) (Romans 5:18)
7. In him all die (1 Corinthians 15:21)	7. In Him all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:21)

The fall of Adam led to his spiritual death and separation from God. All of Adam's future children found themselves in the same situation as Adam. They were unable to overcome sin and death. Humans are, by natural birth, part of the old kind of human group that belongs to Adam. It is a sinful group separated from God.



Adam's sin brought death and separation from God.

The new human group is formed by those who were born from above and not from the flesh (John 3:3, 5, 6). These are those who found in Christ God's only means of salvation. They believed in Him and now have eternal (forever) life (verse 15). They now belong to the new creation. They are freed from the enslaving power of sin (2 Corinthians 5:17). They have become children of God, members of the heavenly family. Paul describes this as adoption into God's family (Galatians 4:5–7). God announced Jesus as Son of God at His baptism. And we take part in His Sonship through adoption at baptism. Adoption does not suggest that we are less than

6. (human) nature—any of the qualities or aspects of humans (men, women, and children) that make us who we are. Without God, our natures are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

7. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

8. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

children. The opposite is true. “The Spirit himself joins with our spirits. Together they give witness that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16, NIV).

MONDAY—DECEMBER 15

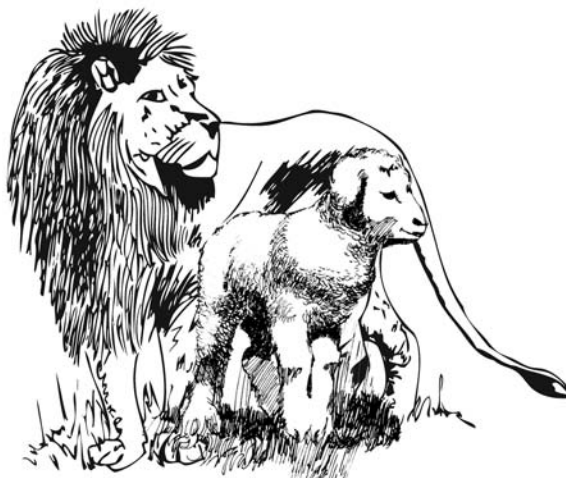
MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST (Galatians 6:15)

The greatest goal of Christ’s work of salvation⁹ is to make all things new. In this way He permanently removes the damage caused by sin. This hope for the “new” was announced by the prophets of the Old Testament. One was Isaiah, who talked about the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17). The Old Testament idea of newness is developed more fully in the New Testament, which adds details of the work of salvation through Jesus. As a result, the “new” is what we expect through our hope in Christ and what we are already experiencing now, as Christians. For example, we have already entered into a *new* covenant with Christ (Mark 14:24). We are already walking in *newness* of life (Romans 6:4). The new is here because Christ started it through the power of His death and resurrection.

The work of salvation is one of re-creation. It is one so new and different that it will result in a new heaven and a new earth. But, this work of re-creation does not begin with the new real heaven and earth, or even with the

re-creation of our old physical bodies. It begins with the creation of a new kind of human group. We must remember that the problem of sin is related to the fall of humans. The answer to this sin problem begins with the removal of its controlling power in the human heart. This has been made possible through the work of Christ for us. This new kind of human group was started by Christ. In Christ, the God and the human were permanently united. The new kind of human group requires humans to take part in the new human spirit started by Christ.

This new human spirit is not an unseen miracle without any visible (able to be seen) evidence (proof) in history. It shows itself in the church as the body of Christ.



The work of salvation will result in a new heaven and a new earth.

What do Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; and Colossians 3:10 mean to you? How have you experienced the promises in

9. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

them? What can you do to help these promises become fulfilled in your own life?

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 16

UNION (BEING ONE) WITH CHRIST (Romans 6:3–6)

How does Paul describe the joining of humans with Christ in Romans 6:3–6 and 2 Corinthians 5:17?

No one is automatically in Christ without a personal faith connection with Him. Our connection by faith with Christ is shown through baptism. The importance of baptism is great.

First, it is a public announcement that the death of Christ was our death. Through His resurrection we are part of a new creation, a new person. Second, we did not die “in Christ.” But we were “baptized into his death.” Through baptism we joined Him in His sacrificial¹⁰ death. In this way we establish a permanent relationship with Him. Third, Paul interprets the wording “baptized into Christ” to mean that we died “with Christ” (Romans 6:3, 8, NIV) and that we were made alive “with Christ” (Colossians 2:13, NIV). This is the language we use to show that our death to sin and our new life take place only in union with Christ and never apart from Him.



To be baptized means that we died *with Christ* and are made alive *with Christ*.

In other words, the full benefits (good things we receive; rewards) of Christ’s death are claimed by us *only* when we by faith join Him in His death and resurrection. *Dying* with Him means that we recognize Him as our Savior. To recognize Him as Savior means that we see in Him the Son of God dying on the cross for our sins and for our rebellion.¹¹ We also experience repentance,¹² baptism, and the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38). True conversion¹³ requires more than recognizing and accepting Bible truth. It calls for us to admit our true condition as sinners. This helps us realize that, separated from Christ, we are trapped in a life of total slavery to sin

10. sacrificial—having to do with an animal, gift, or offering that is given up to get something else that is wanted.

11. rebellion—a fight or struggle against any kind of power.

12. repentance—the act of being sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

13. conversion—the time when a person fully accepts Jesus as his or her Savior and turns away from sin.

and death. We also understand that our sinful condition can be greatly changed only by coming to Jesus. This happens as we are united to Christ's death.

Finally, taking part in the *resurrection* of Christ means that we have accepted Jesus as our only Lord. By taking part in the power of His resurrection, we show that sin no longer rules over us.

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 17

“THROUGH CHRIST” (Romans 16:7, Nlrv)

According to Romans 16:7; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:28; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, how do we understand the words “through Christ”?

The words “through Christ” are used by Paul in different ways. In some examples Paul uses “through Christ” to mean something that God does through Christ. For example, “God was bringing the world back to himself through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:19, Nlrv). Here this wording “through Christ” means two main ideas. First, Christ is God's special agent (worker) for bringing the world back to Himself. Second, the work of bringing the world back to Himself depends on Christ. This means that we can enjoy it only in union with Christ. In fact, all the benefits (the good things we receive; rewards) of salvation found in the sacrifice of Christ are available to us only in Him. These include grace (Ephesians 1:2), the gift

of eternal life (Romans 6:23), God's call to a holy life (Philippians 3:14), election (being chosen) (Ephesians 1:4), redemption (being saved) (Colossians 1:14), justification (being cleared of guilt) (Galatians 2:17), forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32), and sanctification (becoming like Jesus) (1 Corinthians 1:2). In Him we were created for good works (Ephesians 2:10), we can reach God (Ephesians 3:12), we are now seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), we have an inheritance¹⁴ (Ephesians 1:10, 11), we are victorious (have won the battle) (2 Corinthians 2:14), we can do all things (Philippians 4:13), we are rooted and built up (Colossians 2:7). All of these and much more are ours only in union with Christ.

The wording “through Christ” also is used to show that everything the Christian does is done in union with Jesus. We rejoice in Him (Philippians 3:1), boast and glory in Him (Romans 15:17), stand firm in Him (Philippians 4:1), are strong in Him (Ephesians 6:10), and do works of faith in Him (Galatians 5:6).

The wording “through Christ” also deals with one of the most damaging results of sin. Sin dislocates us and puts us under the controlling influence of evil. Christ is now our original center of life and guides us in all we do. It is in Him that we come to know ourselves and the glorious future prepared for us. Everything we do is to be influenced by¹⁵ our union with Him, not for selfish reasons.

14. inheritance—the belongings of another person that will become yours.

15. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

Go back and look over all those things that we have been given through Christ. Then ask yourself, Do I make myself available to all that we have been promised through Christ? If not, why not?

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 18

THROUGH CHRIST: THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH (Romans 8:9)

Study Romans 8:9 and read the comments given below. Then try to explain in your own words the meaning of the verse.

There is a very close connection between the Spirit and Christ. There are several ideas in Romans 8:9 that deserve some attention. First, there is a big difference between being in the flesh¹⁶ and being in the Spirit. Believers are not in the flesh. This means that they are not controlled by their fallen nature.¹⁷ They are not in a state of rebellion against God and unable to surrender to God's will (verses 6–8). Instead, they are in the Spirit. This means they are spiritually alive (verse 10), have become children of God (verse 14), and sin does not rule over them. The verses describe two different ways of life: One belongs to the old person who does not know Christ. And the other belongs to the new person in Christ.



To be in the Spirit means that believers are not controlled by sin or other fallen natures.

Second, being in the Spirit means that one belongs to Christ. This shows that to be in union with Christ is the same as being in the Spirit. The Spirit and Christ are not exactly the same, but it is suggested that Christ relates to believers through the Spirit. Union with Him is union with the Spirit. The gifts that are ours in Christ are said to be in the Spirit. For example, we are justified (cleared of guilt; innocent) and sanctified (made holy) by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11). We have “righteousness [holiness], peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17, NIV). And we have fellowship in both the Spirit and Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9, Philippians 2:1).

It also is important to remember that union with Christ through baptism cannot be separated from union to the body of Christ, the church. To be baptized into Christ is at the same time to be “baptized by one Spirit into one body”—which means the church

16. flesh—the body, including the muscles, bones, and skin. It also means human nature (the qualities that make us who we are), along with our sinful desires.

17. fallen nature—without God, our natures (the qualities that make us who we are) are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

(1 Corinthians 12:13, NIV). The idea of the church as the body of Christ shows the unity and the interdependence¹⁸ of believers with one another and with Christ. Such union is shown in a life lived in Christ/in the Spirit. The members of the church often are recognized as those who are “in Christ.” This shows that sometimes the wording means “to be a Christian” in the sense of living a life fully dedicated to God because of what Christ has done for them.

Look at your life in the past 24 hours. What examples are there to show you are living “in Christ”? How is your union with Christ shown in the way you relate to other church members who are also part of the body of Christ?

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 19

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Are you in Christ? You are not if you do not admit that you are weak and helpless sinners. You are not if you are honoring and glorifying¹⁹ self. If there is any good in you, it is because of the mercy of a merciful Savior. Your birth, your reputation,²⁰ your wealth, your talents, your goodness, your religious feelings, the money and gifts you give to good causes, or anything else in you or connected with you, will not form a bond of union between your

soul and Christ. Your connection with the church . . . will be worthless if you do not believe in Christ. It is not enough to believe *about* Him. You must believe *in* Him. You must depend fully upon His saving grace.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*²¹ for the Church, volume 5, pages 48, 49.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ At the present time both the new “man” and the old “man” live in us. How do you day by day deal with the two? Which one comes up most naturally and easily? Why?
- ❷ Scripture promises a new heaven and a new earth. That means all that is here is going to be swept away, gone forever. How does this knowledge help you pay attention to more important things in your life?
- ❸ Describe what it means for you to be “in Christ.” How does that experience influence²² the way you relate to God and to others?
- ❹ How should the church as the body of Christ influence the lives of the church members? What is it that keeps the members together as one body in Christ? (Colossians 3:14). How can you help strengthen the unity of the church in its message and mission?

18. interdependence—a need of one person for another; working together.

19. glorifying—praising, respecting, and exalting.

20. reputation—what others think of you.

21. Testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.

22. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.