

Spot On

Restoring the Hebraic foundational emphasis on the processes of how you live your life:

- the responsive actions our Lord commands all of His followers,*
- and their responsibility to deferentially obey by grace the One they love.*



Spot 4. “In Christ” Is A Lifelong Union Of Relational Intimacy

This Spot fuses being “*in Christ*” with the biblical reality that we belong to a “jealous” God. How great is the impoverishment to this generation that this vital connection in our pilgrimage to our salvation is never addressed among Christians — to the loss of so many who live as enemies of God even as they occupy pews each week. Let’s look at the first phrase, being “*in Christ*”, or more accurately, being *in union with* Christ:

*“There is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus**”* (Romans 8:1).

*“To the called-out ones of God in Corinth, to those sanctified **in Christ Jesus** and called to be His holy people”* (1Corinthians 1:2a).

*“It is because of Him that you are **in Christ Jesus**”* (1Corinthians 1:30a).

*“Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation”* (2Corinthians 5:17).

To be “*in Christ*” can best be understood by remembering that the word “covenant” can mean “to live in union with.” Being “*in Christ*” calls for lifelong *relational spiritual intimacy* which reflects in the spiritual realm the intimacy of physical union in marital intercourse. To understand this more fully we need to look at the Hebrew Scriptures and the relationship between the people of Israel and God which is described in marriage terms:

“I [God] was a husband to them” (Jeremiah 31:32); *“In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call Me ‘My Husband’; you will no longer call Me ‘My Master’”* (Hosea 2:16); *“But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to Me, O house of Israel,” declares the LORD”* (Jeremiah 3:20).

The unfaithfulness of *spiritual adultery* against our holy and righteous God is even more offensive than adultery through the unfaithfulness of a straying husband or wife, as God makes clear about the people of Jerusalem who violated Him spiritually: *“You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband!”* (Ezekiel 16:32). Our Father established the emotional and physical union of marriage between one man and one woman from the beginning in the Garden of Eden. The faithfulness of that union would reflect the spiritual union He intended when He set apart Israel as His own precious possession. Why did He do this? So that they would accurately represent His love and His power and His holiness to the rest of the world and thereby draw them to Him (see, for example, Jeremiah 13:11).

Here’s the difficult part that’s discounted or denied in much of Christianity today:

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures when you read of Israel and Judah in their *unfaithfulness* to God, it’s in the spiritual sense of putting other gods and images and idols *alongside Him* in their worship and prayers. God is a jealous God — jealous as a loving husband for the faithful love of His beloved (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 32:21; Ezekiel 16:42). And when He is offended, even after a multitude of warnings from His

servants the prophets to turn back to Him, His anger is aroused! Now, you might have trouble picturing God as a “jealous Husband” or even as a God Who demonstrates anger and wrath against those who violate Him. But if you can’t comprehend that, then you’ve likely been influenced by the Hellenist/Greek indoctrination that God is “above all that” — ie., that He couldn’t experience or express emotions!

Within the framework of the New Covenant, in union with Christ means that Jesus is betrothed to His collective called-out ones who comprise His bride:

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Corinthians 11:2).

Only in union with Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit do individuals become a part of that “bride” and are called the “sons [and daughters] of God” (Romans 8:14). And can that “marriage covenant” be violated through spiritual adultery? Yes, according to James 4:4:

“Adulteresses, don’t you know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, resolves to be a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God” (literal from the Greek).

An adulteress is a wife who has intimate relations with another man. Those in Christ who pursue the values and goals of the world which are apart from Father’s will makes them adulteresses—enemies of God. To Him this spiritual adultery defiles His holy reputation among unbelievers and compromises the loving faithfulness to Christ as Lord which following in union with Him requires.

We who follow Jesus are exhorted to learn from the example of our forefathers in the Older Testament who lusted after evil even after God so miraculously delivered them from Egyptian bondage and provided them food and drink in the desert because He loved them. This is why Paul is so adamant in his warning to those he addresses as his dearly beloved friends, because:

“these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1Corinthians 10:11,12; also Hebrew 4:11).

All of Israel’s adulterous testing of God was met by disastrous consequences from His hand —by plague, venomous snakebites, the destroying angel (1Corinthians 10:6-10). The way of God, His standard of love and holiness for His own, hasn’t changed, especially among those He has drawn by grace to be the bride of Christ.

What to take away from this:

Living in covenant union with Christ is grace beyond measure! And, just as in a marriage where love finds deeper expression, so too is the love-borne obedient trust of being in Christ. Why jeopardize in any way the blessing of being found unspotted from the world’s influence and wholly prepared for the return of our heavenly Bridegroom? Examine your heart (Lamentations 3:40; 2Corinthians 13:5) so that the Holy Spirit might expose as detestable to you any vestige of spiritual adultery, whether through lusting after the world’s ways or being devoted in your spirit to any person or entity alongside your professed allegiance to Jesus as Lord of your life.