

UNION WITH CHRIST -- THE CLIMAX OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

I. Statement of the Thesis:

- A. Deuteronomy's prediction of the "Circumcised Heart" (Deut. 30:6) is fulfilled in the NT concepts of "Union with Christ" and Regeneration.
- B. Deuteronomy's prediction of the "No-People" (Deut. 32:21) is fulfilled in the NT Church (cf. Rom 11:11-15).

II. Explanation of the Thesis:

- A. Union with Christ is the fulfilment of the prediction of the "circumcision of the heart" (Col. 2: 11-14)
- B. We have the same heart condition that Israel had in the OT (cf. Deut. 31:20-21; 31:26-27, 29; 29:4), but through the realization of our union with Christ, we have the victory in and through Christ! (Rom. 7:4-8)
 - 1. We live in Union with Christ by realizing that we have "died to the law through the body of Christ, so that we may belong to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God."
 - 2. We live in Union with Christ by realizing that life is no longer about "does" and "don'ts", but about the question of how Christ's mission and goals can be realized in my life - in the full awareness and faith that there is nothing more desirable for my life
 - 3. We live in Union with Christ by realizing that the *Life in the Flesh* will never produce a spiritual life—only the *Life in the Spirit* does!
 - a. The Life in the Flesh
 - b. The Life in the Spirit
 - 4. We live in Union with Christ by realizing that not walking by sight but walking by faith will bring a fulfilled life

III. Setting the Thesis in it's Biblical-Theological Context – Union with Christ may be seen as the core of the New Testament's teaching and, thus, as the essential way in which God works in our times (dispensation).

- A. Union with Christ is not only one of the most important doctrines, but also, unfortunately, one that has been almost forgotten.
- B. Union with Christ is at the core of the doctrine of salvation.
- C. Union with Christ is the foundational doctrine for all other doctrines in the New Testament and, thus, the essence of the “dispensation of grace.”
- D. Both dispensationalists and covenant theologians are agreed on the importance of this doctrine for salvation and the believer’s life in this dispensation of grace.
- E. *Conclusion:* We, thus, see that what is the pinnacle of God’s story of salvation finds its roots and foundation in the foundational book of the Bible—Deuteronomy. This ties both Testaments together and gives us a grasp of the overall story of the Bible, which is, indeed, a “Story of Grace;” this observation allows us to set everything in the two Testaments in its proper context.

We may agree with Thomas D. Bernard, who sees in the believer’s union with Christ, the climax of God’s revelation, as he traces God’s revelation to man from the ‘piety of the patriarchs’ to the Epistles which survey the believer’s ‘standing-point’ in Christ. [Thomas D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* (American Tract Society, 1896; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978), 196-99, 224-27]

IV. Concluding Statement about the Thesis:

The Church does *not replace* Israel but *experiences* the extensions of Israel’s *covenant privileges* in order to make Israel jealous. On the basis of the deuteronomic blueprint for salvation history, we can say that the church is currently experiencing the spiritual components of the New Covenant for the purpose of the glory of God and the provocation to jealousy in Israel.