

The Church is One with Jesus

I. The church's union with Jesus

- Rom 5:12–21: You are either in Adam or in Christ. You are either part of the old, sinful humanity who is doomed to judgment (Gen 3:19), or part of the new, redeemed humanity whom God makes worthy of eternal life (Rom 5:18).
- Good news for the church! Col 1:13: God has graciously transferred us from “the domain of darkness ... to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”
 - We become one with Christ by the Holy Spirit, who gives us faith to receive Jesus (John 3:5–6; Eph 1:13; 3:17).
- Metaphors for our union with Jesus:
 - It's like a vine and branches (John 15:5); like a tree trunk with its branches (Rom 11:17–24); like a foundation and the building on top (1 Pet 2:4–5); like husband and wife (Eph 5:23–32); like head and body (Eph 4:15–16); like father and son (John 1:13) (Berkhof).
 - Our union is organic (life-giving, leading to growth), relational (loving, intimate, based on mutual knowledge), official (formal, giving status), beneficial (good things going both in directions).
- The mystery of love: “In pursuing the interests of his people, who stand in eternal union with him, God pursues his own interests. And in pursuing the interests of God, his people are pursuing their own interests, for when he is glorified, they are benefited by it” (Edwards).

II. Results of being one with Jesus

- All that Christ has is ours. We derive our identity and power from him.
 - His righteousness: we are just as holy in God's sight as Jesus! (Rom 5:18; Phil 3:9)
 - His Spirit (Rom 8:9–11): Paul says Christ is *in us* (Col 1:27).
 - His exalted status and roles as king and priest: we are co-rulers and co-worshipers with Christ (Eph 2:6; 1 Pet 2:5).
 - Even his storyline: suffering unto glory (Rom 8:17; Col 1:24).
- We are one with one another and the whole church throughout time.
 - Eph 4:4–6: one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc.
 - Heb 12:23: in worship we come “to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven ... to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.”

III. Our union won't be perfect until Jesus returns

- The already and not yet: the church is already one with Jesus in many ways, but this union is not yet perfected (Phil 3:12; Heb 2:8).
- Therefore:
 - Sin still persists in the church. Even genuine Christians struggle.
 - The church is not perfectly one. There are lots of denominations, sometimes because of confessional differences, other times because of unresolved sin.
 - Church membership includes many who are not truly saved, who are not actually one with Jesus (Matt 7:15 [wolves in sheep's clothing]; 13:24–30 [the wheat and the weeds]; Rom 9:6 [not all Israel is Israel]).
 - We are still in our old creation bodies: subject to suffering and humiliation.

- Thus there is an imperfect equivalence between what the church will be on the last day, and how it appears now. We are glorious, but we don't always appear as such yet.
- But God promises that each day brings the church closer to glory (Col 2:19).

IV. Implications and questions

- All that Christ has is ours!
 - John 17:22 (Jesus speaking to the Father): "The glory that you have given me I have given to them [his people], that they may be one even as we are one."
 - Do you think of yourself as rich, or poor?
- The church will be perfected in holiness.
 - Optimism about the church even when it really fails us.
 - Patience when the church is mediocre.
- Classic Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy say that there is no possibility of salvation outside of their communions. In contrast, many independent Christians say that they don't need to be a member of any church. What is each side missing?
- How should our union with other Christians affect how we view other Christians, especially those that are different from us?