

Belonging to Christ: Believers are Heavenly Citizens, Sons, and Heirs

1. Brief recap from last meeting; we discussed...

- We discussed several examples of deceptive and false teaching that were carefully worded to twist the scriptures towards universalism, the idea that all of humanity is saved. We also went over scriptures that show how this is not what the Bible teaches.
- We also explored the difference between being "in Adam" and being "in Christ," focusing on the full context of **1 Cor. 15:22-23 (NLT/NKJV)**. We discussed the significance of **v. 23**, particularly the phrase "*those who are Christ's at His coming*," which refers to those who belong to Christ—that is, those who are in Christ through faith. - Not all of humanity will be "Christ's at His coming"; not everyone belongs to Christ or is in Christ. Belonging to Him and being in Him (in union with Him) is a gift received through faith.
- In this study we are going to dig deeper into "*belonging to Christ*" and the "*inheritance*" that comes with this new relationship which is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Believing in Christ brings you into the kingdom of God, making you a citizen of heaven and an heir to all that God has promised in His kingdom.

2. Through faith in Christ, you belong to Christ and are now a citizen of Heaven, brought into His family as a son or daughter and are now an heir with an inheritance. First let's talk about "belonging to Christ" and "being in Christ" and how they are essentially the same thing and what this means for the believer.

a) Belonging to Christ and being in Christ:

- **1 Cor. 6:19-20 (AMP/NKJV)** - You (believer) are a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you and your body is not your own. Your body and Spirit belong to God.
- **Rom. 8:12-17 (NKJV), 8:15-17 (AMP) - Sonship through the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit produces sonship. We need to tie in the fruit of the Spirit with this as well: **Gal. 5:22-23 (NLT/AMPC)**. Here we see that the Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control and in **Rom. 8:12-17 (NKJV/AMP)** we also see that the Holy Spirit produces sonship which enables us to be heirs with an **inheritance**! Tying these two together: The Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, **and** sonship! *Believe it/walk in it.*
- **Rom. 8:1 (AMP)** "Therefore there is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior]." **(NLT)** "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." **(ESV)** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. In these three translations for example, we see "in Christ" and "belong to Christ". Belonging to Christ is the positional reality of being "in Christ". The concepts of being "in Christ" and "belonging to Christ" are theologically equivalent in Pauline theology, as they both describe the believer's union with Christ. We also see this with believers being "**sealed with the Holy Spirit**". This sealing is a mark of divine ownership (**Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30**).

- **Rom. 14:8 (NLT)** - So whether we live or die, we [believers] belong to the Lord.
- The Holy Spirit makes this “belonging to Christ” possible. When we believed in Christ we were sealed in Him with the promised Holy Spirit, thus making us His own. **Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22 (NASB/AMP)**. As mentioned above, this is the Holy Spirit producing sonship through faith in Christ. Notice how in **Rom. 8:9** it specifically says, *"But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him [and is not a child of God]."*, e.g. non-believers do not belong to God and believers do because they have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.
- At salvation we are Baptized “into Christ” **Gal. 3:26-28**, some scriptures referring to the believer as being "in Christ": **1 Pet. 5:14; Phil. 1:1; Rom. 8:1**. Believers have died, and their life is now hidden with Christ in God. **Col. 3:3**.

Note that being "in Christ" and "belong to Christ" are the same thing, describing the believer's union with Christ as noted above: the believers new positional reality.

3. If you belong to Christ [if you are in Him], then you are Abraham's descendants, and with that comes a spiritual inheritance. * If you believe in Christ, you belong to Christ and are in Him.

- **Gal. 3:28-29 (AMP)** – *"There is [now no distinction in regard to salvation] neither Jew nor Greek ...for you [who believe] are all one in Christ Jesus ...And if you belong to Christ [if you are in Him], then you are Abraham's descendants, and [spiritual heirs] according to [God's] promise."* Also read this in **(NASB/NLT)** - All [believers] are one in Christ Jesus. If you are in Christ, you belong to Him. Believers are in Christ and as a result are Abraham's descendants and **[spiritual heirs]** according to [God's] promise. God's promise to Abraham belongs to you, the believer. - **So, what was God's promise to Abraham?**

The promise, is promises (plural):

- That he would have numerous descendants (**Gen. 12:7, 13:15, 17:8**).
- He was promised the land of Canaan to his descendants (**Gen. 12:7, 13:15, 17:8**).
- That through Abraham's offspring, all nations on earth would be blessed (**Gen. 12:3, 22:18**). The blessing to all nations is understood as the offer of salvation and reconciliation with God through faith in Christ (**Rom. 3:20-25 NLT**).
- **How does this promise translate into a Spiritual Inheritance?** i.e. “[spiritual heirs]” **Gal. 3:29 (AMP)** *"And if you belong to Christ [if you are in Him], then you are Abraham's descendants, and [spiritual heirs] according to [God's] promise."*
 - **Spiritual Inheritance:** The inheritance here is eternal life, the Holy Spirit, and the kingdom of God, rather than just the land of Canaan, numerous descendants and being a blessing to the nations. This spiritual inheritance includes:
 - Righteousness received by Faith: Just as Abraham was justified by faith (**Gal.3:6-9**), so are believers through faith in Christ (**Rom. 3:20-25 NLT**).
 - The Holy Spirit received by faith: Paul associates the promise with receiving the Holy Spirit (**Gal. 3:14**).

➤ Eternal Life received by faith: The promise extends to eternal life and a place in God's eternal kingdom. Believers are "citizens of Heaven, citizens of the Kingdom" **now** and for **eternity!** **Phil. 3:20-21; Eph. 2:19; Col. 3:1-3; 1 pet. 2:11; Heb. 11:13-16.** With this citizenship comes undeserved rights & privileges. **We will dive into what these are in future studies.*

- **Now**: Abundant life here on earth as it is in Heaven in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, experiencing His kingdom and His presence while we are here on earth. We are also in Him in Heavenly places. **Eph. 2:4-6 (AMP)** *"...He raised us up together with Him [when we believed], and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, [because we are] in Christ Jesus"* <- This is Paul speaking to believers. This is where we (believers) are now in Christ. We need to believe this and walk in this truth daily.
- **Eternity**: Having a confident hope of an eternal, heavenly dwelling rather than an earthly one. Living forever in the presence of the Lord. **Ps. 16:11, 23:6, 1 Thes. 4:17, Rev. 21:3-4, 22:3-5, Jn. 14:2-3** - These scriptures collectively paint a picture of eternal life characterized by joy, peace, and an everlasting communion with God, where believers are in His presence continuously.

4. With all this talk of being heirs, we must talk about becoming a child of God through faith and what this means for the believer.

a) **Becoming a child of God through faith.**

- Faith is the entry point: Believing in Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior, and accepting His sacrifice for sin is foundational. This faith is not just intellectual, but involves repentance, trust, commitment, and surrender to Christ's lordship. - **Jn. 1:12-13 (ESV)** *"But to all who did **receive him**, who **believed in his name**, he **gave the right to become children of God**, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God".* Born Again, we become a child of God through faith in Christ.

b) **What this means for the believer.**

- Adoption into God's Family: **Spiritual adoption: Rom. 8:14-17 (NLT/AMP)** speaks of this adoption where believers receive the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." This points to being a citizen of Heaven mentioned above. *"For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."*
- Sonship/Heirship: With this adoption comes the status of being co-heirs with Christ, sharing in His inheritance, which includes righteousness, the Holy Spirit and eternal life all received by faith.
- Transformation and New Identity:
 - **Born Again**: The process of becoming a child of God involves a spiritual rebirth. Born again to new life. A transformation into a new creation. **1 Pet. 1:3, 23; 2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 1:12-13.** This new identity is not based on one's past or works, but on being part of God's family through faith in Christ. **Jn. 20:31 (AMP)** *"but these have been written so that you may believe [with a deep, abiding trust] that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the Son of God; and that by believing [and trusting in and relying on Him] you may have life in His name."* The life referred to here is everlasting life."

- Implications of Being Children of God:
 - **Access to God:** As children of God, believers have direct access to God, an intimate relationship where we can *“...come boldly to the throne of our gracious God and there we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” (Heb. 4:16 NLT).*
 - **Transformation:** The identity as God's children leads to a life that increasingly reflects the character of God, emphasizing love, holiness, and the fruit of the Spirit as well as learning to live as a son with an inheritance. Believing it and walking in it! As we allow the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit in our lives we become more like Him.

Homework: Read all of **Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22 (NLT/NASB/AMP)** which talk about how a believer is sealed with the promised Holy Spirit “at the moment of salvation” and then read **Rom. 8:9** “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him [and is not a child of God].”

While reading through these passages not how **Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22** and **Rom. 8:9** are connected and keep in mind that the sealing of the Holy Spirit is a mark of divine ownership.