

In Christ:

What is it?

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By C. E. S.

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In Christ—What is it?

WE read in the gospel of Mark (ix. 41) —“Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because (or) by reason that ye belong to Christ (*literally*, are Christ's), verily I say unto you he shall not lose his reward.” There would be a class of people on earth known as Christ's—*i.e.*, those belonging to Him. A wonderfully blessed company must that be! For such a term speaks not of pretension on the part of those thus described to be Christ's. It speaks rather of His grace, who will own them as such, and the first one who thus describes them, is He to whom they belong. He calls them His. Evidently it is but a class, yet a known class; for others will minister to them on that ground. All on earth, we must remember, are Christ's by purchase. He has bought the field (Matt. xiii. 44). They are His property. Of this Peter (2

Pet. ii. 1), and Jude (4) remind us ; the former writing of those who would deny the Lord, or despot, who bought them ; and the latter, telling us who that Lord, or despot is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Purchased by His death all are, so all are responsible to serve Him, whether they wish it or not ; but purchase, whilst it speaks of ownership, and the rights of the owner, conveys no thought of privilege bestowed thereby on the subjects of that purchase.

Christ's, however, speaks of privilege, and of blessing, in which those so described have each and all a part. How, then, it may be asked, is this brought about ? Let Him, who first described His people as His own, open out to us something about it. They are His by gift—the gift of His Father to Him. Of this, as was proper, He has spoken—"All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). Precious indeed are they to the Lord. The Father's gift to Him, they must be precious.

Carefully, securely will He keep them. Death will not rob Him of that gift (vi. 39), nor can any power on earth, or elsewhere, pluck them out of His hand (x. 28, 29). Meanwhile, since His rejection by the world, and absence from earth, He has, as it were, handed them who are upon earth over to the safekeeping of His Father (xvii. 9-11); and has asked, and His request cannot but be granted, that such shall be with Him where He is, beholding the glory given Him of His Father (24). So far do the gospel take us.

Turning to the epistles, we learn that all true Christians are Christ's (1 Cor. iii. 23; 2 Cor. x. 7). All such are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise (Gal. iii. 29). All such, too, who die, will be raised at Christ's coming for His saints (1 Cor. xv. 23). What privileges and blessings will they share in! Here, for a time perhaps they are looked down on, and treatment meted out to them similar to that experienced by the Master. In the day of His coming for His own, however, He will remember them; He

will come for them. Many—how many—have lived, and died unknown beyond a limited circle of human acquaintances. Many, too, well known in their day, have died, and the place of their sepulchre is now unknown, and their very names have dropped out of remembrance, or have been cut out of human records by press of more recent matter. To Him, however, they are still His. His interest in them is unabated. Christ's they were when they were on earth; Christ's they are, though their dust may be unrecognised by men. Christ's they are, and ever will be; and by and by that will be gloriously displayed. He comes for His own. They that are Christ's shall rise at His coming.

Success in life is an object before men. To attain it, what efforts will some make? To make a name; to build up a fortune; to have the world's applause; to wield power; to possess great influence; these are the prizes after which multitudes have eagerly striven;

yet, comparatively speaking, how few have grasped them. What will all such things be thought of in the coming day, when they that are Christ's will be the objects of His special attention? He comes for *them*, to call *them* to be with Him. He will come *then* for no others. For a class, for a company, He comes, and His voice will at that time call forth from the tomb those only who are His. How will all mere earthly objects, for which men have toiled, and have lost rest and health in pursuit of, sink into utter insignificance! The one thing prized in that day will be to have been Christ's when on earth.

They are His, we have said; the Father's gift to Him; all such come to Him, He tells us. A work of grace, then, is needed in each one to bring such to Him, and thus to manifest the individuals of that company, which make up the Father's gift to the Son. Divine grace must work in them, and the Spirit of Christ they must possess to be His, for the word is definite,

“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His,” *i.e.*, is not Christ’s (Rom. viii. 9). To be born again is one thing, to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, is another. Both are needed for any one to say in Christian times, he is Christ’s, *i.e.*, belongs to Him.

Now, there were three ways in which the saints in early days received that gift. Some as at Pentecost (Acts ii.) and, subsequently, Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (x.) received it, when the Spirit was poured out on them. Some received it by the laying on of the hands of apostles, as in Samaria (viii.), and at Ephesus (xix.) To others God gave it when they believed the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation (Eph. i. 13), which involved forgiveness of sins in Christ’s name. Were the gift of the Spirit, which is needful for any one to be Christ’s, only bestowed by an out-pouring of the Holy Ghost, we could never hope for it, for there will not be a fresh out-pouring of the Spirit in this dispensation. Were it contingent on apostolic hands being laid

on us, we should be shut out from it for ever; for there are no Apostles upon earth. But communicated, as it can be, by God (and was in apostolic days even) to those who believe on Christ, having heard the gospel of their salvation, all such do share in this gift, and so come to be Christ's by having His Spirit. In this way the Ephesian saints had received the gift of the Spirit. In the same way had the Galatian saints also (Gal. iii. 2). And Peter, in Acts v. 32, tells the rulers of the Jews that God gave that gift to them that obeyed Him. Peter himself had received it at Pentecost. Subsequently, many others received it on believing. The way it was commonly received then is the way it is received now, viz., by the hearing of faith (Gal. iii. 2).

But the hearing of faith supposes a testimony. What is that testimony? The gospel of your salvation, says Paul (Ephes. i. 13). What is included in that? Forgiveness of sins, teaches Peter. Of that he spoke on the day of Pentecost, when he told those pricked to the heart

what they should do. "Repent, and be baptised; every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 38, 39). Remission of sins he preached in Acts x. 43, for everyone who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; and, whilst he was speaking (xi. 15) the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word (x. 44). They then and there received the Holy Ghost (xi. 17).

Is baptism with water, then, a necessary prelude to the receiving of this gift? No. For, though those who had been Jews were commanded to be baptised ere they received it, the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius received it whilst unbaptised. What, then, is necessary, ere one born of God can receive it? The knowledge of forgiveness of sins through the blood

of Christ. Peter preached that. Cornelius and his friends believed it. And God, without delaying one moment, gave to them the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is important to mark this, and, surely, for labourers in the Word to work in accordance with it.

A saint, then, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of his salvation, receives the Spirit, and is, thereby, what Scripture calls sealed. God has put His mark—His seal upon him, the seal being the gift of the Spirit. Such an one, henceforth, belongs to Christ. He is Christ's; and, if Christ's, Christ is in him. And of him it can also be said that he is in Christ (Rom. viii. 1, 9, 10). For, to be Christ's, *i.e.* belonging to Christ, is to be in Christ. In proof of this the reader is turned to Gal. iii. 28, 29, where the two terms are connected. We quote the passage:—"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor fe-

male; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And, if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Belonging to Christ, they are in Christ. This is confirmed as we compare 1 Cor. xv. 23 with 1 Thess. iv. 16. The sleeping saints, described in the former passage as "Christ's," are spoken of in the latter as the "dead in Christ."

To be Christ's, then, belonging to Him, is to be in Him. By the former expression, attention is drawn to whom it is that the saints belong. By the latter we are reminded of the race, and of the Head of that race, with which all believers are associated. Now, both these terms, "Christ's" and "in Christ," speak of believers as individuals, and not in their corporate capacity. As to this latter, all on earth who are in Christ are also members of the Body of Christ. Membership, however, of the Body, and the being in Christ, are two very distinct lines of truth. The Body of Christ *now* is always

viewed as being on earth, whereas, those in Christ can even now be spoken of as in the heavnlies in Him (Ephes. ii. 6). And, whilst the body of Christ is restricted to those who form the Assembly, or Church of God (Ephes. i. 22-23 ; Colossians i. 24), it will be found, in a coming day, that those "in Christ" include all the saints of God who will be called forth from the tomb.

For there are just two heads of races recognised in God's Word, under the one or other of which all men will be classed. Those heads are Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ, the former called the first man, the latter termed the second man, and the last Adam (1 Cor. xv. 45-47). And, as all of us are but too painfully aware, the race connected with Adam is liable to the consequences of his one act of disobedience, and partakes of the condition of the head; so is it with the race connected with the second man—the Lord Jesus Christ. This will be found true as regards the body, and in other ways as well. As to the body, the

first man was of the earth, earthy, so all of us are, as regards our bodies, earthy, or made of dust. The second man is heavenly, and all ranged under His headship will be heavenly by-and-by. For as now we bear the image of the earthy, each saint in heaven will bear the image of the heavenly when the change takes place (1 Cor. xv. 51; Phil. iii. 21). But in other ways as well is there a correspondence between the head and the race connected with it, for which the reader is directed to Rom. v. 12-18. Into that we need not here enter further, but turn to answer the question at the beginning of this paper—What is it to be in Christ?

1. To be in Christ is new creation (2 Cor. v. 17). Such are part of a spiritual race, as all in Adam are part of a natural race. A new creation it is termed, because nothing like it ever before existed. It is perfectly new in kind. Moreover, it is needful for us in order to be fruitful for God, for we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before

ordained that we should walk in them (Ephes. ii. 10). Before this truth the question of circumcision drops into utter insignificance. "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation" (Gal. vi. 15).

2. To be in Christ, manifests that each one, of whom that is true, was chosen in Him by God before the foundation of the world (Ephes. i. 4).

3. To be in Christ, assures us that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him (Ephes. i. 3.)

4. To be in Christ, assures us of being by-and-by in person in heaven, who are now seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Ephes. ii. 6).

5. To be in Christ, assures us of no condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). All question of divine judgment has been settled for God's saints. The Lord is beyond it. For them in Him there can be none.

6. To be in Christ, reminds us that God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become God's

righteousness in Him (2 Cor. v. 21). For the display of this we wait till the heavens shall declare God's righteousness, as the Psalms had announced (Ps. l. 6 ; xcvi. 6).

7. To be in Christ, reminds those formerly Gentiles, and, as such, far off, that they have been made nigh by His blood (Ephes. ii. 13), and share in all the privileges enumerated in the end of that chapter (18-22).

8. To be in Christ, reminds us also that His condition as regards sin and the world is ours. He has died to sin, and the law. We, as now in Him, died with Him to sin, the law, and the world, and are to reckon ourselves dead, indeed, unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Rom. vi. 11). And as for the world, to remember that we are risen with Him (Col. iii. 1), because in Him. What was then true of Him, when He died and rose, is true of us with Him (Col. ii. 20), because we are now in Him.

Thus we can give an answer, in some measure, to the question, What is it to be in Christ ?
