

MADE LIKE JESUS THROUGH UNION

- A. Introduction: We have been discussing the fact that Jesus came to earth to establish the kingdom or reign of God in men and through men on this earth (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15). There are many aspects to the kingdom of God. There is a place in the unseen realm called the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus will come again to establish the visible kingdom of God on earth. Kingdom also refers to the reign of God in men through new birth. This has been our focus in the last few lessons and is in this lesson (Luke 17:20,21).
1. God created human beings to become sons and daughters with whom He can dwell. He made earth to be home for His family. It was God's intention from the beginning that men and women receive His uncreated life (something in His being and nature) into themselves. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18; Gen 2:9
    - a. The entrance of this life into man's spirit would produce transformation. God's creatures would become His actual sons by partaking of His life. God and man would be united through life and He could then express Himself in and through them and reign in and through them on earth.
      1. God's original plan was been damaged by sin. Through sin, death invaded and affected God's creation. Death has reigned or ruled in man and earth since man fell. Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23
      2. Because of Adam's sin men and women are now born into a fallen race with a sin nature (or death) in us and we are subject to sickness, old age and death. Rom 5:19; Eph 2:1-3; etc.
    - b. The root problem in this world is death. Every problem and ill in the world is a manifestation or expression of death or separation from God who is life.
      1. Physical death is only one of many forms death takes in this world. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 lists the consequences or curse of sin. Here we find every ill that plagues this world.
      2. Rom 8:6--The mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death —**death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter** (Amp).
  2. The remedy for death is life. Jesus came to earth and went to the Cross to bring life to men. John 10:10
    - a. This verse has been misinterpreted to mean that Jesus died to give us a better life in this life. Although you will have a better life in this life if you serve Jesus, that's not why He died.
    - b. Jesus died to establish the reign of eternal life in men and through men on this earth. Eternal life is not live forever life. It is the life of God, the uncreated life in God. John 1:4; 5:26; 14:6
      1. When we believe on Jesus we are united to (or receive into our spirit) the uncreated life in God. John 3:16--"Believe in" has the idea of "believe into" in the Greek. We are united to (become partakers of) the life in Jesus as truly as a branch is joined to a vine (John 15:5).
        2. When a person believes on Jesus his sins are wiped out and he receives eternal life. His spirit is regenerated and He is born of God or literally born from above. Something from the unseen realm of Heaven comes into our innermost being. John 3:3,5; Titus 3:5
        3. I John 5:11--And this testimony is that God has given us eternal life and this life is given through union with His son. (Williams)
    - c. Salvation is about restoring every part of both mankind and the earth to full function by the uncreated life in God made available to us through the Cross and the new birth.
      1. Rom 5:10--For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, it is much more [certain], now that we are reconciled, that we shall be saved [daily delivered from sin's dominion] through His [resurrection] life. (Amp)
      2. I Cor 15:22--For just as [because of union of nature] in Adam all people die, so also [by virtue of their union of nature] shall all in Christ be made alive. (Amp)
    - d. Rom 5:17--For if, because of one man's trespass (lapse, offense) death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive [God's] overflowing grace (unmerited favor) and the free gift of righteousness (putting them into right standing with Himself) reign as kings in life through the One, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. (Amp)
      1. Reign is a form of the same word translated kingdom. It means to reign over, to possess and exercise dominion, to prevail.

2. Webster's Dictionary says: To reign means to possess or exercise power or rule; to exercise or hold sway in the manner of a monarch. Dominion is authority. Authority is the right to give a command and the power to enforce obedience. (lessons for another day)
- e. Healing is God by His life reigning in our body. Peace is God by His life reigning in our mind and emotions. Holy living is God by His life reigning in our flesh.

3. Jesus shows us what this looks like in a fallen world. He shows us how sons of God can live in this damaged world when the kingdom reigns in them and through them as it did with Him. I John 2:6
  - a. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God. While on earth He did not live as God, He lived as a man in union with the life of His Father in Him. John 5:26; Acts 10:38; John 14:10; etc.
  - b. John 16:33--As a man, Jesus encountered the trials and tribulations of life. But in every circumstance He had wisdom to deal with what came His way. He had peace and provision when He needed it. He had power to set men and women free wherever He went. He changed what could be changed and went through what couldn't be changed in victory (and He knew which was which--lessons for another day).

B. Christianity is transformational and supernatural. Sinners are transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God by receiving His uncreated life—and Jesus is the pattern for the family. Rom 8:29

1. Before He formed the earth God planned that we would be conformed to the image of Christ. Conformed (SUMMORPHOS) means having the same form as another.
  - a. For those whom he foreknew—of whom He was aware and loved beforehand—he also destined from the beginning (foreordaining them) to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness] that He might be the first-born among many brethren. (Amp).
    1. God transforms us from the inside out. His life comes into our spirit at the new birth initiating a process of transformation that will ultimately make us like Jesus in every part of our being. (More on that in a moment.)
    2. This word (SUMMORPHOS) is used one other time in scripture to describe what will happen to our bodies at the return of Jesus. They will be made alive with the uncreated, eternal life of God, made like Jesus' resurrection body, beyond the touch of corruption and death. Phil 3:21
  - b. We don't become Jesus. We become the person God created us to be—born of Him, fully free from every trace of sin, corruption and death in every part of our being and fully glorifying to Him in everything we think, say or do.
2. Rom 8:30 delineates the process by which God makes sons and daughters like Jesus: He calls us, justifies us, and glorifies us.
  - a. God calls or invites us to our destiny. A plan has existed since before we were born, a plan that has been unfolding since man fell in the Garden of Eden, a plan that will be completed.
  - b. God justifies us. To be justified means to be made just as if you never sinned. Through the Cross of Christ God satisfied Divine Justice in regard to our sin.
    1. When we put faith in Christ and His sacrifice our sins are remitted (wiped out) and God justifies or acquits us. When one is acquitted, all charges are dropped because of lack of evidence of wrongdoing.
    2. Col 2:14--He has utterly wiped out the written evidence of broken commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it to the Cross.

(Phillips)

- c. To be glorified means to be made alive with the life of God in every part of our being—human nature alive with God.
3. When we acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord we are born of God—the uncreated eternal life of God comes into our spirit. Our mind and body are not directly affected. But it is God's desire that those inward changes show up outwardly and affect our mind, emotions, and body.
  - a. Paul told Christians who had already undergone tremendous change through new birth that they

must undergo a further transformation through the renewing of their mind. Rom 12:2

1. Transformed is METAMORPHOO which means to change into another form. (META, change; MORPHE, form).

2. The word is used for what happened to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:2).

What was on the inside of Him showed up on the outside. As our mind is renewed, what is on the inside of us shows up on the outside.

b. To renew your mind means to change your perception of reality, to begin to see things the way they really are according to God. When you see things as God sees them and then agree with Him, you begin to experience the way things really are. (lessons for another day)

4. This is reality: You are now a son of God by birth. Your inward being has undergone a tremendous transformation. This change in your spirit gives you entrance to and access to the kingdom of God and brings the reign of God, the reign of life, the kingdom, into you.

a. You now have something in you (in your spirit) that was not there before you were born of God: God, by His life, is in you to work in and through you to produce change in you and free you from every trace of death in every part of your being.

b. The condition of your spirit is the basis of your identity. You were dead, now you are alive. You were unrighteous, now you are righteous. You were unholy, now you are holy. You were a sinner, now you are a son. Whatever is in that life is in you because that life is in you. Rom 5:19; Eph

2:5; II Cor 5:21; I Cor 1:30; etc.

c. The changed part of you is bigger than the unchanged part of you. Your spirit fills your body, every cell. Luke 16:19-31; James 2:26

d. You are a finished work in progress: fully God's son or daughter but not yet fully conformed to the image of Jesus in every part of your being. I John 3:2

1. God deals with you on the basis of the part that is finished because He knows the process of transformation will be completed. Col 1:27--Christ in you, the hope of your glorification.

(Williams)

2. Our union with the life in Jesus is our basis of confident expectation that He who has begun a good work in us will complete it. The changed part of us (the life in our spirit) will ultimately transform and change every part of us fully conforming us to the image of Jesus. Phil 1:6

C. The plan of God is unfolding: God is making sons like Jesus. We must understand the plan and our part in it as well as how to cooperate with God as He works.

1. It is God's desire that the inward changes show up on the outside (in our flesh) so that we accurately reflect Jesus to the world around us. Our flesh includes the unchanged parts of us (mind, emotions, body), the parts not directly affected by the new birth.

a. God imparts life to our flesh, Christlikeness is formed in our flesh, as we read and feed on His written Word. II Cor 3:18--The word changed is METAMORPHOO

b. I John 3:2 says that when we see Jesus (at His Second Coming) the process of conformity to His image will be completed. But note the principle: We are changed as we behold Him. Seeing Him transforms us. Right now, we can see the Living Word through His written Word, the Bible.

2. We talked much about Paul in these last few lessons because to him was given the revelation of the believer's union with Christ through shared life. Note some other points he made. Col 1:25-29

a. v28--Paul said that he and his fellow ministers preached or proclaimed Jesus, admonishing and teaching men and women. Here's why they did it: To present every man perfect in Christ.

1. Perfect comes from a word that means an end, a goal, a purpose. Perfect means finished, that which has reached its end, hence complete, full, lacking nothing.

2. Complete in Christ (Rotherham); full grown (Conybeare); perfected by union with (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); mature through union with Christ (Williams).

b. Paul understood the plan and purpose of God: To make men and women into sons and daughters

like Jesus in character and power. That's the point: that we would know Him and show Him to the world around us.

1. Eph 4:11-13--Paul wrote that God has given ministry gifts to the church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) to perfect (different word that used in Colossians) or completely furnish: in order to fully equip His people for the work of serving (Weymouth).

2. Ministry gifts are to build up the body till we grow to full knowledge of Jesus. v13--And reach mature manhood, and that full measure of development found in Christ (Goodspeed)

3. Ministers accomplish this as Paul did: by proclaiming Jesus, by admonishing and teaching what He has done and is doing. The Living Word is revealed in the written Word.

3. Paul was concerned about the Galatians. He had led them to Christ, but they were being influenced by Judaizers -- Jews who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, but maintained that Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved.

a. These wrong teachings were keeping Christ from being formed in them. Gal 4:19--till a likeness of Christ shall have been formed in you (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); until you take the shape of Christ (NEB)

b. Formed is MORPHOO from MORPHE (form, shape, to form, to fashion). It is used here to describe Christians as little children need to mature until their character and conduct display the very image of Christ.

D. Conclusion: God makes us sons like Jesus by uniting us to, filling us with, the life in Jesus. The remedy for death in every part of our being is life.

1. As we said above, God imparts life to our flesh, Christlikeness is formed in our flesh, as we read and feed on His written Word. II Cor 3:18

a. John 6:63--All the words through which I have offered myself to you are meant to be channels of the spirit and of life to you, since in believing those words you would be brought into contact with the life in me (Riggs Paraphrase).

1. If we want Christ to be formed in our flesh we must become regular, systematic readers of the New Testament

2. Read 15-20 minutes a day. Don't skip around. Just keep reading. Don't look up all the words you don't understand. Read each book or epistle from start to finish. Understanding comes with familiarity.

b. At other times throughout your day, make yourself think about the things we are discussing. Meditate on (go over and over in your mind) some of these specific verses we are referencing.

2. We have uncreated life (and power) in us. It is activated by faith or believing (lessons for another day).

a. Faith is based on how you see God and how you see yourself in relation to Him. If you will spend time reading and meditating on His Word your view of reality will change.

b. You will see God as He truly is and yourself as you truly are in relation to Him. You can't believe what you don't know. More next week!