

# A SYSTEMATIC SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF UNION WITH CHRIST

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## Background

We were “separate from Christ,” not joined to him and his saving benefits. Therefore, we were “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). By implication the background for union with Christ is being outside of Christ (Phil 8:8-9).

## ASPECTS OF CHRIST SAVING WORK TO WHICH BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN JOINED

1. His death (Rom 6:2-6, 8; Col 2:20)
2. His burial (Rom 6:4)
3. His resurrection (Eph 2:5-6; Rom 6:4, 5, 8, 11; Col 3:1)
4. His ascension (Col 3:3; by implication Eph 2:6)
5. His session (Eph 2:6)
6. His second coming (Col 3:4)

## OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE APPLICATION OF SALVATION RELATED TO UNION WITH CHRIST

1. Regeneration: God made us alive in the Union with Christ when we were spiritually dead (Eph 2:5); God brings about the new creation in union with Christ (Eph 2:10).
2. Justification (Phil 3:9)

## THE TIMING OF UNION WITH CHRIST

1. God chose us before creation in prospect of uniting us to Christ (Eph 1:4, 11).
2. We are joined to the son of God at the time of our regeneration (Eph 2:5), our conversion (Eph 1:13), our baptism (Rom 6:4).
3. Union with Christ will be completed only in the *eschaton* (Eph 1:9). In the future God will demonstrate the greatness of his grace toward us in union with Christ (Eph 2:7). We will be raised from the dead because he because of union with Christ (Rom 6:5; Phil 3:10-11).

## RESULTS OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST

1. We get all of God’s spiritual blessings (Eph 2:10).
2. God lavished his grace upon us (Eph 1:6).
3. Redemption (Eph 1:7).
4. Sealing with the Spirit (Eph 1:13).
5. Sanctification (Rom 6; Col 2-3).
6. Death and resurrection (Phil 3:10-11).
7. Union with other Christians (Jn 17:21-23).

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIANS AS A RESULT OF UNION WITH CHRIST

1. We are to do good works (Eph 2:10).
2. We are to praise the Trinity (Eph 1).
3. We are to stop sinning (Rom 6:2, 6, 11, 12-14) and please God (Rom 6:4, 11, 13).
4. We are to shun asceticism (Col 2:20-23).
5. We are to live for eternal values (Col 3:1-4).
6. We are to suffer for Christ (Phil 3:10).
7. We can experience Christ’s resurrection power (Phil 3:10).
8. We are to live in unity with other Christians (Jn 17:21-23).

## DESCRIPTION OF UNION WITH CHRIST

It is a personal relationship between Christ and the believer, and between the believer and Christ, based upon Jesus’s death and resurrection (Jn 14:20-21, 23; 17:20-23, 36).

I agree with H. Ridderboss (Paul. On Outline of His Theology, p. 59) that union with Christ “does not have the sense of a communion that becomes reality only in certain sublime moments, but rather to an abiding reality determinative for the whole of the Christian life, to which appeal can be made at all times, in all sorts of connections, and with respect to the whole church without distinction. Rather than with certain experiences, we have to do here with the church’s “objective” state of salvation.”

... Paul is not teaching a mysticism whereby the distinction between believers and Christ is obliterated. We do not become Christ; we are not merged into his being. We are finite sinners; he is the glorious risen Son of God. The church is joined to him spiritually so that his saving work is applied to her. Union with Christ uses local language to express a relational concept. We belong to Christ and he to us. His salvation is made over to us; all the fruits of his saving work become ours. There’s a spiritual bond between us that will last forever.