



## Jesus' Completeness Becomes Ours

*And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:10-15)*

We cannot logically get to our completeness in Jesus that this passage reveals apart from Verse 9. All that we are before God and all that we have from God grows out of His full deity and His full humanity, including a literal, physical human body. Paul begins our lesson with "And...." What he writes in these verses logically associates with what he wrote in the previous verse.

What constitutes this completeness that we enjoy in the Lord Jesus Christ?

1. We are circumcised, but our circumcision is "...made without hands."
2. Our "made without hands" circumcision puts off the whole body of the sins of the flesh. Paul does not say that our spiritual standing in Christ eradicates our physical human body. We still possess a physical body, but the work of Christ in us puts off all of our sins; past, present, and future, so much so that Paul wraps all of those sins up and refers to them collectively as a "body of the sins of the flesh." We retain a sinful nature, though God's law, written in our hearts and minds, alters our moral outlook and conduct. Paul's point here deals more with our legal standing before God because of what Jesus did for us than it deals with our experience in grace. In this legal setting, Jesus has fully put off our sins and bestowed His righteousness upon us.
3. This circumcision occurs "...by the circumcision of Christ." This does not suggest that His literal circumcision at the end of the first week of His life on earth constituted a literal saving act. Clearly, Paul uses circumcision here in a comparative sense. Whether referring to our "made without hands" circumcision or to Jesus' circumcision, Paul uses

circumcision as an analogy of God's spiritual work in us.

4. We are further "...buried with him in baptism..." an act every bit as analogical as Paul's use of circumcision. He is not referring here to our personal baptism in water, for that baptism does not accomplish the results that Paul here attributes to this baptism. Aside from the doctrinal issues of the passage, this verse eradicates the idea of sprinkling as the New Testament mode of baptism. In sprinkling no burial occurs, and no rising occurs. New Testament baptism requires both, a symbolic act that is only exhibited by immersion of the individual in water and raising that person out of the water.
5. As surely as we were buried with Jesus in baptism, we are also "...risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead." In the experience of water baptism, a certain number of believers who experience water baptism do not arise from their baptism and live the remainder of their lives according to New Testament "resurrection ethics."

If we follow our own imagination, we can assign any meaning we wish to these symbols. However, if we follow the governing authority of Scripture, we will look for Paul's explanation of the symbols of circumcision and baptism. Logically we would expect him to follow his use of the analogies immediately with an explanation, and he does precisely that.

1. We were "...dead..." in our sins and in "...the uncircumcision..." of our flesh.
2. Jesus has now "...quickened..." us, made us alive, "...together with him..." an act

that must occur simultaneously with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the required point of "together with him." Paul is not here referring to the moment of our personal regeneration or new birth, but to the collective moment when all of God's elect were associated with Jesus as He suffered for our sins and thereby accomplished our full and eternal release from sin, including His victorious resurrection.

3. The consequences of this act of Jesus results in the "...blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances that was against us..." contrary to us.
4. By this act, Jesus has forgiven us all sins we ever committed or shall ever commit. Sins, trespasses; the terms cover any form of sin we ever commit. Through Him they are all forgiven, blotted out, nailed to His cross forever.
5. This blotting out did not simply "paint over" those contrary ordinances. He took them away, "...nailing them to his cross." As circumcision requires a cutting of the physical body, the work of Christ "cut" away all of our sins and nailed them to His cross.
6. In the end, even in the moment that carnal men regarded Him as finally defeated and dead, He won the victory over sin and over all our enemies. We are the final and ultimate victors through Him and through His finished work.
7. Our eternal salvation covers salvation from things: from our own sins, mental or acted out, real or imagined.
8. Our eternal salvation also saves us from personal beings and powers, all openly hostile to God and to us, "...principalities and powers."
9. Instead of shrinking back in defeat, by God's amazing grace, Jesus arose from the dead, raised a number of individuals, a mysterious passage, but a simple statement of a profound fact. (Matthew 27:52-53) In this resurrection, altogether literal, physical, and bodily, our Lord lead a victory march, a "triumph" to announce His resurrection victory over His--and our--sins and enemies. We are the victors, marching with Him in this celebration.

In these verses we see both the presentation of two analogies, circumcision and baptism, as well as Paul's explanation of those analogies, especially as they communicate the full success of Jesus' death and resurrection for our sins.

When I attended college in the early nineteen sixties, the heart of existential philosophy's era, all of my literature and philosophy teachers continually asked, "What does this mean to you?" as they directed our study of various writers and philosophers. This question always shut down my thinking processes. ***It was the wrong question.*** I often pondered how frustrated these writers would have been had they known how twentieth century college instructors would so wholly ignore their thoughts and purpose in their writings. If I had ever found an instructor who asked the right question, "What did this mean to the author? What was the author's intent in this writing?" I would have jumped for joy. I would also have studied harder than ever to answer the questions. By introducing these two analogies to our minds, and they by explaining their powerful content to us, Paul quite clearly tells us his, and the Holy Spirit's intent. Only by becoming a literal human being with a literal, physical, material body could Jesus accomplish all these things on our behalf. And in the process of affirming these foundational truths of Scripture and of God, Paul both comforts and strengthens the Colossians, as he refutes the whole shaky foundations of Gnostic error that had invaded the Colossian church.

How could a non-human, bodiless spirit being become a substitute for material, physical human beings? He couldn't. How could we material, physical human beings rise with Him "...through the faith of the operation of God..." if He didn't possess a physical body just as we possess such a body? He couldn't. Thus in reality, Gnosticism presents a savior who cannot save, a god who cannot be known or approached, and a salvation that cannot save a single sinner.

As we contemplate the victory that Jesus accomplished and gave to us, we being "...together with him..." in both His death and in His resurrection, we discover the joy of intimate fellowship and intricate knowledge of our God and Savior. In First John the beloved apostle also confronts later Gnosticism. Notice how John urges his readers to that same intimate fellowship with him and with God, as well as he seeks to aid them to greater joy in God. (1 John 1:1-4) As Paul affirms the truth of Jesus' literal, physical body here, John becomes more direct, characterizing anyone who denies Jesus' literal, physical human body as being "antichrist." These are important truths that command our attention.

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor