



Happy Sabbath to everyone!

This is the first in a new series of Bible studies after a rather extended break. Our Father, as always, has been pouring His grace and wisdom on His Church continually, but we know that while He does not change, the needs of His people do from time to time, and circumstantially; and so, there are times when new voices should speak, and the work of edifying the Church should be shared among the brethren. For the past couple of years, we have taken a collective approach to sharing the Scriptures, and I rejoice in that the Spirit has the opportunity to communicate with us through various agents.

Studies like the one we are having today are not intended to change that, and most weeks we will continue to continue as we have been, but there is also space for an approach that takes a focused and pre-examined look at some verse or concept that contains blessings revealed by examination.

In this study, which is called “Identical With Christ,” I want to begin in a rather unusual way. In most of my former studies, I would avoid quoting from the Spirit of Prophecy writings in order to make the ideas that I share accessible to anyone who reads and appreciates the Scriptures, whether they are Adventist or not, and I think that is still the best policy in general; however, there are times when she – as an inspired writer – states something so eloquently, so beautifully, that it’s worth sharing.

There has been one phrase from her body of work that has often come to my mind since I first heard it. In various circumstances, at different times, this concept, “Identical with Christ,” kept popping up. I don’t think I have ever discussed it openly before, but I heard it for the first time when the concept of victory over sin was first explained to me – many years ago at this point. Since then, it’s been mentioned. It’s been stated from time to time; however, until now, I don’t think we’ve looked at it in context, and the manner in which the Scriptures reveal the exact same truth, a vital truth for every Christian, especially in these final days. The idea that we can be, and really, that we *must* be, identical with the Son of Yahweh is the First Angel’s Message in truth, and the power of the Gospel unto the salvation of those who receive it.

The work of redemption, which is applied to us when we accept Yahshua as our Savior and Lord, makes us identical with the One who saves us. Now, who would be so bold as to say such a thing? Who would be so arrogant as to claim this, when the Scriptures tell us that Christ did not consider it robbery to be equal

with the Father? The verse reads, of Yahshua, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” (Phil 2:6) Shall we, then, being in the form of men, and created lower than the angels, claim to be identical with Him?

This will not be a complicated study. The answer is, and must be, “Yes.” It must be “Yes,” or we are none of His. Consider the context of the statement from Mrs. White: “‘All ye are brethren.’ (Matthew 23:8) As brethren we are identified with Christ and with one another. As brethren we are *identical with Christ*, and through His grace identical with one another. And as we wash the feet of Christ’s followers, it is as though we were indeed touching the Son of God. We do this act because Christ told us to do it, and Christ Himself is among us. His Holy Spirit does the work of uniting our hearts. To become one with Christ requires self-denial and self-sacrifice at every step. The performance of the ordinance of humility calls for self-examination. The noble principles of the soul are strengthened on every such occasion. Christ lives in us, and this draws heart to heart. We are led to love as brethren, to be kind, tender, courteous in daily service, having hearts that can feel another’s woe.” [*Letters and Manuscripts, Vol. 14, Letter 210, emphasis added*]

In future studies, I want to touch on the result of this in-dwelling of Christ. Three elements, three fruit of the Spirit, are mentioned here – Kindness, Tenderness, and Courtesy. Each deserves its own examination. But today, we are looking at the overall picture being presented by the passage. The inspired writer is speaking here about the communion and its associated activities – foot-washing in particular as an “ordinance of humility.” This is a significant phrase for CSDAs, who understand the intent of the New Moon, which we are observing this month tomorrow. Foot washing and New Moons are closely connected in spiritual principles. Both require self-examination and self-sacrifice to cast ourselves as servants of others – one literally, for a time, and the other spiritually, on a continuous basis. That they require examination and sacrifice does not mean that they are difficult. As John tells us, “His commandments are not grievous.” (1John 5:3) when they are undertaken in agape-love.

But even if they were... even if obedience was “difficult” for the new creature, ceasing from sin is impossible for the carnal man, and yet any man, though born carnal, ceases from sin at the invitation of the One who has come to destroy the work of the Enemy. And if we, through Christ, do the impossible, is it not natural that we should do the difficult as well? Nothing is too hard for our Father, (Jer 32:17) and we are like Him because of Yahshua.

For the heart that beats with the divine love, serving others is not grievous.

The apostle Peter struggled with this throughout the days leading up to the crucifixion. In fact, the idea of Yahshua washing his feet was repellent to him. This was the Man who had led him for years, teaching words of life, and performing divine miracles, displaying at every step the character of a King, but not a king as the world knows it, a King of righteousness, of love, showing those traits mentioned in the quote: kindness, tenderness, and courtesy in daily service. Yahshua was to be worshipped, not treated as a servant, and yet He stooped to wash the feet of a fisherman.

“Then cometh He to Simon Peter, and Peter saith unto Him, ‘Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?’ Yahshua answered and said unto him, ‘What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.’ Peter saith unto Him, ‘Thou shalt never wash my feet.’ Yahshua answered him, ‘If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.’” (John 13:6-8)

You know, the stereotype we sometimes hear is that theology, doctrine, is a dusty, dry subject. I have never felt this way. Good theology breaks open the hard heart; sound doctrine can drive you to tears, if you see the beauty in it, and I have always found this particular exchange to be incredibly emotional and impactful.

Peter says, “Lord, dost Thou was *my* feet?” You can hear the surprise, even shock... and it is not incidental that he calls Him “Lord” here. He says, Master, Teacher, You of inconceivable majesty, who am I, that I should be so served by You? Anyone who worships the power, and not the character, of Christ, would be astonished by this. Anyone who wishes to be exalted for selfish ambition would be revolted by this.

Satan wanted the power of Yahweh, the authority, the glory, but he had not the character to rule all of creation. Neither he nor his servants (whether they are angels or humans) can understand true royalty, true dignity, which is found in the use of our advantages to aid those who lack.

Peter could not, in that moment, imagine that he should be treated as an equal, and more than an equal, by the Son of Yahweh, for this was the work of a slave, not even a friend. And yet Yahshua said to Peter, in essence, If you do not let Me lower Myself to be your Servant, you cannot understand Me. You cannot do what I do. You cannot speak the words I want you to speak.

Yahshua says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” (Rev 3:21) Who are we, that we should be co-sovereign with Yahshua? Who are we to sit on thrones, judging angels? And yet, if we reject this offer, if we refuse this invitation, if we will not be made identical with Christ, we are none of His. What is offered is a type of identical authority with the Father and Son, and if we refuse the gift, if we think we are too lowly to receive the gift, then we cannot be any part of Them, for the gift is Themselves. The Father gave His Son to sinners, and through the Son, He gave the world Himself. To refuse Their invitation is to refuse Their Persons, as the Son taught us, “Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.’” (John 14:23) They are the Gift. They are what inhabit the born-again believer, giving Their lives for ours.

Yahshua said, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15) He also says, through these and other experiences, “Because I love you, I am your Servant.” That is a simple enough principle, isn’t it? Because I love you, I am your servant. We see this teaching from Yahshua in the communion service referenced in the SOP quote, and in the context of the statement that we are “identical with Christ,” when we are born again. If men had kept this thought before them, that love means service, how much weaker would sin’s hold on mankind be? How much more often would the Gospel be received warmly, and souls prepared for everlasting life? There would be less lack of Sabbath rest in the heart of humanity, less murders, robberies, divorces; the works of the flesh would be far rarer, replaced by joyful obedience to the commandments, to those works that come forth naturally from the principles of Heaven.

The Church of Yahshua that teaches His Gospel in its integrity is small, and little known in the world. We offer an invitation from our Lord that is seldom considered, and even less often accepted. “Come and be identified with brethren of one Spirit.” But there is a hatred of organization and order in religion today. “Come and be identified with Christ.” But we are all miserable sinners who cannot cease from doing evil, they say. “Come and be the servant of the world, and of a family of brothers and sisters.” But what of my ambitions and ideas about faith and duty? “Come and be identical with Christ.”

Ah, but there are Scriptures about that last one. How can we claim to be identical with Yahshua?

We read, of course, that humility is a supremely important virtue.

“A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.” (Pro 29:23)

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat 18:4)

The problem is that the world, and worldly-minded Churches, do not understand what it means to be humble as a little child. How does a prince know that he is a prince? How does a princess know that she is a princess? It is because someone told them, and they believed. If the Father says to you, “You are my Son, today I have given you of My very own righteousness, and I will hold you up, so that your foot shall not slip,” will you be as humble as a little child, and believe? And if you believe it, will you not proclaim it?

Humility, true humility, does not deny the pronouncements of a superior power; that in fact would be rebellion. That, in fact, would be the true pride, that man’s opinions about himself are greater than what God Himself has called him to be. That man’s own experience of daily sin up to that point in his life is what defines him, rather than what he will become when he trusts in the Word of Yahweh. The theology of the Enemy twists it around, and makes it a sin to say, “I take the Father and Son at Their Word. I believe what they have said to me. I will go and sin no more. I will be identical with Christ.”

Now, let’s talk about the ditches on both sides of the road here, and be very careful, because of how easily the world can misunderstand. Identical does not mean equal in every sense, and the word “equal” must often be contextualized. Consider this passage, which is misunderstood by some: “**But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. (Luke 20:35)**

There are some who teach that when a human being dies, he or she becomes an angel. If we were, in the resurrection, equal to angels in every sense, there would be no difference at all between us, and the statement would be true in every way except for the origin. Yet we know that angels are, and shall remain, creatures of light. Humans are, and shall remain, creatures of flesh, even in the resurrection. That flesh shall be glorified, but it will remain of a separate nature to the divine servants.

In just such a way, Yahshua Himself is called the “only begotten” of the Father in at least six New Testament verses. We, on the other hand, are told this, “**But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.**” (Gal 4:4, 5) We are sons of Yahweh in an equivalent way that Yahshua is the Son of Yahweh, but His Son-ship is by generation, by divine nature, and ours by adoption. The beautiful thing, though, is that just as in a loving human family, a child by adoption is seen as no less than a child by birth. Both have equal affection. Both have equal inheritance, and so it is that we share a Throne with Yahshua, though we are members of the family by different means.

The sinner thinks it robbery to consider himself identical with Christ. He is right to do so. The Scriptures do not say that the carnal man may claim kinship with anything other than the condemned. The saint thinks it is *not* robbery to consider himself identical with Christ. He is also right to do so. We who are of Yahshua, in whom His own Spirit dwells, He has made us of Himself, not because of our merits, not because of anything we have done or ever could do, but because of His love for us.

Here is another thing to consider – What does Yahshua desire? This is a question very rarely asked by the ones who are considering the invitation to cease from sin and join the Family of Heaven. They think, “What do I want? How may I obtain the Heavenly reward? What if I fail?” This is selfishness, and limits the soul’s capacity to hear the voice of the Spirit. But what does Yahshua want? We read, “**For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.’” (Heb 2:11, 12)** That verse is actually quoting Psalm 22, which Yahshua recited when He was on the cross. It begins in sorrow, and it ends with a promise that Yahweh’s righteousness will be declared throughout the earth for generations yet to come.

And yes, it is Yah's righteousness that is within His people, by which means we are identical with the Son.

But it is prideful, they say, to obey the call to righteousness, and to claim it as our own. We are sinners, they protest, who could never actually do what infinite love and infinite power are granting us the very power and desire to accomplish. The answer is this, that spiritual things are foolishness to the carnally minded. Man is not God, yet Yahshua is both, and has invited us to be seen as identical with Him in character, in righteousness, in inheritance from the Father. What do we believe about this? What we believe determines what miracles we experience.

There is one final objection to this idea that I would address.

Some say, "Of course, we are identical to Christ in this: that the Father sees Yahshua when He looks at us; this is how we are saved, even though we are vile and miserable sinners. Because we accept Yahshua as our Savior, we are judged as He would be judged, not as we deserve to be judged."

I have heard this teaching before, and from several sources. In a sense, these words are true. We are judged according to the judgment that Yahshua would receive, because we receive His life, His inheritance, and His throne in the resurrection. The error here is the implication that the Father sees something when He looks at us *that is not true*, that He falsely, or artificially sees the perfect Son at the judgment, when the "reality" is that He is looking at an unchanged sinner hiding shamefully underneath a borrowed white robe.

This is a complete negation of what the word "conversion" means. It is also a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the Father. We read, plainly, "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**" (Gal 6:7) Yahweh's justice is perfect. Yahweh's judgment is perfect. When He looks at the redeemed soul in the judgment He will see Yahshua, His Son, not because the sinner is pretending or hiding within something. No, the opposite; He will see Yahshua because Yahshua is there. The sinner is not inside Yahshua – unchanged and unconverted. Yahshua is inside the former sinner, fulfilling His own teaching, "**cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, [so] that the outside of them may be clean also.**" (Mat 23:26)

How can the outer works be impure if the inner thoughts are made clean?

Be not deceived; don't let anyone fool you, whether a pastor, or priest, or minister. What Yahweh sees, always, is the objective truth. Yes, we hide within Christ in a poetic sense, as some of the hymns we sing say; but the faith of Yahshua is that Christ dwells in us, and that is the hope, the expectation, of glory. That is the cleansing flood that makes pure both the inside and outside of the vessel. What the Father sees when He looks at us is US, truly us, us as we are because of Christ, cleansed in faith through justification, and then cleansed in practice by sanctification. We are declared just, righteous, and then the life that we live bears it out as a vibrant testimony in fulfillment of the promise. Humble service and bold testimony are balanced in perfect measure.

Every work will be made manifest and come to light, and yet, the Father looks at us and sees the flawless character of His Son. Both these things are true. This means, then, that the soul of the redeemed is entirely cleansed. When the claim to be identical with Christ is truly grasped, it is a thing that is made true, not just outwardly, but in all ways, and this is the power of the Gospel, not to deceive the Father into letting us slip past the guards into Heaven... but to convert, to transform, the soul, even now, even in this life, not by some slow, evolutionary process, but by re-creation, by the original power that called light instantly from darkness. Is it impossible? Yes... but so is every miracle, and miracles are what we offer to the world.

We are the children of that light, and therefore are, and can only be, identified with that light, and identical with that light. We let the knowledge of this fill us, and by our faith, so it shall ever be unto us.