

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-07-15—ONE WITH GOD

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Last week I talked about having the mind of Jesus Christ. It is how we are being made like He is—it is Jesus Christ LIVING in us<sup>1</sup>. But it is much more than just having similar characteristics such as when a son takes after his father. It is literally having the mind of Christ. That does not mean that we are becoming replicas of Christ because each of us has unique personalities. However, having the mind of Jesus Christ literally produces a change to our thoughts and emotions. It is making us into a NEW creation—not a modification but something completely new:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 Therefore, **if anyone be in Christ, he is a [brand] new creation**; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Individually we all have unique thoughts and emotions but having the mind of Christ means our motives, desires, and hopes are becoming exactly as His. We could even say that we are to become one with Him. But it is still more than what you might guess. Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30), and they have been that way from the beginning. Read the verse that the Jews refer to as the Shema:

DEUTERONOMY 6:4 Hear, O Israel: **The LORD our God is one LORD.**

This has been subjected to much debate and discussion, but it is also very simple. It says that the *Elohim* (“God” = plural)—are one. We know that this refers to both God the Father and God the Christ because the Bible says:

JOHN 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**. 2 The same [*being*] was in the beginning with God.

But the Jews believe that the Shema literally means there is only *one being* who is God. Since *Elohim* refers to more than one being, what does their oneness mean? In Hebrew, *one* is the word *echad*, which means the quantity one, first, or **united**. Notice these examples of two or more people united in the sense of being one (*echad*):

GENESIS 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and **they shall be one [echad]** flesh.

GENESIS 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, **the people is one [echad]**, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 2:20.

EXODUS 24:3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and **all the people answered with one [echad] voice**, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

ZEPHANIAH 3:9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to **serve him with one [echad] consent**.

Being one in these verses means united together with common purpose and thinking like a husband and wife. However, as spirit beings, the oneness of God the Father and Jesus Christ is much deeper.

The ancient Israelites did not have the means to connect with God because they were physical. In fact, they were given an impossible task. Read what God commanded immediately following the Shema:

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: 5 And **thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might**.

To love God in the fullness of their heart, soul, and strength is impossible for flesh and blood because physical beings cannot even comprehend that kind of love much less mentally or emotionally connect with spiritual beings. People are born with the ability to love friends (Gk. *phileo*), family (Gk. *storge*), and spouses (Gk. *eros*), but they do not have agape love naturally—it only comes from God. Agape love is the highest form of love. God the Father somewhat revealed the depths of it when He sacrificed His Son who willingly died because they both LOVED us as enemies<sup>2</sup>.

No one without the Holy Spirit in them, is capable of agape love. It is a deep love such that hate and malice can never coexist with it. It says in 1 John 4:20, “If a man say, I love God, and **hateth his brother, he is a liar** ....” But even this fails to fully describe the depths of agape love. If I might be so bold, agape love is such that, “If a man say, I love God, and **hateth his ENEMY, he is a liar** ....”<sup>3</sup> Those of the flesh begotten with the Holy Spirit will never have perfect agape love in this physical life—but loving our enemies is a start. Becoming one with God is somewhat of a mystery as Jesus Christ alluded to:

JOHN 17:11, 20-23 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, **that they may be one, as we are**. ... 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us**: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; **that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be**

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<sup>2</sup> John 3:16; Rom. 5:10; Col 1:2.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 5:44.

**made perfect in one**; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Obviously, God the Father and Jesus Christ ARE one with each other. Of us, however, Jesus said, “that they **may be** one....” Even with the Holy Spirit, being one with God the Father and Jesus Christ and each other will never be fulfilled in this life because only spirit beings can be fully one with each other.

The fullness of agape love is much more than the complete absence of hate and malice or loving our enemies, even if we are willing to die for them. Over the years I have tried come up with a definition and, perhaps, this comes close:

**DEFINITION:** **Agape love** is the state of one’s heart and mind in which every thought, emotion, desire, motive, spoken word, action, and work is for the sole purpose of doing good for others without any regard to the needs, wants, or desires of the self.

But by this definition, agape love is not something that can be perfected in this life because we are limited by the pulls of the flesh. There is a huge gulf between being one with someone—or even God—as physical beings compared to being one in a spiritual life. Only a spirit being can know the innermost heart and mind of someone and, thereby, be at one with them. Christ living in us is crucial to becoming one with Him because our thoughts are being changed:

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against **the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;**

Every thought that is “against **the knowledge** of God” must be cast down (lit. demolished). Knowledge of God means having thoughts motivated by agape love: “... **everyone who loves** has been begotten by God, and **knows God**. The one who does not love does not know God because God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8). All thoughts that are not *of* agape love must be eliminated.

It also says all other thoughts must be brought into the captivity of “the obedience of Christ.” What does that mean? Our thoughts must be motivated by agape love: “... **! [Jesus Christ] have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love.**” (John 15:10). Thoughts of agape love reflect the same obedience of Christ to the Father.

So, what does it mean to capture our thoughts? Simply put, it is anchoring our thoughts IN agape love. Staying with the analogy of bringing our thoughts into captivity, our thoughts are to be ‘prisoners’ of agape love. Captives can only do what their captors allow so, if our thoughts are captives of agape love, then they are ruled by agape love. This is close to being one with God the Father and Jesus Christ because they ARE love.

However, we still fall far short of perfection because physical beings are limited in their ability to connect with others. For example, no matter how much we might desire it, no

one can actually feel the pain of a friend who is suffering. Besides all the other reasons people suffer, suffering also enhances oneness with God. Suffering causes us to reach out to God and plead for mercy and healing. At the same time, others are driven to earnestly pray for and encourage us. This brings a oneness with each other AND God. But why suffering? Ask yourself, would there be the same emotional depth if someone was blessed with great happiness or immense joy? No, because suffering exacts the greatest sympathy, empathy, concern, care and love! We might be happy for someone who is joyful, but that does not produce the same depth of agape love as when someone suffers.

So, we are limited. None of us can be perfectly be one with each other or God in this physical life. We cannot truly know the pain of others or their grief except by what is revealed by their facial expressions and words. Even though that is sometimes more than we can bear to see, that is not the same as KNOWING and FEELING exactly what is in their mind and heart:

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12 For now we see through a glass darkly, but then *we shall* see face to face; now **I know in part, but then I shall know exactly as I have been known.**

Some might think Paul was referring only to God the Father or Jesus Christ but he did not specifically mention them. Perhaps, he was speaking to everyone—God and us! At the resurrection, we will finally be FULLY ONE with God the Father, Jesus Christ, AND each other! We will actually BE agape love! We will **know** and be **known** with a depth, familiarity, and singleness of purpose that transcends words.

So, having the mind of Christ and letting Jesus Christ live in us are not merely “memorization” scriptures.” It is the method of growing, testing, and proving the increase of the agape love from God in us. We are physical embryos suffering in a womb called the earth and agape love from God is the life blood of the spiritual umbilical cord called the Holy Spirit. Just as a human embryo cannot see and communicate with its parents until after it is born, we will not be fully one with our Father, Elder Brother, and each other until we are born of spirit and ARE that brand new creation. But then, the most amazing thing happens:

REVELATION 21:3, 5, 7 Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and **God himself shall be with them, and be their God.** ... 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, **I make all things new.** ... 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and **I will be his God, and he shall be my son.**

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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