

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

Acts 2, 10 – 13

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 10 of 14



Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

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Our Identity – Who do we think we are?

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

Our Identity – Who do we think we are?

- Our personal identity develops as we tell our personal story – either to others or to ourselves.
- That narrative develops over time.
- We construct it out of details personal to us and the shared narratives of our communities.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

Narrative and Metanarrative

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Narrative and Metanarrative

- Each story we tell, about ourselves or anyone else , can be called a **narrative**.
- Any historical framework into which we can fit all the stories that can ever be told is a **metanarrative**.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

The American Church:

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

The American Church:

- Churches tend to be deeply segregated along generational, racial, socioeconomic, educational and other lines.
- This is not the model the Bible presents to us.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

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3. To accept that **our identity in Christ** is something shared, and is a basis for unity with diverse others in the church.
4. To appreciate biblical diversity as a **spiritual strength** that expresses itself in the people and ministries of our church.

Previously in this series

- As we look back on our previous messages, consider how each segment contributes to **our identity in Christ**.
- This is the story that we all fit into together.

Previously in this series

A Shared Origin: The Story of Creation

Genesis 1 – 2

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Previously in this series

A Shared Tragedy: Sin and Its Effects

Genesis 3 – 11

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Previously in this series

A Shared Promise: The Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3

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Previously in this series

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 6:4-9

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Part 4 of 14

Previously in this series

A Shared King: The Covenant with David

2 Samuel 7

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Previously in this series

A Shared Songbook: Christ in the Psalms

Psalms 2, 16, 22, 110 & 118

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Previously in this series

A Shared Expectation: The Nations in Prophecy

Isaiah – Malachi

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Previously in this series

A Shared Savior: The Lord Jesus Christ

Matthew 1 – 2

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ



Part 8 of 14

Previously in this series

A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

Matthew 28, Luke 24 & Acts 1

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A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

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- We left off with the Great Commission and the disciples waiting for “the promise of the Father.” (Acts 1:4)
- Jesus called this promise being “clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)
- It is also the baptism “with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:5)

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

Background:

- Pentecost takes place 50 days after Passover.
- It was also known as Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks, one of the holidays for which people gathered in Jerusalem.
- This was 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

Background:

- **Shavuot** celebrates the beginning of the spring harvest season in Israel and the giving of the Torah.
- The Talmud says God gave the Jews the **Ten Commandments** on the **sixth of Sivan**, the first night of Shavuot.
- Consequently, many Jews gather for an all night Bible study, going out into the streets first thing in the morning.¹

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- Let's read **Acts 2**.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **2:5** People were gathered in Jerusalem for the holiday.
- **2:6** Since people came from various countries, each was used to speaking another language at home.
- **2:11** Some of the people present were **proselytes**, non-Jews who had converted to Judaism.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **2:21** This statement, taken from **Joel**, is now filled with additional meaning – “**the Lord**” now refers to Jesus.
- **2:38** Peter assures them that receiving the **Holy Spirit** is part of this new relationship with Christ.
- **2:42** This is what the church life looked like for those very first believers.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

Reminders:

- Everyone in **Acts 2** is either a **Jew or a proselyte (2:5, 11)**
- The people of Israel had a faith and practice given to them directly from God.
- They owned the Scriptures, the Temple in Jerusalem and the promise of the Messiah.

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Reminders:

- The question of whether **Gentiles (non-Jews)** could come directly to Christ without converting to Judaism is a fair one.
- God answers the question in a story involving **Peter**.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- Now to **Acts 10**.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- Peter understandably needed to be eased into accepting Gentiles directly into the fold.
- **10:9-16** God gave Peter this vision to convince him of what he is about to do.
- **10:44-48** Amazingly, the Holy Spirit comes upon this gathering of Gentiles **while Peter is still speaking**.
- It provides very convincing evidence that salvation is by faith alone through Christ alone.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **11:19-26** This is now intentional evangelism of Gentiles.
- **Phoenicia** is more or less the region of Lebanon.
- **Antioch** is in Turkey near its border with Syria.
- **Cyprus** is the island of the same name in the Mediterranean.
- **Cyrene** is on the coast of North Africa, in today's Libya.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **Acts 13:1-3** The leaders of this church are a curious group.
- **Barnabas** is our friend **the Levite from Cyprus**, who we first meet in **Acts 5 & 11**.
- **Simeon** likely had dark skin. **Niger** means black or dark.
- **Lucius** is from **Cyrene in North Africa**.
- **Manaen** was a true aristocrat, a friend of the royal family.
- **Saul** (aka **Paul the Apostle**) is our friend the miraculously converted Pharisee.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **Acts 13:1-3** Some believe **Simeon called Niger** is the **Simon of Cyrene** that helped Jesus carry the cross.
- Personally I believe this, though it is not a vital point.
- I once wrote a post on it, which I would like you to read.
- You can find it here:
<https://wordpress.com/post/dckoso.wordpress.com/277>

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **Acts 13:1-3** These leaders were all likely Jewish at this early stage of the church.
- The vital thing to see, however, is that they were diverse as far as their origins.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **Acts 13:1-3** Differing cultural and class backgrounds within Judaism almost split the Jerusalem church in **Acts 6**.
- But it didn't, because the apostles, led by the Holy Spirit, would not allow it.
- They worked through their differences and worked toward spiritual unity.

A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

- **Acts 13:1-3** So now we see the leadership team that God put together in the first combined Jewish/Greek church.
- It also turns out that this is the church that God used to begin sending out teams of missionaries.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- On the day the church was born, people from diverse places heard about it, each in their own language.
- God used Peter to bring Christ to a Roman household, opening the door to Gentiles coming into the church.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- In Antioch, Jews and Greeks both responded to the gospel, forming a united church of people from diverse backgrounds.
- God gave that church a diverse team of leaders, allowing for diverse perspectives in one united body.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- **Jerusalem** was the birthplace of the church on Pentecost.
- **Antioch** was the birthplace of Christian mission.
- Of the two, Antioch makes a better model for the church in an average American city.
- We need to appreciate our differences while simultaneously keeping our primary focus on Jesus and who we are in him.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- Finding our **identity in Christ** is to see ourselves as²:
 1. Created in Christ (**Ephesians 2:10**)
 2. Crucified with Christ (**Galatians 2:20**)
 3. Buried with Christ (**Colossians 2:12**)
 4. Baptized into Christ and his death (**Romans 6:3**)

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- Finding our **identity in Christ** is to see ourselves as²:
 5. United with Christ in his resurrection (**Romans 6:5**)
 6. Justified in Christ (**Romans 3:24**)
 7. Glorified in Christ (**Romans 8:30**)
 8. Sanctified in Christ (**1 Corinthians 1:2**)

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- This **identity in Christ** provides the inner motivation that compels us to unite rather than divide.
- In so doing, we still validate our individuality.
- Rather than negating differences, our identity in Christ transcends them, looking first at that which all of us share.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- Our identity in Christ is wrapped up in our belonging to him.
- **Who we are** is very important, but **whose we are – who we belong to** – is more important still.³

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- In **Philippians 1:21** (ESV) Paul was able to say,
“For to me to live is Christ ...”
- I pray we can all say the same thing.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- Let's pray that God would:
 1. Fill us with his Holy Spirit
 2. Help us appreciate who we are in Christ
 3. Unite us in the bond of a shared identity
 4. Kindle within us a longing for a lost world
 5. Motivate us to bring Christ to as many and as wide a variety of people as we are able.

A Shared Spirit Conclusions

- Finally, may the Lord make a church that is
 1. Even more unified
 2. Even more diverse
 3. So fully identified with Christ that God's nature, love and wisdom will be evident to us and to the outside world.

Next Week

A Shared Responsibility: The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12 – 14

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Reference List

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2. Yuan, Christopher. 2018. *Holy sexuality and the gospel: Sex, desire, and relationships shaped by God's grand story*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 190-191.
3. Rosner, Brian S. 2017. *Known by God: A biblical theology of personal identity (Biblical theology for life)*. Kindle edition. Edited by Jonathan Lunde. Grand Rapids: Zondervan; 46, 137.