

What Child is This?

Colossians 1:15-20

B. I.: You cannot know God if you don't know and believe in the true identity of Jesus.

Anyone who has his finger on the pulse of our culture even a little bit is well aware of ambient hostility toward Christianity that seems to be growing. While it is true that nearly everyone would say that they "like Jesus," the reality is that most people really only like the Jesus of their own imagination. They like to imagine Him as a great moral teacher. They like to imagine Him as the defender of the poor. They like to imagine Him as the personification of good will and tolerance.

But if you press people about what Jesus actually claimed to be; if you speak of Him as one who declared Himself to be the only way to heaven - the Preacher of the one and only gospel of God; If you represent Him as the eternal Judge of all who fail to repent and believe in Him, who will send many to eternal damnation, then you will see their affection for Jesus turn to hostility in the blink of an eye.

If you listen to the news on Christian radio these days it seems there is a growing parade of Christian leaders who seemed shocked and surprised by what appears to be a growing hostility toward Christianity. The media has become more hostile. The courts have become less tolerant. The legislature seems to be following suit now. Chaplains are being kicked out of the military for praying in Jesus' name. Students in Public schools are being slapped with disciplinary measures for acting in a way consistent with their faith at school. Government institutions are afraid to display anything that appears Christian. And businesses are reticent to wish people "Merry Christmas".

But while these are disturbing trends to be sure, they should not be shocking to us. We shouldn't be surprised at this for Jesus Himself said "If they hate me they will hate you also." And the fact is, the world hates the real Jesus. It always has, and it always will.

So when it comes to celebrating Christmas, let us not become defenders of the holiday. Let us rather be loving proclaimers of the living Christ. Because while the true Jesus may be offensive to those who hate God, He is the only hope of their salvation. For "there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

As we worship the incarnate Son of God at the end of 2015, let's be sure we are worshiping Him NOT for what we want Him to be, but for who He really is.

What Child is this? Last time we were reminded that this was an important question repeatedly asked in the Gospel record. For example, the crowds ask it in Matt. 21 at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Disciples asked it (Mrk. 4) when Jesus calmed the storm on the sea. The Pharisees asked it repeatedly whenever Jesus claimed to forgive

people's sins. Even king Herod asked it (Luk. 9) after beheading John the Baptist and then heard testimony of Jesus's ministry. He was afraid John had come back from the dead. And then in Matt. 16 we learn that Jesus is concerned that His disciples get the answer to this question right so He asked them, "Who do YOU say that I am?"

What child is this? Eternity hangs on the answer to this question. And we began learning the answer from Paul's letter to the Colossians. Let's stand together and read this text once again.

Read Col. 1:15-20

What Child is This?

Well as we saw last week (Col. 1:15), He is...

I. The Image of God: (v.15)

1. We saw from the GK last time that "image" comes from the world icon. Jesus is literally the icon of God. That is, He is the invisible God made visible. Jesus didn't just bear the image of God (as you and I do), He is the very Personification of God in Human flesh.

2. Second, He is...

II. The Son of God: (v.15)

1. That is, He is the firstborn, the heir, the eternal Son who will inherit the heavens and the earth and all they contain. In Daniel 7 we actually see a prophesy of this happening. Daniel says (Dan 7:13-14)

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴"And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

2. Jesus is the Son of God who became the "Son of man," the One who will inherit all that has been created in heaven and earth and under the earth.

3. Third, Jesus is...

III. The Power of God: (v. 16-17)

Read 16-17

1. It always amazes me when I think of Jesus as the Creator. Before anything else existed, the Son of God lived for eternity with the other Persons of the Godhead. He is the eternal Son, that's why Paul can say (almost absent mindedly) that He was "before all things." Of course He was before all things. As John himself says, "apart from Him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1-2). If that is true then Jesus existed before EVERYTHING. That's why He did not hesitate to say to the Pharisees (Jn. 8:58), "Before Abraham was, I Am."

2. We need to realize that those precious little hands poking up from the manger 2000 Decembers ago, were the same hands that created the world into which they had now been born. And not just the world but the entire cosmos was the creative masterpiece of those hands!

3. Furthermore, the true Jesus is not just the Creator of the world, but the Sustainer of it as well. "All things were created by Him and for Him, and in Him all things hold together." This is what we learned last week. But there's more. The true Jesus is not only the Image of God, the Son of God, and the Power of God, He is also...

IV. The Majesty of God: (v. 18)

1. Read 18

2. What can be more precious to God than the earth and all it contains; the universe and all it contains? Only one thing: the Church.

3. The church is what everything else is about? Why did God create any of this? And what is history about? And what is the meaning of life? It all comes down to God's commitment to glorifying His Son by giving to Him a people from every kindred, nation, tribe, and tongue who will worship Him forever.

4. The only thing God is doing in the world is building His church. She is God's most precious possession. And the only One worthy to receive the church from the hand of God is the Lord Jesus Himself. It is His rightful inheritance as the firstborn.

5. So Jesus is the head of this "body" called the church. And he is not only her head, He is her beginning. That is, He is her source, her Origin, her Creator.

6. Not only that, but He is also her Leader. In other words, the reason every member of the church has the ultimate hope that we will be raised from the dead to "stand in the presence of God's glory blameless with great joy" is because Jesus did it first. He led the way. He is the "Firstborn from the dead."

7. You may remember from verse 15 that "firstborn" is a reference to rank rather than to order. In other words, He is not only the first one to experience true resurrection, but the greatest of all who do. He is highest in rank! Why? Because He is the Icon of God, the Son of God, and the living Power of God.

8. And notice why He is the “Firstborn”. It is so that “He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” In other words, it is God’s design that the Lord Jesus Christ one day be looked upon by all living creatures as the “Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”.

9. One day He will be irrefutably manifest as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! On that day, at the name of Jesus “every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10). He will have first place in everything.

- O’ that it might be said of us already – that Jesus has already come to have first place in our lives.
- What would our homes be like if Jesus Christ was given first place in everything?
- What would our marriages be like if Jesus was recognized as first place in every aspect of our union?
- How many people would dislike us if we really lived in such a way that demonstrated that Jesus already has first place in our lives? And how many would come to know if as savior if this were true of us all of the time?
- Because we have been given the Spirit and the Word, we can live in such a way that gives Jesus first place in everything. It is already that way in heaven. So may we often pray what Jesus commanded us in the Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
- May Jesus come to have first place in our lives NOW, while we wait for the day when His Father will make it official for all the world to see.

10. What Child Is This? He is the Majesty of God! The Author of Hebrews writes (8:1), “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” So you see, He is already there. The man Christ Jesus sits upon the throne of His father in the majesty and glory of His name even now. He is the majesty of God.

11. And yet, there is more. This Jesus is not only the Majesty of God, He is also the Fullness of God.

V. The Fullness of God: (v.19)

1. Read v. 19.

2. The reason that Jesus is the Majesty of God is because He is the fullness of God.

3. This is where Biblical Christianity breaks away from all the cultish religions of the world. Almost every major religion is willing to concede that Jesus is worthy of great

respect and honor. But none of them recognize Him as God. To them He's an angel, or a prophet, or an emanation of the divine, but He is not God.

4. And this is what the false teachers were trying to impose upon the believers in Colossae. So Paul wrote to destroy such philosophical heresy. In case he had not already been explicit enough about Jesus identity, Paul now makes it transparently clear. "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him."

5. The "fullness of what?" you may ask. To which Paul responds (2:9), "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." How can you get any more explicit than that? Jesus Christ is not just man. He is the fullness of God. While it is true that there is not anything essential to man that Jesus did not possess, it is also true that there is nothing essentially God that Jesus did not possess. He is the "God man."

6. What Child is this? He is the Majesty of God and the Fullness of God. Finally...

VI. He is the Lamb of God: (v. 20)

1. Read v. 20

2. When you discover all this truth about Jesus it prompts us to ask, "So why did such a majestic Being ever come to earth?"

3. Well, the simplest explanation is that He came to fix a really big problem. You see, God is absolutely holy. There is nothing in God that can tolerate even the slightest measure of sin. But man, on the other hand, whom God had created for His pleasure, became desperately wicked by his willful disobedience and rebellion against God. So the relationship between man and God was broken and needed repair.

4. So, because of His great love with which He loved us, Jesus laid aside the rights and privileges of being the eternal Son and came to earth to reconcile God and man. He came to Satisfy God's holy and just punishment for sin. And what is that required punishment? Paul explains (Rom. 6:23), "the wages of sin is death." Left to himself every man born into the world would face the eternal punishment he deserves. What sin earns is death and all of us have sinned. The only way the relationship between God and man could be reconciled was for God Himself to come to earth as a real human being to represent us before the judgment seat of God. He came to be the Mediator between God and men.

5. So, at precisely the right time, Jesus was born of a woman (like every human baby), He lived 33 years to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. And then He died on a cross to fulfill the righteous penalty of the law. He did both on man's behalf so that we who were dead in our trespasses and sins could be made alive together with Christ.

6. In other words, Jesus came to be the Lamb of God. He gave Himself as a sacrificial lamb to pay the penalty of all who would believe. By so doing, He has made peace with God for us through the blood of His cross.

7. Now that's what makes Christmas truly amazing! There is nothing about sinful man by which we can recommend ourselves to God. In our truly honest moments we know that deep down inside we are sinful and undeserving of anything good from God. But, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, Christ died for us. He died in our place.

8. That's what Christmas is all about. What Child Is This? He is the Image of God, The Son of God, The Power of God, the Majesty of God, the Fullness of God, and the Lamb of God. He is very God of very God.

9. C. S. Lewis once wrote about this truth. He said,

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be a Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He does not intend to. (Mere Christianity; p. 52)

10. So who do you say Jesus is? This, beloved, is the most important question you will ever answer. I mentioned earlier how in Matthew 16 Jesus pressed this question upon His disciples: "Who do YOU say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

11. Perhaps the H.S. is revealing this to you this morning with a kind of clarity and meaning that you have never experienced before. Perhaps the Father is drawing you to Himself even now so that you will be saved. I plead with you, don't hesitate for a moment to reach out with the hand of faith to receive what God is offering you in Christ. He is your only Savior, and He loves you.

Who do you say Jesus is? All eternity hangs on this questions because you cannot know God if you don't know and believe in the true identity of Jesus.