

Who is Jesus Christ?

Text: Colossians 1:12-22

Introduction:

1. This is one of the great questions of history. Jesus Christ as a historical figure has divided human history. There was confusion and debate in Christ's day as to who He was. Jesus asked His disciples "Whom do men say that I am?" to which they replied, "John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets." Christ then challenges the disciples to answer the question personally; "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered correctly, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." See Matt. 16:13-20 & Mark 8:27-30.
2. The challenge and question that Christ put to the disciples those many years ago remains for each one to answer individually for himself. Each individual must come to a personal decision about Christ. You cannot be neutral to Him.
3. The text before us today leaves us in no doubt as to who Christ is and why He came. Let's consider four answers to the question "**Who is Jesus Christ**" from this section of the Word of God.

Jesus Christ is...

I. THE REDEEMER (VS. 13-14)

Verse 12-13 emphasize the work of the Father in salvation then the text transitions to focusing upon the Person and work of Christ. We also note that this section of Scripture falls under the context of the believer's walk and the importance of thanksgiving to God for His saving grace. On a simple level, the word 'redeem' means to buy back. It refers to a release because of a paid ransom.

A. The Place of our Redemption (Vs. 13)

1. Delivered from the power of darkness (Vs. 13a)
 - a. The word 'delivered' refers to a total, Divine rescue. This form of the word is only used of God in the New Testament (Gromacki).
 - b. We have been rescued from the "power of darkness". This expression points to the kingdom of Satan which is a place of moral and spiritual darkness.
 - i. Eph. 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this world**, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*."
 - ii. Acts 26:18 "To open their eyes, *and to turn **them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto***

God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

2. Transferred into the kingdom of love and light (Vs. 13b)
 - a. The word ‘translated’ means to transfer from one place to another. The word was used to describe the geographical transfer of people from one country to another.
 - b. The phrase “his dear son” literally means “the Son of His love”. Verse 12 makes reference to “the inheritance of the saints in light”. So we have been rescued from Satan’s kingdom of darkness, evil and sin and transferred into God’s kingdom of love, light and true liberty (freedom).

B. The Price of our Redemption (Vs. 14a)

1. Our redemption, while offered freely, was secured at the highest cost – the lifeblood of God’s own Son, poured out at Calvary. There is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood. Heb. 9:22 “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission.**”
2. No amount of gold, silver, tradition or self-effort could redeem us from our sins. 1 Peter 1:18-19 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; **But with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

C. The Power of our Redemption (Vs. 14b)

1. Forgiveness is connected to redemption. Because the ransom price has been paid by Christ’s blood, we can be forgiven. What a glorious word ‘forgiveness’ is!
2. The word ‘forgiveness’ comes from a verb “to send” and a preposition “away from”. Forgiveness therefore refers to the sending away of sins from a person who has committed them. Psalm 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he **removed our transgressions from us.**” 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins...”
3. The word ‘sins’ comes from the Greek word meaning to “miss the mark”. We need forgiveness because we have all sinned against God!

Jesus Christ is...

II. THE REVEALER (VS. 15A)

The work of Christ on the cross has its infinite value by virtue of Who Christ is. Take away the truths of Christ’s Deity and His work on the cross

becomes meaningless. The Apostle Paul now launches into one of the most Christ exalting sections of Scripture that describes **Who Christ is.**

A. God's Invisibility – “the invisible God”

1. Exodus 33:20 “And he said, **Thou canst not see my face**: for there shall no man see me, and live.”
2. 1 Timothy 6:16 “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; **whom no man hath seen, nor can see**: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”
3. John 1:18 “No man hath **seen** God at any time;”
4. John 4:24 “God is a **Spirit...**” (A spirit has not flesh or bones. Lk 24:39)
5. Contrast this with the idols of the heathen. The gods fabricated by the imaginations of sinful men are totally visible and creaturely. See Psalm 135:15-18.

B. God's Image – “who is the image”

1. ‘image’ = exact likeness, portrait. The same word used by Christ in the Gospels to refer to Caesar’s image on a penny (Matt. 22:20, Mk 12:16 & Lk 20:24)
2. 2 Corinthians 4:4 “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, **who is the image of God**, should shine unto them.”
3. Hebrews 1:3 “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the **express image** of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” ‘**express image**’ = used to describe a tool for engraving or carving. Refers to a precise reproduction in every respect, a stamp or impression.
4. Christ is called “**the Word**” in John’s Gospel. He is the exact expression of the Father.
5. John 14:8-9 “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, **and yet hast thou not known me**, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”
6. Illustration: The Gospels reveal God’s nature as displayed in the Son of God. E.g., His **compassion** at the grave of Lazarus, His **righteous anger** at religious hypocrisy with the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day, & His **love** for sinful mankind.

Jesus Christ is...

III. THE CREATOR (VS. 15B-19)

A. The Creator of the Cosmos (Vs. 15b-17)

He is...

1. The Head of Creation (15b)
 - a. The word ‘firstborn’ in this context means first in rank or position. Note that it does not say Christ was the “first-created”. Further, the next verse makes it clear that Christ created “all things”. Christ cannot be created and at the same time Creator of all things!

- b. In reality, the word 'firstborn' is a title, emphasizing Christ's preeminence, priority and sovereignty over all of creation.
- 2. The Means of Creation (16a)
 - The first phrase "by Him" has the sense of "in Him" (Greek: *en autou*). The second "by Him" has the sense of "through Him". So, Christ is both the source and means of the creation. 'For' is 'hoti' meaning 'because'. Paul now justifies the title of 'firstborn' given to Christ in the previous verse.
 - a. Things in the heavens
 - 1. Psalm 19:1-3 "The **heavens declare** the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."
 - 2. Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are **clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"
 - 3. Illustration: The number of the stars

In 600 B.C. the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "...the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured..." (Jer. 33:22) The first man acknowledged to have counted the stars was Hipparchus in 190-120 B.C. After making a study of the stars, he announced that there were 1,080. It is now generally accepted that without the aid of a telescope and on a very clear night, up to 4,000 stars can be seen. With the aid of modern telescopes, it is estimated that there are 10 to the power of 21 stars. That's the number 1 with 21 zeros after it! If you could count 20 stars per second, it would take 100 million billion years to count that many stars! Interestingly, this number is also an estimate of the number of grains of sand on the seashores of the world. The Bible says of God, "*He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.*" (Psalm 147:4)

- 4. Illustration (the sun): The sun has a diameter of 864,000 miles (one hundred times that of earth's) and could hold 1.3 million planets the size of earth inside it.
- 5. Illustration (the star Betelgeuse): Has a diameter of 100 million miles, which is larger than the earth's orbit around the sun.
- b. Things in the earth (e.g., botanical, animal & human life)
 - 1. Illustration (the eye):

The human eye is extremely complicated – a perfect and interrelated system of about 40 individual subsystems, including the retina, pupil, iris, cornea, lens and optic nerve. For instance, the retina has approximately 137 million special cells that respond to light and send messages to the brain. About 130 million of these cells look like rods and handle the black and white vision. The other seven million are cone-shaped and allow us to see in color. The retina cells receive light impressions, which are converted to electric pulses and sent to the brain via the optic nerve. A special section of the brain called the visual cortex interprets the pulses to color, contrast, depth, etc., which allows us to see 'pictures' of our world in three dimensions. Amazingly, the eye, optic nerve and the brain's visual cortex are totally separate and distinct subsystems. Yet, together they capture, deliver and interpret up to 1.5 million pulse messages every milli-second (one thousandth of a second)! Dr. Gary Baxter Pg. 77-78

- 2. Quote: "Max Planck, winner of the Nobel Prize and one of the founders of modern physics, wrote, "According to everything taught by the exact sciences about the immense realm of nature, a certain order prevails – one independent of the human mind...this order can be formulated in terms of

- purposeful activity. There is evidence of an intelligent order of the universe to which both man and nature are subservient.”
- c. Things invisible (e.g., principalities and powers. The unseen world).
3. The Goal of Creation (16b)
 - a. “for him” = lit. “unto him”. Christ is the purpose and goal of creation. Creation only has meaning when we understand it was for His purpose, glory and pleasure.
 - b. You will never know true purpose in life until you understand that you were created were made to know Christ and to live for Him.
 - c. Rev. 4:11 “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure** they are and were created.”
 4. The Forerunner of Creation (17a)
 - a. Christ predates creation – “he is before all things”. The verb ‘is’ indicates His eternal existence, an attribute of Deity. Christ **is** before all things, not **was** before all things.
 - b. Christ is the Great I AM – “Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.**” (John 8:58) This is the same title used by JEHOVAH God in the Old Testament – “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14).
 5. The Sustainer of Creation (17b)
 - a. Illustration: The Atom.

Eight positively charged protons closely associated together within the confines of its tiny nucleus with 8 neutrons with no charge. According to the laws of physics, these should attract each other and the whole history of electrical phenomena and electrical equipment have been built on these principles known as Coulomb’s law of electrostatic force and the law of magnetism. What holds the nucleus together? Why doesn’t it fly apart? (D. Lee Chesnut) In seeking to explain the powerful force that holds protons together within the nucleus, scientists coined the phrase “strong nuclear force,” but have no explanation for why it exists. Karl K. Darrow, a physicist, comments: “You grasp what this implies. It implies that all the massive nuclei have no right to be alive at all. Indeed, they should never have been created, and, if created, they should have blown up instantly. Yet here they all are...Some inflexible inhibition is **holding them relentlessly together**. The nature of the inhibition is also a secret...one thus far reserved by Nature for herself.”

- b. Illustration: The rotation of planets.
6. Wiersbe summarizes it well, “Everything exists in Him, for Him, and through Him. Jesus Christ is the Sphere in which they exist, the Agent through which they came into being, and the One for whom they were made.”

B. The Creator of the Church (Vs. 18-19)

Christ is the Author of both the physical universe and the spiritual organism of the church. He is:

1. The Church’s Head (Vs. 18a)

Headship implies at least two truths:

 - a. Leadership – the church is to operate in submission to Christ’s rule. No human being has any right to usurp Christ’s place as Head of the church.
 - b. Life – this is brought out in the next chapter (Col. 2:19). Christ is the source of the church’s life and blessing and when He is kept

- in His rightful place, there is unity among the people of God in the local church.
- c. Wuest: “the head, the inspiring, ruling, guiding, combining, sustaining power, the mainspring of its (the body’s) activity, the centre of its unity, and the seat of its life.”
2. The Church’s Founder (18b)
 - a. The word ‘beginning’ points to the fact that Christ is the church’s originator.
 - b. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).
 - c. The church was conceived during Christ’s ministry and birthed on the Day of Pentecost. The converts on the Day of Pentecost were “added to them”, referring to the 120 disciples who were gathered in the upper room.
 3. The Church’s Firstborn (18c)
 - a. As noted above, the title points to Christ’s rank & position. In the previous reference, Christ is called the “firstborn’ of creation. Now he is called the “firstborn from the dead” which is a reference to His resurrection.
 - b. It highlights that Christ’s resurrection is preeminent above all other resurrections. It does not mean first in relation to time as others were raised from the dead before Christ’s resurrection but it means first in rank and position. Others had been raised back to physical life to eventually die again but Christ was the first to come out of death in an immortal, incorruptible body, never to die again. Jesus said, “*I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, **behold, I am alive for evermore**, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Rev. 1:18)
 4. The Church’s Preeminent One (18d-19)
 - a. The word ‘that’ reveals the grand purpose of all that has been described. The purpose of the physical creation of the universe and the spiritual creation of the church was in order that Christ might have first place in all things.
 - b. Challenge: Is Christ Preeminent in our church? Does Christ have first place in all areas of your life? Does He have first place:
 - i. In your daily life?
 - ii. In your weekly schedule?
 - iii. In your decisions?
 - iv. Will you give Christ first place in 2023?
 - c. “for it pleased the Father” = the basis for the preeminence of the Son was the pleasure of the Father. It pleased God that all fulness reside permanently in the Son of God. The word ‘fulness’ “denotes the sum-total of the Divine powers and attributes. The totality of the Divine dwells in Him.” (Wuest)
 - d. Christ possesses all the Fulness of the Godhead and we have been made complete in Him! See Col. 2:9-10 & John 1:16. We are complete in Christ!

Jesus Christ is...

IV. THE RECONCILER (VS. 20-22)

A. The Payment for our Reconciliation (Vs. 20)

1. The Blood shed on the cross
 - a. Hebrews 9:22 *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without **shedding of blood** is no remission.”*
 - b. Illustration: Israel reconciled through the blood of the sin offering. *“And the priests killed them (the goats for the sin offering), and they made **reconciliation with their blood** upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.”* (II. Chron. 29:24)
 - c. Scriptures emphasis on the Blood of Christ: we are purchased by the blood (Acts 20:28); Atonement/propitiation is by the blood (Rom 3:25); we are justified by the blood (Rom 5:9); we are redeemed and granted forgiveness through the blood (Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14; 1 Pt. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9); we are drawn near to Christ by the blood (Eph. 2:13); we are cleansed by the blood (1 Jn. 1:7); we are washed from our sins in His blood (Rev. 1:5).
2. The Peace secured (Rom 5:1)

B. The People for Reconciliation (Vs. 21-22)

In human relationships, reconciliation usually involves some wrong on both parties but not so with God. God needs no reconciliation with us as He is Perfect and Holy in every way. God did not sin against us, we sinned against Him. God did not wrong us, we wronged Him.

1. Our Past (Vs. 21a)
 - a. We were **Estranged**
 1. ‘alienated’ = cut off, separated, a foreigner or stranger
 2. *“...**without Christ...without God in the world.**”* (Eph 2:12)
 - b. We were **Enemies**
 1. ‘enemies’ = hostile, hateful. “It is one thing to be estranged from someone; it is another thing to act in a hostile manner toward that one. The Colossians actively opposed God and wilfully broke His moral law.” (Gromacki)
 2. ‘mind’ = the rational faculty, the heart, seat of moral judgment.
 3. 1. Corinthians 2:14 **“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”**
 4. Romans 8:7 **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”**
 5. Psalm 10:4 **“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: **God is not in all his thoughts.**”**
 6. Note: For a sinner to be saved, he must repent. Repentance involves a radical change of mind!
 - c. We were **Evil**
 1. James 1:15 – sinful deeds are conceived in the mind and birthed in the actions.

2. "wicked works" = sinful practice.
2. Our Present (21b-22a)
 - a. The Intervention of God
 1. "**yet now** hath he reconciled".
 2. Read Ephesians 2:1-4
 3. Romans 5:6-9 "*For when we were yet without strength...*"
 4. 1 Timothy 1:13 "*Who was before a blasphemer...*"
 - b. The Substitution of Christ
 1. "body of his flesh" – Christ died in a real body
 2. 'death' – Christ died a real death for sin
 3. Illustration: Estranged wife and husband reconciled at the grave of their only son.
3. Our Future (22b)
 - a. Holy = set apart
 - b. Unblameable = without blemish, spot (1 Pt. 1:19)
 - c. Unreproveable = unaccusable, beyond reproach. Lit. "not to be called in" No charge can be laid. It is a legal term. No charge of condemnation nor sentence of eternal death can ever be brought against believers in the court of Divine justice.

Conclusion:

1. Have you been reconciled to God? Have you received Christ's free offer of salvation?
2. Does Christ have first place in our lives? E.g., personal, family & church?