

Very Good News!

to encourage the Leaders of the Your Kingdom Come conference.
Presented by Richard Eason at 8:00 pm on Thursday 7 August 2008.

Who is Jesus?

In the twentieth century Jesus was turned into a cuddly Father Christmas who gives us everything that we want. Tonight we're going to take a look at the real Jesus!

An exposition of Hebrews 1:1-13

Verse 1-2: Jesus is God the Son, God's Word to us in these last days, the one authoritative revelation of the heart of the Father. All previous revelation must be interpreted in the light of Jesus. He owns the universe not only as the Father's heir, but also as its creator.

Verse 3-4: Jesus reflects God's glory – His flawless character (Ex 33:18-19). He not only made the universe, He keeps it operating by His Word of power. Yet He offered Himself as the sacrifice that purified us from our sins. And now He is seated on His Father's throne (the place of supreme authority) at the right hand of the Father (the expression of God's invincible power).

Verse 5: When God's eternally pre-existing Son became a man, at that point in time and space He became the Father's first begotten human son – a fact so staggering that the Father Himself announced it publicly and audibly after Jesus' baptism. The man Jesus is thus included in the Godhead, enjoying sublime intimacy with the Father in the Spirit, which assures us that in Him we are included in that Divine circle of intimacy.

Verse 6-7: Although a man, Jesus is God because the angels are commanded to worship Him.

Verse 8-9: Jesus is plainly called God in these verses. His humanity is also highlighted by mention of His comrades (He is the first of many human sons, Rom 8:29) and by the reference to the throne and kingdom from which He will rule the nations (see Rev 3:21 and Matt 25:31). Jesus human comrades are anointed with the oil of joy, but He has it in greater measure.

Verse 10-12: Jesus is called the Lord and creator of the earth and heavens. They will perish when He rolls them up and changes them, but Jesus will live eternally.

Verse 13: His enemies will be made a stool for His feet while He is seated on the Father's throne.

A second witness to all of this comes in the gospel of John. Expound John 1:1-4 and 1:14

Verse 1: John's gospel begins back in the mists of eternity. Whereas Mark and Luke begin with John the Baptist and Matthew begins with Adam, John emphasises Jesus' pre-existence with the Father from eternity past.

In doing so, John does not at first speak openly about Jesus. Instead, he speaks of "the Word" – a phrase both Jews and Greeks thought they fully understood. John sets out to shatter their ideas by showing that "the Word" is actually a Divine being who was "with" the Father ("with" is the Greek: *pros*, which implies face-to-face communion).

Verse 2 and verse 14: These verses refer to "the Word" as "He" so "the Word" is a being, not just a concept. In verse 14, John reveals that "the Word" became flesh, which means that this Being who has always been in face-to-face communion with the Father clothed Himself in the fallen Adamic nature. So the Word is none other than Jesus.

Being born in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), Jesus faced every temptation mankind faces, yet did not sin. He overcame the sin in the flesh as part of the process of saving us (Heb 4:15). Every day of His life was an agonising struggle against the temptations and wrong-headed opinions about the Father that typify Adam's descendants. Luke 2:52 says Jesus "increased" but the underlying Greek is the military word *prokopto*, which paints Jesus as beating His way forward by blows. With every blow He overcame sin in the flesh.

Finally, by allowing it to be crucified, He brought an end to Adamic flesh, which is why 1 Cor 15:45 calls Him the last Adam and the second man. John 10:17-18 makes it clear that Jesus' life was not taken from Him, He laid it down out of love for us and obedience to the Father.

Verse 3: And this was not just a man suffering for his fellow men. As in Hebrews, John emphasises by reiteration that Jesus is the creator of all things.

Verse 4: In this verse we find that life – the only life there is – is in Jesus. No matter how much some may wish it were otherwise, we are utterly dependent on and belong to the one who created us and from whom we draw life itself – the Lord Jesus Christ. As the source of life and creation, He is the ultimate reality – The Truth – that sheds light on our being and reason for existence.

A third witness to the wondrous reality of Jesus is given in the first chapter of Colossians, which goes even further. Expound 1:15-17 and 1:19

Verse 15-16: Jesus accurately conveys what the Father is like and has the rights of inheritance over all creation. Everything – including all human and angelic authorities – was created in Jesus, through Jesus and for Jesus.

Verse 17: He has absolute precedence in creation and it is all held together in Him.

Verse 19: All the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in "the Word" who, out of His passionately devoted love for us, clothed Himself in sinful human flesh, conquered it and terminated it.

Why did God the Son become a man?

The gospel we preach in the west today was framed in legal terms by the Roman lawyer Tertullian, an early church father. As a result, most western Christians would say God the Son became a man to pay for our sins. That was essential, but it was never the main aim.

Eph 1:3-6 shows that the Father's purpose in Christ from before the foundation of the world has been to draw mankind into the Divine circle of intimacy by adopting us as sons. Satan tried to sabotage God's purpose and while it is true to say that Jesus is God's emphatic "No!" to Satan's attempted sabotage, Jesus is much, much more.

The eternal uncreated God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit living in mutually delighting, devoted love. Their love brims over with generosity and humility and puts the well-being of others before self – truly joyful, tranquil, patient, kind, good, faithful and gentle (Gal 5:22, 1 Cor 13:4-7). It is no exaggeration to say that God is passionately relational.

God wants us as sons, but it is clearly impossible for man to become like God. So God became like man and that man, Jesus, raised mankind to be sons of God.

We have already seen in Col 1:15-17 that every human being – indeed the whole universe – was created in Christ. So when Jesus died, mankind died in Him according to 2 Cor 5:14.

Better still, when Jesus was resurrected, we were raised to new life in Him. That is the message of Rom 6:5. Moreover, Eph 2:1, 4-9 says that Father, Son and Holy Spirit brought all that about while we were still in sin. We were created, de-created and recreated in Christ to share His sublime relationships as the Father's Son.

The good news is that it is an accomplished fact right now! God "has (past tense) raised us up and seated us together with Him in the heavenly places in Christ." We did nothing to help Jesus create, de-create and recreate us. Truly, our salvation is by grace!

Surely we have to do something – but what?

At this point some of you may be thinking: "He's gone too far. It's not just by grace, it's by grace through faith. We have to respond by believing."

Perhaps you might even be tempted to use Jesus' response to the Pharisees in John 6:28-29, where He told them that the work of God is to believe in His Son.

The problem is that that kind of believing is not something we can generate. We can't psyche ourselves up to it. It's not positive mental attitude. Rom 10:17 tells us that that kind of faith comes by hearing God's Word and Eph 2:8 says that faith is a gift from God.

So the only human contribution possible in the matter of our salvation is the ungrateful folly of rejecting the gift of faith that God plants in our heart when we hear His Word.

Surely we have to do good. Doesn't John 5:28-29 say that those who have done good will be resurrected to life and those who have done evil will be resurrected to judgment? It does, but in John 15:4-5 Jesus teaches that we can't do good unless we abide in Him. On that basis, any good we do comes from the life of Christ flowing through us.

Likewise, any evil we do comes from not abiding in Jesus. Rom 10:14-16 teaches that we can't even believe in Jesus, let alone abide in Him, unless we hear the Word of God that contains the gift of faith. So not believing in Jesus becomes a sin (Rom 16:8-9) when we hear God's Word and receive His gift of faith but then reject it – that is failing to abide in Him.

The gift of faith is believed not just with our mind, but deep in our heart. Matt 12:34 shows that it causes us to speak. That is why Rom 10:9 says: "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Our heart and our mouth respond that way when the Holy Spirit gives us a revelation of who Jesus really is. That's why we're here – to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus in this conference in ways that advance His kingdom on earth.

Repentance versus confession of sins

Every revelation we get requires repentance (which literally means a change in our thinking). Acts 11:18 shows that repentance is another gift from God. For example, as we hear and believe the gospel, we repent of thinking that anyone or anything other than Christ could have created mankind, de-created our sinful nature and then recreated us.

The gift of repentance changes wrong thinking, but it can't change our past sins. We can't repent of sins. 1 John 1:9 says we must confess them. The word confess (Greek: homologeo) means "to say the same." Confessing is saying the same as God – agreeing with Him that something in our life is sin. Such bold, transparent honesty before God is the opposite of making excuses or trying to do some dodgy deal with God to atone for our sins.

After confessing our sins, the Holy Spirit may show us a wrong belief that caused us to sin. We can certainly repent (reverse our thinking) about that wrong believing!

The breastplate of righteousness

Repenting of wrong beliefs and confessing sins keeps in place the breastplate of righteousness that guards our heart. Too many Christians live in defeat because they think they have lost their righteousness (right standing with God) when they sin.

That's wrong believing! The antidote is to meditate on 1 John 1:9 until we hear what God is saying in it (that if we confess He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness). When He gives us faith to believe that, He also gives us the gift of repentance from contrary thinking. In fact, faith and repentance are like opposite sides of one coin – they always come together.

As long as we have faith in Christ we are righteousness in God's sight. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in Phil 3:8-9:

“... I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”

We're given the free gift of righteousness when God gives us faith to believe in Christ. As Rom 5:17 says:

“If, because of one man's trespass (Adam), death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life (as kings – Amplified Version) through the one man Jesus Christ.”

When God gives us faith to believe that all human beings have been created, de-created and recreated in Christ we stop seeing ourselves and others according to the flesh. We begin to see things from God's perspective. 2 Cor 5:16-21 puts it this way:

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The longer we believe in Christ as Head of this new creation, the more wonderful the character changes in our life, evidenced by good relationships and good works, Eph 2:10. The good works don't save us of course. They come out of the gift of God that enables us to believe that Jesus has saved us.

How should we respond to this very good news?

In Christ mankind is welcomed into the intimate heart of the royal family of the universe.

The response of a believing heart is summed up in Rom 10:5-12:

“5 Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. 6 But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we

preach); 9 because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For man believes with his heart and so is justified (i.e made righteous), and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. 11 The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame.""

If we want to earn a life of unending intimacy with Father Son and Holy Spirit, we must do everything in the law of Moses. No one except Jesus has ever been able to do that.

But the good news is that right standing with God comes free with faith in Christ. It is a kind of faith that doesn't struggle to be a spiritual super-star who goes up to heaven to bring Christ down etc. Instead, it believes in the resurrected Jesus and obeys the promptings of that faith by confessing Him as Lord – the ultimate authority in the universe.

That's why we're here:

- to proclaim the resurrected Lord Jesus, the Word (THE revelation) of God,
- to abide in Him without wavering,
- to repent of all contrary thinking and
- to confess the our sins and the sins of our nation

so that Jesus' kingdom advances on earth as a result of this conference.

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