

Who is Jesus?

Colossians 1:15-29 (ESV) ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

There is a common misperception that maybe some of us are guilty of in this church.

What we perceive of God in the Old Testament is one thing and what we perceive of God in the New Testament is completely different. In the Old Testament it seems like God is some angry old man just waiting to pounce on people. In the New Testament we see God as full of love and mercy. The Bible tells us that God never changes. The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.” In the Old Testament we read, “And Abram believed in God and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Salvation, being saved by God has always been a matter of faith, God producing within you the faith that will save you for eternity.

In the Old Testament we read of several judgments of God. Sodom and Gomorrah were wiped out where sexual sin was supreme and not God. Before that we have the judgment that came upon the earth at the time of Noah. Every thought of the people was set on evil except in Noah’s family. There was only one righteous family on the earth. As we read through Israel conquering the promised land, God has Israel’s army wipe out several populations. We read these stories and think God is a God of vengeance. Why would we want to believe in a God like that?

Here is my answer. In Old Testament times, God clearly spoke to the people through prophets, through people like Noah, Abraham, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Elijah, and many, many, more. The prophets told the people that unless they returned to the

Lord God and turn away from Baal worship, God would send judgement. The judgement could come in many forms like that of the 10 plagues in Exodus placed on Egypt and the eventual loss of the Promised Land. In each case, plenty of warnings were given and the people refused to listen to God and judgment came. Noah preached for 120 years, and no one listened. God gave the Canaanites 400 years to repent, and they failed to do so. God gave them over to the people of Israel as they conquered the promised land (Walter C. Kaiser Jr, Tough Questions About God And His Actions in the Old Testament, pg. 29). Jeremiah predicted the judgments to come if the people did not repent and those judgments came. Every judgment sent by God was done so the people would repent, turn to God, and live. Jesus spoke to John of 21 judgments to come before Jesus comes again in the book of Revelation. It is dangerous not to heed God's warnings.

Please listen to the word of the Lord. **Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (NIV)** ¹⁵ See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

What was just read was often given in a very similar way through the Old Testament prophets. John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets came preaching the importance of repentance and turning to God. **1. The heart of God is wooing, drawing people**

to Himself to be in relationship with Him so to be saved for all eternity. That is the heart of God. We see the heart of God most clearly in Jesus who sacrificed his life for you so you can live forever with Him. There is no greater love than to give your life and that Jesus did for you and for me. What a slap in God's face to question His love. What a slap in God's face to question God's ways. God is absolutely perfect in every way. God has never made a mistake and everything God does is right for God cannot do wrong. God is holy and there is no one above God. He reigns supreme. When you disagree with God, guess who is wrong? It is not God.

2. In Jesus we meet the heart of God. Jesus perfectly represents God in every way for Jesus is God. **3. Every time God the Father is mentioned in the Old Testament, Jesus is right there with Him agreeing on everything.** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the ones who pulled off the entire creation. They always worked together and have never had a disagreement.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. These verses affirm the full Deity of Jesus Christ. The term firstborn can throw us because Jesus is eternal, having no beginning nor end. Jesus is over the entire creation. The term "first born" ascribes to Jesus' supremacy, honor, and dignity. It is a term of status and does not refer to time. Firstborn simply means "of first importance" (Warren Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, pg.115). He is the Father's principal heir. Christ is especially loved by the Father, and all things were created by Him and for Him. Since all things were created through Him and for Him, Christ is Lord of all. He is supreme even over the spirit world that we cannot see but at times feel.

"And in Him [Christ] all things hold together." **4. Christ is not only the Creator of the world, Christ is also the sustainer.** **5. In Christ everything is held together, protected, and**

prevented from disintegrating into chaos. He is either Lord of all, or not Lord at all in our lives. When you study the science of atoms and molecules, protons and neutrons and their constant movement, if somehow they stopped doing what they are doing, there would be no more existence. Christ holds all things together. Christ maintains the balance necessary for humans to exist on this earth and the consistency of the universe (John MacArthur, Col. Pg. 49).

Verse 18, ¹⁸ *And he is the head of the body, the church.* In our Apostle's Creed we say that we believe in "the holy and catholic Church. In the contemporary service we say that we believe in the "holy Christian church" which in today's language is actually more understandable. Let me explain. When you become a Christian, when you are saved by God's grace through faith, you become part of the true church. **6. Jesus is the head of the church, the one in charge, the preeminent One.** There is only one true church made up of those who are truly saved, born again, born anew, born from above. Denominations are man-made. The true church is formed by God Himself. When we say we believe in the "holy catholic Church", the term catholic means universal, meaning we believe in the one true church formed by God with Christ at its head. Dr Warren Wiersbe writes, "As Head of the church, Jesus Christ supplies it with life through his Holy Spirit." "He gives gifts to men and women, and then places these gifted people in His church that they might serve Him where they needed." "Through His word, Jesus Christ nourishes and cleanses the church" (Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol 2, pg. 117).

"[Jesus is] *the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*" Here is that term firstborn used again. Paul is not saying that Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead. He was not. But Jesus is the most important of all who have been raised from the dead; for without His resurrection, there would be no resurrection at all (ibid. pg.117). It is the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead that makes it possible for all believers to be raised from the dead all the way into the new heaven and the new earth. Jesus came to have

first place in everything, the true meaning of firstborn. Jesus is in first place so to speak. He is the Savior, He is the Creator, and He is the Head of the church.

“¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” Simply put, when you look at Jesus, you see the face of God. God is most clearly, seen, understood, and known through Jesus the Christ. Jesus is God the Son and the Son of God, fully human and fully God. Amen and Amen.

I close with these points. We are on this earth to love Jesus, to serve Jesus, to please Jesus, and to speak of Jesus to others whenever possible. Since Jesus is the Preeminent One, obeying Him and doing His will is our constant aim. **7. If I have desires that are contrary to God’s will, it is up to me to live to please Jesus and not myself.**

Early on in this sermon I mentioned God’s judicious judgments. God’s judgments are His business, not ours. Please do not in any way think I was talking about Hurricane Ian in Florida. There are some who wrongly name God’s judgments and they ought to keep their mouths shut. The people in Florida are not worse sinners than the rest of us, deserving of such an awful hurricane, possibly the biggest one to hit our country. **Luke 13:1-5 (NLT2)** *¹ About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. ² “Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?” Jesus asked. “Is that why they suffered? ³ Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. ⁴ And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too.”*

Jesus is rebuking them. He is saying, “if God does punish sinners in this way, then they themselves had better repent because all people are sinners” (Wiersbe, volume 2 pg.225. None of us are sinless, so we all are called to repent and be ready to face God while we still have time. **8. Human suffering and tragedies are not always divine punishments, and it is**

wrong for us to “play God” and pass judgment (Wiersbe, Volume 1, pg.224). Job did nothing wrong, but his friends said that it was sin in his life that led to his sufferings. No one suffered more than Jesus and He never sinned. The prophets were tortured for doing the right thing for God. All the disciples were martyred except John. We dare not call those happenings God's judgment on them.

I want to stop here and pray for those who have suffered terribly from hurricane Ian. Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus, You are the preeminent one. You see and know better than anyone the sufferings taking place from the hurricane. Lord, please open people's eyes to who you are. Move us as a nation to help them in any way possible. May the tragedy move us to work together to bring aid to them. May this occurrence not bitter people toward God but see how fragile life is and how we all need God in our lives. We pray for national repentance. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.