



Talks 16-21 of Michael Eaton's Whole Counsel of God series by Terran Williams

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## **THE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, PART 1** THE INITIAL IMPRESSION OF JESUS

### TALK 16

Contents:

- Intro
- The centrality of Christ
- His life on earth according to the gospels

### INTRODUCTION

In Genesis 3:15, right at the time of the fall of humanity, God promised that he would send someone, a descendent of Eve, who would crush the head of the devil, and would have his own heel bruised. A crushed head speaks of total defeat. A bruised heel speaks of temporary injury. Christ fulfilled this on the cross. Though injured by the devil on the cross, yet he brought ultimate destruction to the devil there.

The main theme of the Bible is Jesus. 22 of the 29 books in the New Testament mention Jesus in the very first verse.

It is such a big subject that we can hardly get our mind around it. Eaton's way is to go round the subject in 3 circles:

- 1) An immediate impression
- 2) Get the historical order of his life – how the disciples experienced him progressively
- 3) From A-Z: from his pre-existence to his exaltation

## THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST

He is everywhere in the Bible. He is central in the Christian life. He is even more central than the Father or the Spirit.

The Old Testament is all about Jesus too:

Luke 24:25-27

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Christ is the seed of the woman. Christ is the seed of Abraham. He comes from the line of Shem. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the Passover Lamb. He is the fulfillment of the Levitical system – every law, institution, sacrifice – it's all about him. He is the great King of Israel. He is the Prophet. He is the Priest. He is the Wise Man. He is the 'beloved' of the Song of Songs. He is the 'missing gap' in the book of Ecclesiastes. He is the one to be born in Bethlehem, of a virgin. It is all about him.

## HIS LIFE ON EARTH ACCORDING TO THE GOSPELS

We're not told much about his pre-30 years. The New Testament focuses only on his birth, a story about when he was 12, and then focuses in on his public ministry, but most focus in the gospels (one third) is about the last week of his life, thereby focusing on his death. The focus of the gospels is his death. For example, in the gospel of Luke, the turning point comes with these words, only 9 chapters in:

Luke 9:51

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

# WHY IS IT THAT THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIES OUT THERE TELL US SO LITTLE ABOUT JESUS' EARTHLY LIFE?

## There are three reasons:

1) The first reason they do this is that Christians so tend to over-focus on the glory of Jesus, that we neglect the earthly life of Jesus. It seems that, while our culture struggles to believe that Jesus is God, we sometimes struggle to think of him as man. Jesus was very ordinary. Which is why Judas had to identify him before the soldiers with a kiss – he looked like everyone else. Do you think Jesus was good-looking? The answer is 'no':

Isaiah 53:2

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

2) The second reason we minimize the earthly life of Jesus is that we struggle to tell the story of Jesus. There are 4 gospels that make the order of his life confusing.

3) A third and greatest reason is that his story had been under attack for the last few 100 years. The enlightenment made people sceptical about the medieval stories and myths, and they cast doubt on the gospels. In the 1800s scholars (such as Renan, and Strauss) wrote sceptical works on Jesus, dismissing his miracles. Albert Schweitzer introduced a turning point when he wrote a history of the movement of people who studied the life of Jesus. His book was 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus'. What he showed was that so-called scholar super-imposed themselves upon Jesus. The irony is that he did just the same as he tried to describe Jesus. The point is this: people were sceptical whether you could find out anything about Jesus. The 'quest' came to nothing. Bultmann, in the 1930s, would say, 'I suppose we could say Jesus existed, but that is all we could say.' Sadly, this kind of scepticism affected even Bible-believing scholars. Even they stopped writing about the life of Jesus.

Here is the funny thing about pagan scepticism: if you study the story it has the ability to stand up for itself. The more thoroughgoing you are, the more you'll find evidence. We don't need to fear any facts. After a while even Bultmann's students started challenging him! They started the 'second quest for the historical Jesus'. They started to find things in the gospel that were obviously true, such as the use of first-century Aramaic in the gospels. They started to find marks of authenticity, which is still on the rise.

Nowadays, there is the 'Third Quest for the Historical Jesus'. This quest has revealed the amount of historical and cultural details in the gospel that perfectly fit what we now know about 1st century Palestine.

Eaton then reveals his own approach to the gospels by telling us about Edwin Thiele: The biggest problem in the Bible historically was Old Testament chronology – there were total contradictions with

some dates. Then the problem was solved by a certain theologian (Edwin Thiele) who started with the assumption that the data was in fact correct. He looked for some explanations. He discovered that

- 1) Israel and Judah had different ways of numbering a king's reign when he died in the middle of a year,
- 2) For a few years Judah used Israel's method of dating,
- 3) Israel and Judah started the year at different points,
- 4) Often there are two kings reigning at the same time (e.g. sons). He solved the problem not by being sceptical but by believing his data. Eaton's point as it relates to Jesus and the gospels is this, 'What would happen if we read every verse in the 4 gospels, supposing there were no mistakes?'

**You would come to the following conclusions:**

- 1) Mark's gospel is written in chronological order.
- 2) Luke's gospel is in chronological order. Luke enlarges Mark's gospel. There is one place which is out of chronological order: the story of Jesus coming to the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-47) is brought forward (and Luke tells us it is out of order in verse 23) simply because Luke wants to let us know that this is not a success story.
- 3) John's gospel is in chronological order. John's aim is different to the other three. He tells us of Jesus' Judean ministry – whereas the other three tell us of Jesus' Galilean ministry. He tells us about the festivals. He fills in the gaps of the other three. He focuses on the festivals in Jerusalem that Jesus went to.
- 4) Jesus cleansed the temple twice – once at the beginning of his ministry (John 2), and once at the end of his ministry (Mark 11).
- 5) If we only had Mark, Luke and John there would be no conflict at all. Matthew's gospel, the first one, is the problem one. He often groups things by subject not by timing – especially in chapters 5-15. For example, he gives a sample of what Jesus taught (Matt 5-7), miracles Jesus did (Matt 8-9), and how people responded to Jesus (Matt 11-14). The rest of Matthew (chapters 1-4 and 16-28) are chronological however.

You have to trust your sources to learn anything about history. Even if they don't make sense, you assume they will make sense if you persevere.

**Illustration:** Various books written by Eaton have different 'about the author' descriptions. They appear to conflict, but they don't really. He is English, Kenyan, South African, Baptist and Pentecostal all at the same time.

So, since we can trust what we read in the gospels, what do we learn about Jesus' life?

- There is the miraculous conception. Much of the birth narratives happen when he was about 1 to 2.
- Then we have the story of him as a 12 year old.
- Then at age 30 he begins his ministry. His ministry is prepared by John the Baptist. He is anointed by the Holy Spirit. He stands up to Satan in his temptation.
- He goes to Jerusalem where he starts his ministry. He presents himself to Nicodemus in John 3.

It is a kingdom of new birth. But they reject Jesus and kill John the Baptist. So he transfers his ministry in Galilee. This fulfils Isaiah 9 – it was in Galilee where the light would appear.

## THE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, PART 2

### CHRONOLOGY OF JESUS' LIFE AND THE ORDER IN WHICH THE DISCIPLES DISCOVERED JESUS

#### TALK 17

- Contents:
- His life on earth according to the gospels, cont'd
- The claims Jesus made about himself

### C. HIS LIFE ON EARTH ACCORDING TO THE GOSPELS, CONTINUED

#### What was the flow of his life-story?

Each gospel begins with a prologue or title. Then we see his infant years. Then we see the ministry of John the Baptizer, making it clear that the Saviour would be a spiritual one. He is tested in the desert, and is baptized in the Spirit. Then he launches his ministry in Jerusalem. But they reject him (they kill John the Baptist). Then he sets up his headquarters in Capernaum in Galilee. From that base, he goes on a few missionary tours. Miracles and healings draw much attention to himself. He even banishes sickness from an entire town. Mark 1:35: he came primarily to preach, and he goes on tours.

At the end of the first tour in Galilee, there was rising hostility (Mark 3:6). He withdraws.

He goes on a second missionary tour around Galilee, and preaches the famous Sermon on Mt (Matt 5-7), appoints his twelve. Then takes a break and keeps quiet for a while.

He goes on a third missionary tour around Galilee. All the time it is becoming more dangerous. He knows he's going to die, but takes steps to protect his life from premature death.

A turning point comes (Mark 8, Matthew 16) when he goes to the region of Caesarea, Philippi (a place of safety) and finally discloses to the disciples that he is the Messiah. (At this stage they probably haven't realized he is the divine Messiah). From that time, Jesus began to explain that he would die in Jerusalem and resurrect. The disciples refuse to believe what Jesus says, and live in a kind of denial. Then he stays in Galilee, but without a settled base.

John tells us while all this is happening that he keeps on going to Jerusalem, three times a year in fact. Luke 9:51 tells us that he goes to Jerusalem one last time – to die. Luke 9 onwards records Jesus' circuitous journey towards Jerusalem.

Lastly, the gospels record the last week of Jesus' life in great detail. It culminates in his death and then his resurrection.

Jesus becomes increasingly famous, and increasingly in danger the whole time.

Interestingly, the religious leaders of Jerusalem had decided not to crucify Jesus during Passover, but they did anyway.

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus kept the Passover the day before he was crucified. But John tells us that he was crucified on Passover. How can this be? There are different possible explanations – Eaton mentions two:

- 1) With massive crowds in Jerusalem (and limited space) they distributed Passover over two days,
- 2) The different gospels have different starting times for the Passover.

Pilate slows the whole process down. Starting late Thursday night, Jesus goes to 5 back-to-back trials before he is crucified on Friday. Pilate eventually allows Jesus' death to go forward.

Saturday, nothing happens. The law forbids much activity. The disciples are hiding, but they then meet in Jerusalem to try give Jesus a decent burial. Just before dawn, several women go to the tomb. To their surprise the stone is rolled away. Jesus is there, but they thought he was the gardener.

At his resurrection he says, 'I am going to my Father and to your Father'. By this he clarifies that his relationship with the Father as the unique Son of God is different to our relationship with the Father as adopted children of God.

There was more than one ascension. On the Sunday he resurrected he had ascended already. Those last 40 days, he wasn't on earth visiting heaven. He was in heaven, visiting earth. In this 6 weeks he trained his disciples how to see himself in the Old Testament. At the end of it all, he departs and leaves planet earth for the last time. Later he would appear to Saul of Tarsus in his physical body, but none since then.

**Recommended book:** 'Jesus and the gospels' by Michael Eaton.

## WHAT KIND OF PERSON WAS HE?

Initially the disciples only see he is a man. Then they realize that he is the Messiah. When he conquers death they start looking at him with new eyes (John 20:28: 'Thomas said, 'My Lord and my God'''). There is much we can learn in the gospels about his human character.

We notice how he would often interview people. We see how he handles people. He never said a harsh word to a woman, or a real sinner. He only spoke harshly to religious leaders who were preventing

people from being saved. He was called 'the Friend of Sinners'. The word 'sinner' in the gospels means 'those who are so corrupt that they aren't allowed in the synagogue'. People were disgusted with the people Jesus was fraternizing with.

He was clever in how he dealt with Pharisees who challenged him. He would answer questions with answers. He would reveal the heart of the person asking questions. They ask questions in an attempt to get him into trouble. But he asks them questions that point to himself. Finally, they stop asking him questions.

He was so prayerful. He spent extended time in solitude.

He never sinned. He challenged his enemies to find a single sin in him. They couldn't. His disciples couldn't find a sin either.

## THE CLAIMS JESUS MADE ABOUT HIMSELF

Some called him 'Rabbi' or 'Teacher' as a form of honour.

Then there were titles that referred to him as the Messiah: 'the Son of David', 'the Christ', 'the Son of God'. Jesus never openly called himself 'Christ' or 'Son of David'. Why is this? It is because people's understanding of the Messiah was too political at that time. They thought that the Messiah would, like the revolutionary Judas Maccabeus (2nd century C), overthrow Roman power by military might. But Jesus refused to be understood like that. That's why he often ignored / rebuked people and demons who called him by Messianic titles.

The title 'Son of God' had the a sense of deity about it. It implied that he was divine:

John 5:18

For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

He even claimed to be the one of whom the entire Scriptures are about.

John 5:39

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.

Jesus regularly used the phrase 'I have come...' (for example, Matthew 5:17). This implied his pre-existence.



He said things that would be arrogant in the mouth of any other human. He presented himself as the answer:

Matthew 11:28

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Many people think that Jesus was just a pale Galilean wandering around telling people to be nice to each other. Many speak highly of the Sermon on the Mt (Matthew 5-7) as though it is just a lot of moral teaching. But if they read it rightly, they'd see the claims Christ makes about himself in it. For example:

Matthew 7:26-27

<sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Jesus is claiming that he, and his teaching, is the only safe foundation to live one's life on. Also, in the Sermon of the Mt, he even assumes the right to upgrade and replace the Law of Moses with himself and his own teachings:

Matthew 5:27

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you ....

In the Sermon on the Mt, he even claims to be the final judge, with the authority to banish people from himself forever:

Matthew 7:21, 23

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

In the gospels we see him forgiving sins, we see him giving people foretastes of the final resurrection:

John 11:25, 43-44

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. ... When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

In the gospels he is so humble and meek, and yet in between the lines, so to speak, there are these claims about his Messiah-ship and divinity. Most notable is the way he receives worship from Thomas.

John 20:27-29

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus accepts the worship! In the book of Revelation, not even angels received worship. But since Jesus is divine, he receives worship.

### The title 'Son of Man'

Jesus often called himself 'the Son of Man'. It wasn't a title used commonly. Jesus took it from a description of a man in Daniel 7:

Daniel 7:13-14

There was someone like a son of man ... he approached the Ancient of Day ... and was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him ... his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

The phrase 'son of man' just meant 'I', 'a human being'. But Jesus takes that title, and he gives it the meaning of Daniel 7:13-14. For example:

Mark 13:26

Jesus said, 'At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.'

What really perplexed people is the way Jesus spoke of the Son of Man suffering. There was nothing in Daniel 7 about the Son of Man suffering. What he does is put Daniel 7 (i.e. the Son of Man) and Isaiah 53 (the prophetic section that speaks of the Suffering Servant who for the salvation of Israel) together:

Mark 8:31

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

## What the phrase 'the coming of the Son of Man' means

Jesus' phrase 'the coming of the Son of Man' is often misunderstood to always mean Jesus' second coming to the world. But if we look at Daniel 7 we see the Son of Man coming to (not from) the Father and receiving his kingdom. In other words the phrase 'the coming of the Son of Man' usually refers to his ascension from the earth when he went in the clouds to the Father and received his kingdom. When we realize this we read many verses very differently. For example Matthew 24:1-35 is often misunderstood to be speaking about the end of the world – which according to verse 34 will happen within one generation of the time Jesus said it. How do we make sense of this? The answer lies in Daniel 7:13-14. The 'coming of the Son of Man' doesn't refer to his coming to the world from the Father, but rather to his coming from the world to his Father in ascension. Look at Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:2, 30

2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." (This refers to the overthrow of Jerusalem in AD 70)

30 "At that time ... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

34 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

But we know that Jesus did not return in AD 70, nor did he return within one generation from his words. But nonetheless he did ascend. He wasn't talking about the second coming in verse 30, but rather about his ascension! Then it makes sense.

On this note, Matthew 24:1-34 is often misunderstood to speak about the end of the world. But read it again:

Matthew 24:6-8

6 You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.

These are not signs of the end, but only signs that the end is not yet. These are signs of the beginning (v8).

Matthew 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The 'end' here does not refer to the end of the world, but to the end of the Jerusalem temple. Jesus speaks of the speed at which the gospel will get out immediately following his death and resurrection, which is what the book of Acts tells us happened.

Jesus came to the Father and then demonstrated his ascension to the world in a few ways:

1) he poured out his Spirit on his church

2) he sent out his apostles to all the world 3) he brought judgment on Jerusalem in AD 70. These fulfill Jesus' words that 'the world will see the Son of Man coming'. The second coming of Jesus, however, will be the final visible expression of his kingdom power to this world. It is just not the only fulfillment of Jesus' words. Matthew 24:36, however, seems to start speaking about his second coming not just the end of Jerusalem:

Matthew 24:36

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Jesus here (in verse 36) shifts to the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus says there will be no signs that will warn us that it is imminent. However, the epistles do give us one sign that Christ's coming is coming nearer ... the progress of the gospel.

Interestingly, we can have foretastes of the second coming. Every tragedy is a form of judgment-foretaste, whether on a personal or nationwide scale. AD 70, the destruction of Jerusalem, was the foretaste. Jesus told the Christians to run for their lives. History books tell us that no Christian lost their life in AD 70. Eusebius tells us the Christians escaped to Pella.

Jesus didn't tell the disciples when the kingdom would come (i.e. the Second Coming) but he did tell them how the kingdom would come:

Acts 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup> So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

This is how we will move towards the end of the world: all nations will be reached through the empowering of the Spirit.

Acts 1:9-11

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Don't stand there staring up into the sky. Get on with what he has for you to do. Go make disciples of all nations. This is a good Scripture to correct the prophetic cranks who always try predict the end of the world.

## THE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, PART 3

### THE ETERNAL STORY OF THE SON OF GOD

#### TALK 18

Contents:

- A recap of the way the disciples experienced Jesus
- Jesus' pre-existence
- Jesus' virgin birth
- H. Articulating Jesus' nature

#### A RECAP OF THE WAY THE DISCIPLES EXPERIENCED JESUS

The disciples first of all discovered Jesus was a genuine man. He looked Jewish. He spoke with a Galilean accent. He could be hungry, thirsty, tired, angry, upset and sad. He grew in knowledge. He asked questions.

He lived as a human being. His deity was, in some way, veiled. He didn't live upon it. He didn't know how a television worked. He didn't function with omniscience in his head – for example, he didn't know the date of his second coming. He prayed for guidance. He needed to pray. He lived by faith, in dependence on the Father and the Spirit.

Did he do miracles because he was divine? The answer is no. He did it by faith, and in the power of the Spirit. With regard to the cursing of the fig tree, and the feeding of the 5000 – he even suggested that his disciples could have done these miracles too.

They were admiring him as a great human and teacher. Only in Christ's resurrection, and after the Spirit's outpouring, did they begin to understand that he was divine. They discovered him as a man before they discovered him to be divine. That is similar to the process many people go through

– a non-Christian thinks of him as a great moral teacher, and then, at the time of their salvation, discovers that he is more than just a man; he is divine.

## JESUS' PRE-EXISTENCE

The Son of God existed before he was born into this world as Jesus. He made a decision to become a human in eternity before he was born.

Philippians 2:6-7

<sup>6</sup> [Jesus Christ] who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be exploited; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

John emphasises this too:

John 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.

## JESUS' VIRGIN BIRTH

In Isaiah 7 we see king Ahaz of Jerusalem under attack from Assyria. He could do three things:

- 1) submit and pay taxes to Assyria,
- 2) team up with Aram and Israel,
- 3) nothing. The third option is the one suggested by Isaiah, the prophet. He tells Ahaz to not worry about it and to ask God for a sign that he will fulfil his promise. Ahaz refuses to ask God for a sign. Isaiah then rebukes Ahaz and says that God will bring a sign anyway.

Isaiah 7:14

The Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us').

The word 'virgin' here is not to be translated 'young woman' (Hebrew: *elmah*) as some sceptical scholars suggest. How do we find out the meaning of a word?

- 1) We find out by listening to the way they are used. Throughout the Old Testament we see that the word 'elmah' means young unmarried virgin woman – simply by judging the usage of the word. The

sceptical scholars say that the word 'bethulah' (not used in Isaiah 7:14) refers to virgin. But throughout the Old Testament it is clear that this is a wrong meaning (simply by judging the usage of the word) – in fact it means young woman, but who is possibly married. Also other languages similar to Hebrew (i.e. Ugaritic) show 'elmah' to mean 'virgin'.

2) Or we find out just by listening to what has been said. Isaiah 7:14 would make no sense if this 'great sign' would be that a woman would be a baby. But Matthew gets it right:

Matthew 1:22-23

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:<sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

The one objection to this prophecy referring to Jesus is that it seemed like the prophecy referred to something that would happen right then. But Eaton provides some explanations.

Just two chapters later, Isaiah 9:1-7 tells us more about this child mentioned in Isaiah 7:14:

Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7

In the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

And of course it all happened, just as Isaiah said! The prophecies of Isaiah 7 and 9 came about. Israel and Aram were wiped out within 65 years by Assyria. Jesus was born of a virgin! He was really Immanuel, God among us! He ministered in Galilee. Jesus alone fulfilled this prophecy.

## WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS' VIRGIN BIRTH?

It points to the uniqueness of Jesus. Jesus was no ordinary being. He is entirely unique in the history of the world, and God's plans to save the world.

It points to the sinlessness of Jesus, the new Adam. We are sinners who through birth are 'in Adam', but Jesus was not in Adam. He was a sinless new Adam who was born in a different line to the sinful human race:

Luke 1:34-35

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

It points to the fact that Jesus is a new head pioneering a new humanity. He couldn't have saved us as sinners, if he were sinful. In the first Adam we all fell, but in the second Adam there is the potential that we are all saved, since there is atonement for the whole world's sin. In the same way he brought the first Adam into the world directly, so he did with the second Adam. Because Jesus was born of a virgin, we have the great privilege of being in Christ, the second Adam.

## ARTICULATING JESUS' NATURE

In the history of the church, these things were intensely studied. They asked questions: 'How could Jesus be God and man?', 'How do we talk about the person of Jesus Christ?' There were several heresies in the first few centuries after Christ ...

The Ebionites denied the deity of Christ. They believed he was just a man, and denied his deity. Interestingly, they were the successors of the Judaizers mentioned in the New Testament.

The Docetists denied the humanity of Christ. They believed that he was God, and that he only seemed to be human, but he wasn't really. There were people who were denying that Jesus had come in the flesh. The letter of 1 John deals with this heresy. That is why he starts his letter affirming that Jesus was a real man who you could see, touch and talk to. In 2 and 3 John he calls people that denied Jesus' humanity deceivers. Interestingly, a little bit of this got into Islam. Mohammed had contact with Docetists. That is why he taught that Jesus only seemed to be crucified, but in fact God replaced him on the cross with another person who looked like him.

Arius denied the full deity of Jesus. Though Christians affirmed that Jesus was both God and human, the controversy continued. In the 4th century Arius, a false teacher, called Jesus 'a god'. He claimed that Christ was a created being, who was created to be 'a god'. He had an inferior deity. But this was rightly rejected by the church, who in opposition to it, wrote the Nicene Creed which affirmed that Jesus was 'God of God, Light of Light, of one substance with the Father'.

Appolinarius denied the fully humanity of Jesus. He was a trichotomist, who believed that the human being consists of three bits – body, soul and spirit. Taking this view, he taught that Jesus had a body, and a soul, but instead of having a human spirit, he had God. The church condemned this because in effect it claimed that Jesus was not fully human, only two third's human, so to speak.

Nestorius said Jesus was two persons with two natures. Like Arius, but with a different spin, he denied the full deity of Jesus. He taught that Jesus was a man, who at some stage (probably his



baptism) became the dwelling of God. God came and lived in him. He was a man who became divine while God lived in him. In other words, he was two persons with two natures.

Eutychus said Jesus was one person, with one nature. He believed Jesus' nature was a hybrid of humanity and divinity.

Finally, and in rejection of all the above heresies, in the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the church clarified that the teaching of the Bible tells us that Jesus is 'one person, but with two natures – human and divine; he is fully man and fully God'. It is for this reason, the phrase 'God became man' is not so accurate. The phrase wrongly suggests that he stopped being God. The better language is 'the Word became flesh', or 'the Son of God took upon himself human nature, without ceasing to be divine'.

Could we say more than the council of Chalcedon did about Jesus? The answer is, probably not. If there is a difference between Christians then and now, it is that we rightly emphasise Jesus' humanity more than they did. Interestingly, the church then didn't take Mary's humanity seriously, as seen in their teaching that she was perpetually a virgin. This is the effect of Plato, where we despise matter and earthliness, and esteem spirit. Jesus was a human being who was tempted as we are, but because he was also divine he was able to overcome those temptations. 'Tis mystery all, let earth adore, let angel minds explore' said Wesley of how God took flesh upon himself in that stable. The Son of God was born in a cave where they keep the animals. It was dirty. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...

John 1:14, 18

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only [Son], who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

One person was both God and man at the same time! He was man as though he was not God. And he was God as though he was not man.

Why was it important that Jesus was both God and man? The main reason is because he came to die for our sins. If he wasn't a man he could not die for us. If he wasn't God, he would not have been sinless and therefore able to carry our sins.

# THE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, PART 4

## THE CROSS (GAL 6)

### TALK 19

Contents:

- The suffering and sympathy of Jesus
- The centrality of the cross of Christ in the Old and New Testaments

## THE SUFFERING AND SYMPATHY OF JESUS

Luke 2:52

And as Jesus grew up, he increased in wisdom and in favor with God and people.

Jesus was fully human. And he suffered as a human. Jesus' parents offered a pigeon on behalf of Jesus (Luke 2:24) – this was a sign of his poverty. The son of a carpenter, Jesus was poor most of his life. Jesus' friends caused him suffering. He experienced misunderstanding, betrayal, and injustice from friends and enemies. Pilate, after declaring him innocent, condemns him to death anyway. He handled this suffering so well. He was tempted and tested at all points, and yet did not sin.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

He went through all this suffering so that he could sympathize with us, and feel for us. He experienced every kind of temptation. Now he is our high priest who is there for us. We can live on him, and on his grace.

He has experienced it all. He wept over the death of a friend (John 11:35). He wept because everyone else was weeping – even though he was soon to raise him from the dead.

But Jesus' main suffering was his death on the cross.

## J. THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Galatians 6:14

<sup>14</sup> May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

The big thing in the story of Jesus is the story of his cross. Paul would only boast in the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is even more important than the teaching of Jesus, or the miracles of Jesus, or the example of Jesus, or the church of which Jesus is head. The Lord Jesus Christ – and his cross – is the centre of everything we should glory in. The cross is central to the whole Bible. For example, one third of the gospels are concerned with the death of Jesus. Also, the Lord's Supper, which is Christ's last word to the disciples, is all about the death of Jesus. Jesus changes the Passover meal. Instead of giving them meat he gives them bread, and he points to the significance of his death on their behalf. The cup is, he says, his own blood. Jesus wants them, and us, to remember his death and the significance of his death. The death of Jesus keeps the church of Jesus alive. Our main message to the world is the cross.

### THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Passover lamb of 1300BC pointed to the cross. It was the way of salvation from God's judgment. The lamb takes the punishment the Israelites deserve. Although there are many lambs that died during the Passover, God speaks of one lamb. The lamb's blood was painted above and beside the door. The firstborn son of every family will die under judgement, unless he is under the blood of the lamb. Can you imagine the situation on that Passover night? Some people may have thought of themselves as quite good and therefore did not shelter under the blood, and they died for it. No matter how good a person was, his goodness did him no good. Some people were so sinful, and yet if they were under the blood of the lamb, they were safe from judgment. No matter how bad he was, he was alright. Our goodness cannot help us, and our badness cannot hinder us – the only thing that matters is whether we're under the blood of the lamb. Nationality too did not save people. Probably there were even some Egyptians that also sheltered under the blood, and they were saved too. They were not judged because they put their faith in the blood of the lamb.

The temple sacrifices all pointed to the cross. When a person would bring an innocent animal, they would lean on the head of the animal, putting the guilt of their sins on the animal. Then the priest would slaughter the animal on behalf of the sins of the people. Then, once the animal was sacrificed, the person would be able to talk to God.

The prophecies pointed to the cross. Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 for example.

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Psalm 22:1, 16-18

<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? <sup>16</sup> Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. <sup>17</sup> All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. <sup>18</sup> They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

## THE STORY OF ABEL AND CAIN POINTS TOWARDS THE CROSS

Genesis 4:2-5

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> But Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour.

Abel, the first person mentioned in the line of Adam, offered an animal sacrifice to God. Hebrews 11 says that by faith, Abel offers an animal. Animals were made on the same day as humans (i.e. Day Six) and therefore served as a substitute. Abel had this idea that if he offered an animal on behalf of himself, he would be accepted. Cain, on the other hand, brings a vegetable offering, symbolizing his own efforts. Abel trusts in the death of a substitute to be accepted by God. Cain trusts in his own works. Abel is accepted by God. Cain is rejected. This was pointing towards the cross. We don't come to God on the basis of our works, but on the basis of Christ's death on our behalf.

## THE CROSS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The gospels highlight the cross. Luke 9:51 reminds us that the cross was the destination of Jesus. Jesus said that he came to serve, by laying down his life as a ransom for many, which means 'everyone' (Mark 10:43-45). John the Baptists says of Jesus, 'Behold the lamb of God, who dies for the sins of the world.'

The book of Acts speaks of the cross incessantly. The opening gospel message by Peter speaks of the cross as God's deliberate plan to get his will done (Acts 2:23). All the evangelistic sermons say that God put Jesus forward on the cross. He was 'hanging on a tree' (Acts 10:39), which alludes to the Old Testament law that 'cursed is someone who hangs upon a tree' (which is what happened in the death of Absalom, David's son). God arranged things that Jesus would get the worst death.

Then the epistles speak of Jesus so much. For example Paul says to the Corinthians the following:

1 Corinthians 1:18-24

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." [c] <sup>20</sup> Where are the wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It was perceived as crazy that an Israelite man who died on a cross somewhere was God's method of saving the human race. But, indeed it was God's method. The cross, when believed in, brings down the power of God's forgiveness, and the power of the Spirit. The cross is the power of God to save us, forgive us, get us to heaven. Amazingly, Jesus right now presents his blood to the Father on our behalf. He points his Father to his blood. The blood of Christ gets us to heaven, and keeps us in heaven. For example, could we fall even in heaven? No, because the blood of Christ will prevent it. Amazingly, even heaven has been sprinkled with the blood of Christ (see Hebrews 9:21-23). It only had to be done once. Jesus' sacrifice was once and for all, unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, which needed to be repeated. The sacrifice of Jesus makes us feel clean forever.

Hebrews 9:12-14

<sup>12</sup> He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

The New Testament is full of mention of the cross. For example, there is 2 Corinthians 5:

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. ... <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be a sin-offering for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

When Jesus took our sins, we took his righteousness. It was a double exchange! Our sins were put on Jesus. His righteousness was put on us. He takes our sins upon himself. He became a sacrifice for sin on our behalf. The cross was the dumping ground of all the sin in the world. When God looked at Jesus on the cross, he saw nothing but sin. Now when he looks at us, he sees nothing but righteousness.

## THEN THERE IS THE BOOK OF REVELATION:

Revelation 5:5, 6, 9

<sup>5</sup> Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” <sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center before the throne ... <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God members of every tribe and language and people and nation.

Even heaven is glorying in the cross of Jesus, who is both the Lion and the Lamb!

## IT'S IN THE EPISTLE FROM PETER TOO

1 Peter 1:18-19

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 Peter 2:24

24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

## IT'S IN THE EPISTLE FROM JOHN TOO

1 John 2:1-2

<sup>1</sup> My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 1:7

<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all [b] sin. Jesus is the sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' death is more important than anything. If we are not preaching the cross of Christ morning, noon and night, we're missing the great theme of the gospel.

Focusing on the cross will make us less infatuated with this world:

Galatians 6:14-17

<sup>14</sup> May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. <sup>16</sup> Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God. <sup>17</sup> From now on, let no one cause me trouble ... It's all about the cross. Even the resurrection is primarily evidence that God has accepted the sacrifice of the cross.

## THE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, PART 5

### THE RESULTS OF THE CROSS (ROM 3)

#### TALK 20

Contents:

- Seven aspects of salvation Jesus achieved on the cross
- The necessity of receiving salvation by faith

**Eaton starts with a recap of the teaching about Christ so far.**

#### K. SEVEN ASPECTS OF SALVATION JESUS ACHIEVED ON THE CROSS

Romans 3:22-26

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement (can also be translated 'propitiation'), through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice (can also be translated 'righteousness'), because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice (can also be translated 'righteousness') at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

These verses have three of the great words of the Bible: 1) Justification (v24), 2) Propitiation (v25), and 3) Redemption (v24). These words sound technical now, though they weren't technical words in the first century.

What was happening on the cross? When Jesus cried out 'Why have you forsaken me?' what was the answer to that question? Everyone admitted Jesus had not sinned. So it wasn't his own sin that was being punished. Jesus, like the lamb of the sacrificial system, was spotless. The answer is that the Lord Jesus was a substitute for us. He bore our sins. He took our place. He lived the life we should have lived. He died the death we should have died. God put on him the sins of the entire human race. He, the righteous one, died in the place of the unrighteous.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

God took the entire sins of the human race and laid them on Jesus. He let his anger against sin come upon Jesus rather than upon us. He bore our sins in the body on the tree.

So what was the result of this substitutionary death? Let us look at Romans 3 for insight into the first three aspects of salvation:

Romans 3:22-26

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.<sup>25</sup> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement (can also be translated 'propitiation'), through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice (can also be translated 'righteousness'), because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—<sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice (can also be translated 'righteousness') at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.



## CHRIST'S SACRIFICE JUSTIFIES US (V24).

### The first achievement of the cross is justification.

We are declared righteous. Because Jesus takes our sin from us, it as if he were the sinner. He bears the punishment for our sin. Because he is bearing our sin, God declares us forgiven, free and righteous in his sight. Just as he takes our sins, we take his righteousness. There is a double exchange, a double substitution. We are declared righteous. Not just forgiven (which is the removal of sin), but righteous (which is the bestowal of something).

Justification doesn't take place inside of us, like for example the new birth takes place in us. In fact it takes place in the courtroom of God, in the heavenly throne room. It is like a Judge saying over a sinner, 'I pronounce you not guilty.' We are released from guilt and condemnation. It is not that we are just off the hook, it is that we are declared positively righteous, as though we are as righteous as Jesus himself.

Verse 25 says, 'He did this to demonstrate his justice (can also be translated 'righteousness'), because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished'. What does this mean? It refers to how many people became children of God even before Jesus died upon the cross. Think of Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah etc. God had 'passed over' their sins even before Jesus had died. We could say, 'Hey, God said he would punish sins, but why hasn't he punished these people?' Paul explains that God passed over those former sins, because one day the price was due to be paid by Jesus. These people in the Old Testament had salvation given to them in advance, because God had ordained that the payment would be made later on when Jesus died upon the cross. This showed God's righteousness and justice. He wasn't being unjust in saving Abraham. God is righteous. Sin is a real problem, even for God. He can't let sin go unpunished. That would be an unrighteous thing to do. But on the cross, he showed his justice or righteousness, by paying the penalty for our sins himself. The only way God can treat us as though we're righteous, is if sin is dealt with. God can't sweep our sin under the carpet. He must punish sin. And so he did punish sin – he punished it in his Son. He is both 'just' and the 'justifier' (v26).

The righteousness of Jesus comes upon us. It is a gift of grace freely given us. It covers us. It is like what used to happen in banks. You used to sometimes get extra money credited to your account. That is the meaning of justification. The righteousness of Jesus is 'credited to your account'. We didn't deserve it. In God's sight, we are credited with Christ's righteousness, forever and ever. Justification is something that happens outside of us. It happens in heaven and not in our hearts.

The fact that we are justified in God's sight helps us to pray. How can someone who has done sinful things come before a Holy God? The answer is that we approach God not on the basis of what we have done, but on the basis of the blood of Jesus which has given us a covering righteousness.

## CHRIST'S SACRIFICE REDEEMS US

### The second achievement of the cross is redemption.

'We all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus' (v24). We are redeemed. What does it mean? It means the release of a slave by the payment of a price. In the ancient world 50% of Rome were slaves. In those days, a slave could buy their own release. In ancient Israel, similarly, a person could be released from the death penalty through the payment of a price. This was also called 'redemption'. What are the implications of this teaching?

It means we're slaves to sin, and we cannot rescue ourselves, but need someone else to release us through the payment of a price. Jesus said, 'Everyone who sins is a slave to sin' (John 8:34). What does it mean to be a slave to sin? It means we're captive to a) the power of sin and b) to punishment or condemnation that the sin deserves.

We can't be a godly person without Jesus. Try and see for yourself. Our resolutions come to nothing. Here is a verse which speaks of the bondage of sin:

Luke 11:21-22

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

This verse tells us that sin, or Satan using our sin, keeps us imprisoned or in bondage. But when Christ, who is 'someone stronger' spoken of here, comes he rescues us from our bondage to sin's power.

We can't remove our own fallen nature, our tendency to sin from when we were born. In Psalm 51:5, David says, 'Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.' Even the sweetest little children soon turn out to be wicked sinners. We're born wicked and we start going astray. William Wordsworth described our sinfulness poetically like this: 'Trailing clouds of glory, from God we come. But shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy'. Not only does sin become more powerful in our lives, we also deserve more and more punishment because of our sin.

But praise God, Christ redeems us – he releases us by his blood from both the penalty or punishment our sin deserves, and then he also begins to set us free from the power of that sin in our lives. In him we have redemption, by the payment of a price.

## CHRIST'S SACRIFICE TURNS AWAY GOD'S ANGER TOWARD US

### The third achievement of the cross is propitiation.

'God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement (can also be translated 'propitiation'), through the shedding of his blood' (v25). Propitiation is a particular kind of sacrifice. It is one that turns away anger. For example, you have a quarrel with your wife, then you try appease her anger by buying her flowers. It is a sacrifice that stops the offended party from being angry.

God poured out his hostility, his anger against sin, onto Jesus. God put Christ forward. God is not angry with you anymore. God's anger against sin is a reality:

Romans 1:18

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

God has a holy hatred against sin. It is not that he has a bad temper though. Sin is so offensive to God that he must punish it. We can't have a relationship with God while that anger is getting in the way. Can God love us and be angry at us at the same time? Yes. God combines a holy anger and a love toward sinners. He loves the person, but he hates the sin.

Christ himself is the propitiation. That is the answer to the question Jesus asked on the cross, 'God, why have you forsaken me?' God abandoned Jesus on the cross because at that moment he became the sin-bearer. That is why Jesus at this point does not call him Father, but rather just 'God'. At that moment, fellowship with God had been lost. Amazingly, the sky even turned dark for three hours. The universe frowned upon Jesus, the sin-bearer. But then eventually he said, 'It is finished!' This means the payment had been made. Then Jesus breathed his last. He lay down his life. He poured out his soul unto death.

What does this mean for us? It means that, if we are in Christ, God has no anger toward us at all. The cross swallows up his anger! There is no anger in his heart toward us – even if we still sin. Of course, our sin displeases God, but our sin will not cause God to banish us in condemnation.

God is love. Is that whole truth? It is the whole truth for you if you are in Christ. For the Christian, God is no longer angry, just loving.

## CHRIST'S SACRIFICE RECONCILES US

**The fourth achievement of the cross is reconciliation.**

2 Corinthians 5:19

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

If justification is the removal of guilt and the bestowal of acceptance, and redemption is the removal of bondage and the bestowal of freedom, and propitiation is the removal of God's anger and the bestowal of peace, then reconciliation is the removal of God's enmity and the bestowal of friendship.

God is no longer our enemy. Outside of Christ, there is a double enmity between ourselves and God. We don't get on well with God, and he doesn't get on well with us. But Jesus reconciled us to God through his death. God is now our friend.

## CHRIST'S DEATH SANCTIFIES US

**The fifth achievement of the cross is sanctification.**

Hebrews 10:14

By one sacrifice he has 'made perfect' (can be translated 'sanctified') forever those who are being made holy.

The word 'sanctify' means 'to cleanse, to make holy, to set apart for special use'. However, it is used in different ways in the New Testament. Although sanctification can be taken to mean the lifetime process of being made more like Jesus, the way it's being used here speaks of what happens instantly when we're saved. The very second we trust in Christ, we are sanctified in God's sight. There is a cleansing in God's sight. We are made holy in God's sight. We are set apart for special use. We become a saint, a 'holy one'. Contrary to Catholic teaching about sainthood, we are canonized the second we believe. That is why Paul keeps on calling all Christians 'saints'. Stain and pollution and uncleanness are removed. We become a saint by the blood of Jesus.

## CHRIST'S DEATH TRANSFERS US INTO ANOTHER KINGDOM

**The sixth achievement of the cross is transferral.**

Colossians 1:13

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

We emigrate out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. We are new citizens of a new country. We have a new king, Christ. Justification is our passport. We now live under the leadership of Christ.

## CHRIST'S SACRIFICE ADOPTS US

**The seventh achievement of the cross is adoption.**

Ephesians 1:5

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ

## THE NECESSITY OF RECEIVING SALVATION BY FAITH

Romans 3:25

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith

As we see in this verse, salvation doesn't automatically come to us. Though Jesus has died for the whole human race. Salvation is available to all:

Matthew 22:5

'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

**All seven aspects of salvation are available, but are to be received by faith.**

- 1) We must see that Christ on the cross has accomplished salvation for us.
- 2) We must go to God, thank him for salvation, and put our trust in Christ, and in the sacrificial blood that achieved salvation for us.

At that second, God pours salvation upon us ...

2 Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

In the same way God created the universe out of nothing, so salvation comes to you out of nothing you have done. We make no contribution. God does it all.

Do you know these things? It all takes place by the blood of Jesus. He bore our sins upon his body on that tree (1 Peter 2:24). God has done it all in Christ! There is justification, redemption, propitiation, reconciliation, transfer, sanctification and adoption.

Everyone needs to lay hold of salvation for themselves. We need to go talk to God and Jesus and lay hold of them.

Acts 16:29-31

29The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ...

Being saved is simple. Believe in the Lord Jesus. That man went from nothing to a full member of the church through simple faith in Jesus.

## THE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, PART 6

### THE RESURRECTION

#### TALK 21: THE FIRST 8:30 MINUTES

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- M. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus

## THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Jesus was raised from the dead physically. He could eat food for example. However his body had new powers to it. He could pass through walls for example or travel across great distances instantly. What is the significance of the resurrection to us?

1) The resurrection is the mark of authenticity. It is the proof that he is who he said he is, as the following two verses show:

Matthew 12:38-42

<sup>38</sup>Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." <sup>39</sup> He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup>For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

John 2:19

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

2) The resurrection is the sign that God accepted the cross. The Bible speaks of some sacrifices being acceptable (e.g. Romans 12:1-2). The high priest, who entered the Most Holy Place once a year to offer a sacrifice, had these bells around his robe which rattled and made a noise. As long as one could hear the jingling from outside they knew he was alive and his sacrifice had been accepted. The resurrection is the sign that the sacrifice of the cross had been accepted, as we see in this verse ...

Romans 4:24-25

God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

3) The resurrection of Jesus is something we share in now. We are alive with Christ now. We are united to him in his resurrection:

Romans 6:4

Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

4) The resurrection is the proof of our own future resurrection. Christ's resurrection is the forerunner of our own resurrection:

Romans 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Interestingly, even the unsaved will resurrect because of this resurrection power, except that they will resurrect to condemnation not glory.

## THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father. What is he doing there? He is ruling as king of the universe. He reigns until he has put all his enemies under his feet. He is also presenting himself to the Father, saying 'Accept them on the basis of my performance not their performance' (1 John 2:1). He is also interceding on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25). This does not mean he is begging. As the royal king he is putting requests to the Father. Fascinatingly, the entire chapter of John 17 is Jesus praying, on the last day of his life, to the Father as though he were already in heaven. So John 17 is a sample of the kind of prayers Jesus is praying now. He prays, amongst other things, that we might be protected from the evil one (v11), that we might be one (v11), and that we would be with him in glory (v24).