



©2023 Ginger Hertenstein Conley

SERMON TITLE: Who Is Jesus?

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:8-15

DATE January 15, 2023

Online service at www.fpcd.org/live

Read also Genesis 2 and 3 (see below)

Many years ago, in the centuries following the death and resurrection of Jesus, the world was a different place. There was no internet; no 7,000 TV stations; no telephone; no cell phone; no trains, planes, or automobiles. There was no electricity or flush toilets. No playlists, and no recording of fav shows.

Imagine a world with none of those distractions. What did people do?

They held councils. They met and talked about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We recited the Nicene Creed. It was written by a council which met in Nicaea in 325 A.D. to figure out who Jesus is. In 381 A.D., another Council amplified, adopted and authorized the Nicene Creed as “a true expression of the faith.”

Today we have the UN, the CDC, the WHO, but back then they had the ECC—the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

Statements of faith are very important—knowing what you believe and who you believe. Regardless of our distractions, we need to understand these questions:

1. What is the problem?
2. Who is Jesus?
3. How is Jesus the solution?

Everyone knows something is wrong in the world. No matter how healthy or ill our body is --- no one is here from 1900! That is the biggest problem! Christians believe Jesus is the biggest solution because he gives us victory over death.

We need to be able to articulate “Why I am a Christian” by understanding who Jesus is.

Genesis defines the problem as spiritual. We learn that:

- God created the world and the results were good.
- There is another spiritual force or power in this world that refutes God’s plan of goodness and life.
- This opposing force led to rebellion.
- Jesus defeats the opposing spiritual powers, giving victory of life over death.

Today let’s join the ancients and think about spiritual things. So just who is Jesus? Let’s READ Colossians 2:8-15.

Isaiah wrote this word years before Jesus came:

“The LORD’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. It’s your sins that have cut you off from God.” (Is 59:1-2a).

But:

“The LORD looked and was displeased to find there was no justice. He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his strong arm, and his justice sustained him. He put on righteousness as his body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on his head” (59:15-17a).

Question 1: *Is Jesus really 100 percent God? How can God in all God’s fullness become a man?*

If God became a human, wouldn’t God’s unchanging, unknowable, absolute, transcendent nature be changed? God was in heaven—wouldn’t he have to **create a Son**? And, isn’t God “One?” Then how would God have a Son?

God was thought of as an unchangeable mover. How could a son pre-exist for all eternity with the Father and then become a man without being inferior to God? The debate at the Council at Nicaea in 325 A.D. was over the statement: “**Jesus was fully human, but not fully God.**”¹ People struggle with that today.

Human philosophies and the “elemental spirits of the world” would say the man, Jesus, is limited, therefore, we must just follow his good example. If you adopt this, then Jesus is only a model to salvation. You have reduced Jesus to a noble “social action” person who might be like God, but is not God.

The result of believing Jesus is simply a good man is to TRY HARDER. If you will just try harder, the world would be a better place. Under this philosophy, God cannot really be known because Jesus is a mere creature. If Jesus is not God, the canyon between God and us cannot be bridged. Who is Jesus? Just someone who is a good example to emulate.

C. S. Lewis said Jesus never left that option open to us.² “Jesus said, “Yes, I am the bread of life!” (Jn 6:48) and “before Abraham was, I am (Jn 8:58).” Those “I am” statements identify Jesus as God.

¹ For more references on this discussion see, *Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why it matters what Christians believe*, editors Ben Quash and Michael Ward (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

² C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 55-56. .

Paul writes: "Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness" (Phil 2:6-7).

I know that term is uncomfortable but we are all slaves to sin and without Jesus we cannot set ourselves free.

Question 2: *Is Jesus Christ really human or did he just "seem" human?*

The question implied: Wouldn't it be demeaning for God to be mixed up in matter? Wouldn't it be unthinkable? There's a big difference between the flesh and the Spirit. How can Jesus be both?

If it is truth that sets you free, it has nothing to do with active participation. The problem with that vein of thought is that it spiritualizes faith. Faith becomes just something spiritual or "head knowledge" instead of living out your faith in relationship to others.

Jesus could be reduced to "divine wisdom." He is God; thus we can't personally relate.

If Jesus was not really human, then Jesus would not have touched people.

- ✓ Think of the man born blind and Jesus spat and made mud with his saliva, and then rubbed the mud on the man's eyes to heal them. (Mk 8:22-26)
- ✓ Or, when he prayed over the little girl and took her hand and resurrected her from the dead. (Mt 9:25)
- ✓ "There was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Mt 8:2-3).

Christianity offers not just a philosophy or principles, but action. We are invited to go to people in the same way. Great miracles have occurred through the active prayers and faith of Christians. Watch this video, recorded January 3rd, the day after Damar Hamil, safety for the Buffalo Bill's, suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed following a hit in the game against the Cincinnati Bengals. He had no heartbeat on the field, and CPR was necessary. He was transferred to ICU, unconscious, and on a ventilator. Dan Orlovsky, an ESPN sportscaster, while live on the air of ESPN's national sports broadcast, took action on behalf of Damar Hamil: VIDEO³

When the Bills played New England the next week, this was posted to the Buffalo Bill's website after they returned the kickoff for a touchdown:

"There was uncertainty about how the team would feel when they returned to the field for the first time since they saw Hamlin down on the field getting medical attention. But that storybook opening is exactly what the team needed to confidently take the first snap and to battle the emotions they had been dealing with throughout the past week.

As Hines ran from one end of the field to the other, the Bills' sideline felt it in them that they were going to come out victorious for their teammate.

"Things like that just don't happen, that just shows you that God is real and for that to start that game like that, we were all like ... all right, something is scarily weird," offensive player Dion Dawkins said. "It's strong energy and this team, it's just full of love. And from the angels that have been watching us and D-Ham's spirit and all of those prayers, it just seems like it's just overflowing to each and every one of us and it was a special moment."

Through the eyes of QB Josh Allen, "It was spiritual. Bone-chilling. It was special." I can't remember a play that touched me like that, I don't think in my life. It was just spiritual. And I was going around with my teammates and saying God's real. You can't draw that one up any better... it's been three years and three months since the last kickoff return, so pretty cool."

Damar Hamil was released two days later to go home, a miraculous recovery.

Jesus is both 100 percent human and 100 percent divine. Jesus is a "hands-on God" and teaches us to be the same. When we see Jesus as he is and we participate with Jesus humbly but boldly—not in talk only—but in action, in front of all people, and before the spiritual forces in the world, then those opposing forces will be defeated royally.

Are you willing to stand up for Jesus, before whom every knee will bow and tongue confess "He is LORD?" If we all do, it will change the world!

AMEN

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 2:15-17

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Genesis 3:2-6

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" -- therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

³ <https://waynation.com/video/espn-host-prays-for-damar-hamlin-recovery-on-live-tv/>, accessed January 11, 2023.

⁴ <https://www.buffalobills.com/news/bills-dedicate-spiritual-and-surreal-victory-to-damar-hamlin>, accessed 1/12/23.