

Moving Past the Caricatures to the Christ

Introduction

Jesus of Nazareth has left an indelible mark on history and the allure of his person remains a tractor beam on the human psyche. He cannot be ignored, he cannot be shut down, he cannot be locked out and he will not be forgotten. But he is caricatured.

A caricature is an approximation, a distortion that imitates reality but without full truthfulness. It exaggerates partial truths making the picture presented a lie. The ancient church has always dealt with distortions as to the identity and mission of Jesus. Early false teachers would highlight his humanity but deny his divinity. Others would highlight his heavenly nature to the neglect of the gritty humanness he shares with each of us. Other religions make up a Jesus of their own imaginations highlighting some facet of his actual nature. Muslims highlight his role as a prophet but deny his full unity with God. Many Hindus friends accept him as a guru and spiritual guide but not unique God and Savior. Mormons make his spirit brothers with the devil and the offspring of a sexual union. Even Scientology weighs with a bizarre caricature within their internal mythological creations. And then there is Southpark...Here Jesus is a talk show host like Jerry Springer, fights with the devil and battles Santa Claus. The caricatures abound and will never cease surrounding the enigmatic man who is God.

Tonight we will move past all the caricatures to the one who is called The Christ. Not the genie in the bottle of the health-wealth-prosperity gospel. Not the levitating guy who spits out chicken soup for the soul. Not the long haired Northern European looking guy who hangs as a painting in many hallways. No not any of that. We will come to the Scriptures to see Jesus for who he really is and what he has done for the world.

There are many things we study as human beings. In western culture we've made quite the habit of putting "ology" behind all the things we like to study. Biology is the study of biological systems and organisms. Sociology is the study of the systems and relationships of a certain unique biological organism. Psychology is saying whatever you want about people and how to fix them. We get this "ology" from the Greek word "logos" which has a range of meaning but can mean "discourse or word about" something or other. So, theology is a discourse about *theos*; theology is a discourse about God.

Interestingly enough, the beginning of St. John's gospel reads as follows:

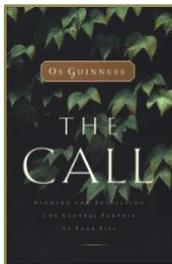
¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made...¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The word for "Word" here in the Bible is our *logos*. The divine word, the divine idea, the Son of God, was made flesh in the person of Jesus. So, when we speak of *Christ-ology* we are looking at a *logo* about the "Logos." This "ology" is most important for it is a discourse or study of the man who was and is God.

Christology as Theological Discipline

Over the last two thousand years of history the person of Jesus has been the subject of much teaching and discussion. The New Testament places Jesus on display in all his multi-faceted glory and has served the church as the sure word of truth regarding his identity.

The church, both ancient and modern, has always dealt with distortions as to the identity and mission of Jesus.



Jesus' sense of calling is especially critical in a world awash with conflicting portraits of him. Recent years have offered us Jesus the great moral teacher and example, Jesus the nationalistic firebrand and failed Jewish revolutionary, Jesus the wild eyed apocalyptic prophet announcing the end of the world, Jesus the wandering cynic preacher or shrewd Galilean holy man, and Jesus the family man – divorced and remarried with three children. Skeptics and opponents of the church have made hay with such confusion.

OS Guinness, *The Call*, 219

When looking upon Jesus theologians have typically discussed two things. His **person** and his **work**; who Jesus is and what he has done for the world.

The Person of Jesus

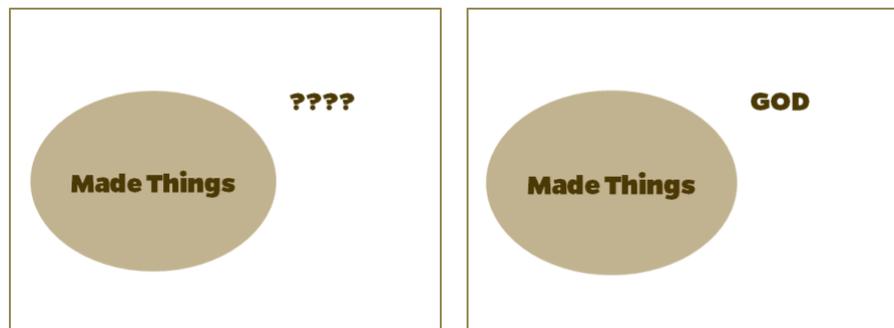
Jesus is God

1 In the beginning **was the Word**, and the Word **was with God**, and the **Word was God**. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 **In him was life**, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-5, 14

Prior to Time (verse 1, 2)

Creator of all (verse 3)



All life and light in him (verse 4)

This is JESUS (verse 14)

I AM Jesus (John 8)

Backdrop of the Exodus

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Exodus 3:13-15

Clarity in Controversy – John 8:31-59

Jesus Truly Human

On Philosophical Traditions

- **Greek Philosophy**
- **Eastern Philosophy**
- **Monotheism**
- **Docetism...**

A Real Human Being

1. **Born** - Matthew 1:18-23
2. **Growth and Development** - Luke 2:52
3. **He was Hungry**
4. Grew **weary** and physically **tired**
5. Was **tempted** – Matthew 4; Hebrews 4
6. Experienced **pain, loss, suffering**
7. **He Died** - He **gave** his **real life**, suffered a **real death**,

Putting on Human Nature

Definition of Chalcedon



We confess, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, perfect God, and perfect Man of a reasonable soul and flesh consisting; begotten before the ages of the Father according to his Divinity, and in the last days, for us and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin according to his humanity, of the same substance with his Father according to his Divinity, and of the same substance with us according to his humanity; for there became a union of two natures. Wherefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of this unmixed union, we confess the holy Virgin to be the God-bearer; because God the Word was incarnate and became Man, and from this conception he united the temple taken from her with himself.

Source: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/chalcedon.asp>

Subtraction by Addition

Philippians 2:1-8

Hebrews 4:14-16

Jesus is the Saving King

On Being and Doing

Summary so far

- Truly **GOD** We worship him, we become like him, we follow him
- Truly **HUMAN** He connects us to God as our priest, he is our friend, his is our brother, he is with us in every temptation, can sympathize and empathize.

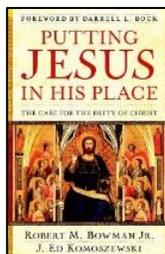
Leadership Longing

Being and Doing

Mini NARRATIVE of the Christian movement (Acts 1-5)

God Exalted Jesus

The Right hand



It was one thing to enter God's presence and yet another to sit in it. But to sit **at God's right side** was another matter altogether. In the religious and cultural milieu of Jesus' day, to claim to sit at God's right hand was tantamount to claiming equality with God.

Robert M. Bowman Jr., J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in his Place, The Case for the Deity of Christ*, 244, emphasis in original.

Jesus is not raised in **humility**; he was raised in **glory** – exalted above all others.

This is what it is to be a Christian:

- Jesus is God, Jesus is Fully Human, brother, friend, our High Priest
- He then is our KING, leader
- He is our Savior

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Christ/Messiah

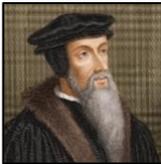
The Christ or Messiah – The Anointed One of Covenant Promise

Christ was not Jesus' last name; it is a description of his **identity**, a factual representation of who he is. Jesus is called "Christ" or the **Messiah**, or **anointed** one of God.

1 Timothy 2:5-7

5 For there is one God, and there is one **mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a **preacher** and an **apostle** (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a **teacher** of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

John Calvin, one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation described Jesus' name "Christ" as follows:



Moreover, it is to be observed, that the name Christ refers to those three offices: for we know that under the law, prophets as well as priests and kings were anointed with holy oil. Whence, also, the celebrated name of Messiah was given to the promised Mediator. (Institutes II.XV.II)

Munus Triplex Christi – the Three Anointed Offices, Prophet, Priest and King

Anointing in Redemptive History

- **The Prophet** (1 Kings 19:16)
- **The Priest** (Leviticus 21:10 – Chief priest anointed with oil upon his head)
- **The King** (1 Samuel 10 and 16 – Samuel Anoints Saul and David, 1 Kings 1:39 – Zadok anoints Solomon, Jehu in 2 Kings 9 anointed by Elisha)

Jesus Messiah

Jesus's Messianic Ministry Through His Church

Ephesians 4:11-16

The Christ Leads His Church

Jesus' Active Work Today in and through His People, His Church

- **Prophetic Ministry - Word - Preaching** - the word of God, living and active - changing us, the gospel saving, transforming, renewing. **2 Peter 1:19-21**
- **Priestly Ministry – Sacraments/Ordinances** - Signs and seals of the new covenant (promise sealed with a sign) - **Baptism!** Entry, **Communion** - continuing sign of Gods promise until kingdom come
- **Kingly Ministry - Leadership**

Anointed one who fulfills Gods promises:

- **Adam**
- **Israel**
- **David**

The Work of Jesus

His Work in Justification

Am I Accepted? Am I Okay?

I believe there are two things that all human beings struggle with that I would like to address:

1. Am I **accepted** here? Do I **belong**?
2. What's wrong with me? **Am I okay**?

Today we two very important realities and what Jesus has done for us to remedy our condition we have two great themes to look at together.

1. Adoption
2. Justification

Adopted into the Family (Ephesians 1:3-6)

A few thoughts on Election:

- God created the world – his choice
- God chose Abraham – created the Jewish nation
- God chose to bring through the offspring of Abraham – a Savior for all peoples
- God chose you before you chose him
- He chose you before the foundation of the world
- Unbelievably kind and gracious – Paul is gushing about this...God's kindness is that he has **not left us as orphans in sin, in death and under wrath.**

What we do not know

- "We don't know" what this means for anybody else...
- God's choosing is not because you are fly, suave, debonair, smart or anything

Adoption as Sons

Bringing Kids Home (Romans 8:26-30)

He Also Justified

Justification - declared innocent, counted righteous before God

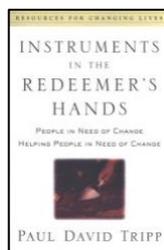
It involves two works of GOD

- 1) Forgiveness of sins – pardon
- 2) Being declared Righteous “In Christ”

Philippians 3:8

Myself my Justification?

Where do I belong? Am I Okay?



This Grace adopts, welcoming us into his family with all the rights and privileges of true sons and daughters. This grace enables, empowering me to think, say, and do things I could not do in my own strength. This grace transforms, radically changing every aspect of my life. Grace is the thick rod of rebar that courses through the concrete of the biblical story.

Paul David Trip, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 32.

1 John 3:1 Behold, what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

His Work in Substitution

Human Beings - Beautiful Problems

I want to begin here for a moment with a question about ourselves. **Are human beings a good thing or a bad thing?**

- Agent Smith?
- Whitney Houston?

Our View of Humanity?

- Pessimistic view?
- Optimistic view?
- Truthful view?

How can God be **JUST** and the one who **JUSTIFIES** the Guilty?

Christ Died FOR Us

1 Now I would remind you, brothers, **of the gospel** I preached to you, which you **received**, in which you **stand**,
2 and by which you **are being saved**, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in
vain. 3 For I **delivered** to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in
accordance with the Scriptures

1Corinthians 15:1-3

Three truths that converge as we look at this idea of “Christ being our Substitute”

1. **Our Sin** - 2 Samuel 11; Psalm 51:4; Romans 1:18
2. **God's Holiness** - Isaiah 6:1-5
3. **God's Mercy** - Psalm 51:1-4

Died "FOR"

- **Sacrifice for Our Sins**

Leviticus 16 – Day of Atonement
Romans 3:21-25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 4:10

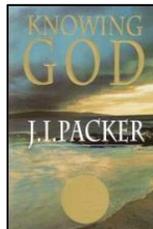
- **Substitution for Sinners**

- **Substitute** – He takes our Place

Greek words "**Huper**" etc. Someone does something “instead of you” or “in your place.

- **John 10:11, 15** – I am the good shepherd, I lay my life down FOR my sheep – he is willing to die, so that the sheep do not die
- **Galatians 3:13** – having become a “Curse” FOR us.
- **Hebrews 2:9** – that he might taste death FOR everyone.
- **Romans 5:6,8** – Christ died for the ungodly
- **Romans 8:32** – he gave himself up for us all
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** – to be sin FOR us
- **Galatians 2:20** – give himself up FOR me
- **Ephesians 5.2** – And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
- **Ephesians 5.25** – Gave himself for the church
- **1 Timothy 2.6** – his life given as a ransom for all
- **Titus 2:14** – gave himself for us to redeem us

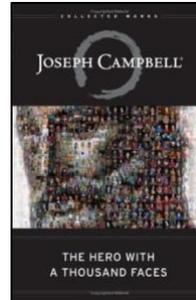
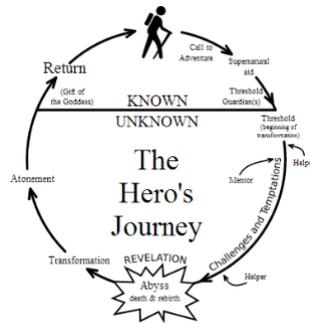
J.I. Packer, Theologian and Greatest Book Endorser of all Time, said it so succinctly and clearly in his modern classic “Knowing God”



Our sins *have been* punished; the wheel of retribution *has* turned; judgment *has* been inflicted for our ungodliness—but on Jesus, the lamb of God, standing in our place. In this way God is *just—and* the justifier of those who put faith in Jesus who “was delivered over to death for our sins and *was* raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25)

His Work in Redemption

The Power of Story



Longing for Redemption - Cultural References



In a genre less committed than most to the this-worldly, there will always be messiahs to save the world from evil robots or invading aliens. And at movie theaters and on TV screens nationwide, there will always be legions of worshipful fans.

Benjamin A. Plotinsky, Managing Editor of the Urban Planning City Journal http://www.city-journal.org/2009/19_1_urb-science-fiction.html

Redemption Accomplished

The Paradigm of Redemption - Old Testament

The Story Exodus

- Slavery, Bondage
- Does God hear? Does God care?
- Promise of Redemption

Exodus 6:2 :What God does in the exodus...Who God is influences what he does: **Exodus 34:6, 7**

Mission Accomplished New Testament

There are several different ways in which the New Testament speaks of redemption. There are three main words/groups of words.

1. PURCHASED - Agoradzo

Yet we are told we are “purchased” by God.

- **1 Corinthians 6:18-20**
- **Galatians 3:13**
- **Revelation 5:9**
- **Revelation 14:3**

Buy out of slavery...but not by paying off the Devil

2. RANSOM - Lytron

- **Matthew 20:28**
- **Titus 2:14**
- **1 Tim 2:6**
- **1 Peter 1:18, 19**

Not paying a ransom to the Devil...**Payment by God the Son, to God the Father**

Hebrews 9:11-15 - But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **12** he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal **redemption**. **13** For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **14** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit **offered himself without blemish to God**, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

- **Purchased** (Payment Made)
- **Ransomed** (Bought out of Slavery)
- And Finally Word **Released...**

3. RELEASE – Apolytroxis (Apo – Full, Lytroxis)

- **Hebrews 9:15**
- **Colossians 1:13,14**

Summary – Quote from one of my friends Dr. Bruce Ware:

Redemption is Christ giving his life as the payment of the price needed to secure our release from the guilt and bondage of sin...We have been bought at a price – this is a term of the marketplace – a literal purchase that takes place...paying with his own blood, his own life, Christ bought us out of slavery...

- Freedom **From**
- Freedom **To**

Additional Works of Jesus

- **Our Example** – Living Justice, Follow Him, Obey His Commandments as He Obeyed God, We Fellowship with Him in Suffering, We Follow him on his Mission
 - Love and to Serve – Mark 10:45
 - Seek and to Save – Luke 19:10
- **Our Victor** – He is the Conqueror of Sin, Satan, Demons, the Powers that be

Conclusion

Christology as Theological Vision

Seeing Jesus

Seeing Because of Jesus

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.

CS Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

Christology and Theological Transformation

A Quick Bibliography in Christology

1. The Cross of Christ by John Stott
2. Putting Jesus in His Place by Bowman and Komozewski
3. Jesus the Son of God by DA Carson
4. Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ by John Piper
5. Dethroning Jesus by Bock and Wallace
6. How God Became Jesus edited by Michael Bird
7. The Person of Christ by Donald Macleod
8. Name Above all Names by Begg and Ferguson
9. Jesus Shock by Peter Kreeft

*Note – Kreeft is a Roman Catholic philosopher so use discernment as necessary related to communion/sacraments etc.