

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Part One

The Uniqueness and Significance of the Man Jesus Christ

"More than 1900 years later, a historian like myself, who doesn't even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this most significant man...the historian's test of individual greatness is 'What did he leave to grow?' Did he start men to thinking along fresh lines with a vigor that persisted after him? By this test Jesus stands first." H.G. Wells

Revelation 21:5 - "Behold, I make all things new."

"Some people have made transformational changes in one department of human learning or in one aspect of human life, and their names are forever enshrined in the annals of human history. But Jesus Christ, the greatest man who ever lived, virtually changed every aspect of human life - and most people don't know it."

What if Jesus had Never Been Born D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe (p 1)

Consider the effect of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

- Hospitals (essentially began during middle ages, Red Cross, modern missions, preventative medicine)
- Universities (also started during the Middle Ages, most great ones were Christian in origin)
- The civilizing of many barbaric countries
- Higher standards of justice
- Literacy and education for the masses
- Representative government (especially as seen in the American experiment)
- Civil liberties (liberty itself is a Biblical theme)
- Abolition of slavery
- Modern science (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler ("thinking God's thoughts after him"), Pascal, Newton, Pasteur, Faraday, Boyle)
- Benevolence and charity
- The elevation of the common man/the elevation of women
- High regard for human life
- The condemnation of sexual perversity
- The codifying of many of the world's languages/literacy
- Inspiration for the world's greatest works of art (Byzantine, great cathedrals, Renaissance, musical notation, Western music after Bach) - modern art, rebellion against Christianity
- Countless lives transformed from social liabilities to social assets
- The eternal salvation of countless souls!

The Incomparable Christ

He preached Himself, yet he was selfless; performed miracles but not for his own glory; king of all yet servant of all; numbered with the transgressors yet no one can prove him guilty; tempted as we are, yet without sin; The bread of life began his ministry by hungering; The water of life ended his ministry thirsting; He hungered as man and fed the hungry as God; He was weary, yet he is our rest; He was called a devil yet he cast out demons; He was sold for thirty pieces of silver yet he redeems us; He was as a lamb led to the slaughter yet he is the Good Shepherd; He gave his life, and by dying he destroyed death.

The Supreme Question: "Who do men say that I am?"

Matthew 16:13-16 — This passage is in many ways the turning point of the synoptic gospels - from this point on the shadow of the cross falls over his ministry.

Notice:

- 1) There are differing opinions of who Christ is. Jesus presses the issue, for it is of extreme importance that we get this one right.
- 2) Many opinions are honorable ones, yet they are not the right one. These were not the sentiments of enemies: they esteemed him highly, yet they fell short in their estimation.
- 3) They all thought him to be someone raised from the dead (as if their generation was incapable of producing one such as he).
- 4) They never thought of him as the Messiah - their expectation of Messiah were wrong

The question for us: But who do *you* say that I am?

- We cannot hold others only to this question: we must consider if our own thoughts may fall short as well
- The disciples were trained to teach others, to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Correct answer: The Christ, the Son of the living God

The Christ – the anointed one, the one promised from of old.

Son of the Living God - Jesus had referred to himself as the "Son of Man" but they knew and believed him to be the "Son of the Living God". Divine nature, veiled in flesh.

* Flesh and blood does not reveal this, but the Father in heaven.

Jesus Claims to be God

Christianity verses other religions:

Other religions demand outward conformity to laws or moral codes. Christianity offers a changed heart in order that it's adherents might do as it requires

We do not do right in order to get to heaven, we do right because we already are in heaven (because of what Christ has done). We do good out of love for God... the purest motive.

Christ verses other great religious figures:

"I would that I could be Christ-like without becoming a Christian" - Mahatma Ghandi

"Not one recognized religious leader, not Moses, Paul, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, etc., has ever claimed to be God; that is, with the exception of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only religious leader who has ever claimed to be deity and the only individual ever who has convinced a great portion of the world that He is God." Thomas Schultz

Why is it important to understand who Jesus is?

Consider these common perceptions of Christ that we come across today:

- Mormons
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Christian Science
- United Pentecostal

Handbook of Contemporary Theology, David L. Smith

- Neo-orthodoxy
- Post Vatican II Catholicism
- Process Theology
- Liberation Theology
- Feminist Theology
- New Age Movement

Theology II: Christology

Part Two

The Incarnation

Remember Peter's confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

The Son of God:

There were many uses of this phrase in 1st century Palestine:

The Jews used it as a title for the expected Messiah (yet deity was not implied)

The Greeks had many "sons of gods" - super men who were born from a union between a god and a human woman

But John takes pains to distance his description of Jesus from these ideas.

The Classic Text on the Incarnation - John 1:1-18

He never uses the term "son" in the opening sentences at all. The term he chooses is "*Word*".

"Logos" or Word

A strange term to our modern ears. It was used from the 5th century B.C. onward.

Stoics considered the logos to be a kind of cosmic force which, when we line up with it creates a state of happiness or well being.

Jewish readers would immediately recognize the inference - in the Old Testament God's word was His creative utterance, His power in action fulfilling His purpose. (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6,9)

John's logos, however is not a force but a person!

Notice what John says of the Word:

1) The Word is God

1) "*In the beginning was the Word*" - he is eternal; he already was when all things began. The Word did not at any point come into existence. There never was a time when the Word was not.

2) "*... and the Word was with God*" - he is distinct from God; he is in direct relationship to the eternal God

3) "*... and the Word was God*" - The Word is deity; he is not a creature, he is distinct from the Father, yet divine in himself. (* not "the word was the God" or "the word was a God.")

- 4) "... *through him all things were made*" - the creator; the Father's agent in making every made thing
 - 5) "... *in him was life*" - he gives life and maintains life
 - 6) "... *that life was the light of men*" - he illuminates all men; gives understanding
- 2) God became a man
- 7) "The Word became flesh" - God was now in human form "*He had not ceased to be God; he was no less God than before, but he had begun to be man. He was not now God minus some elements of his deity, but God plus all that he had made his own by taking manhood to himself.*" (Packer)
 - 8) "*and made his dwelling among us* (tabernacled among us)" - recalls the OT tabernacle of Moses where the cloud of divine glory dwelt.
 - 9) "*We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*" - If you have seen the Word, you have seen the Father. Yet, he is not merely the dwelling place of God: he is God dwelling among us! He is not merely a word about God, nor a word from God; he is Himself the Word of God!

Kenosis - (Gk. "emptying)

Philippians 2:7 - "made himself of no reputation" (KJV)
 "stripped himself of all privilege" (Phillips)
 "made himself nothing" (NIV)
 "emptied himself" (RV)

Some espouse that if Jesus truly became human he had to renounce some of his divine qualities. How else could he experience the limitations of time, space, knowledge, consciousness? Perhaps it is best understood that Christ did not lay aside the divine powers and attributes, but divine glory and dignity. (John 17:5 "the glory I had with you before the world began")

If Jesus was not fully God, how could he perfectly reveal the Father? Is he not also now, in heaven a "reduced God"? No, his kenosis was not an emptying of his divine nature, but a laying aside of his glory; a voluntary restraint of power, an acceptance of hardship, ill-treatment, rejection and eventually an unjust death. It was love pouring himself out for the sake of unlovely, unholy human beings and becoming poor that we, through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

** Being Christlike means that we empty ourselves on behalf of others

*"At one and the same time - this is the wonder - as Man he was living a human life,
and as Word He was sustaining the life of the Universe,
and as Son He was in constant union with the Father." (Athanasius)*

Two errors that John addressed in John Chapter 1

Sabellianism - also known as modalism, is a heresy which states that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of one God, rather than three distinct persons.

Arianism - a nontrinitarian belief which asserts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but is entirely distinct from and subordinate to God the Father.

The Humanity of Christ

What did John mean when he said the Word "became" flesh? What did his "becoming" entail?

1)

2)

3)

*Completely, truly God - completely, truly man.
In two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without
separation*

Christological Heresies of the early church

Nestorians - believed that that emphasizes the disunion between the human and divine natures
Jesus

Eutychians - believed that the human nature of Christ was overcome by the divine, or that Christ had a human nature but it was unlike the rest of humanity.

In the early church it was the humanity of Christ that was in doubt

Docetism - because of the belief that all matter was inherently evil (Greek influenced), Docetists believed that Christ's body was not real, but only the appearance of a physical body.

Gnostics - 2nd century - denied that the supreme being came in the flesh, claiming Jesus to be merely a human who attained divinity through gnosis (attaining special knowledge) and taught his disciples to do the same

Manichees - 4th century - taught dualism: the belief that there are two equal opposing forces, one good and one evil.

John attacks this thinking viciously (read 1 John 1:1; 4:2-3; 2 John 7)

Today it is the deity of Christ that is in doubt

The incarnation is viewed as a myth. Jesus is viewed as a man, full of God, obedient to God, teaching doctrine from God, but not God.

"If the incarnation of God is set aside, then salvation is no longer of God who stoops but of man who climbs" (Lewis)

Modern theology, by divorcing the Christ of faith from the Jesus of history is in danger of initiating a new form of docetism. God is kept in the world of the spirit, a world eternally removed from man's world of flesh. This may be good Greek philosophy, but it is very bad Christian theology!

Our theology must be grounded on what the original authors wrote and the Spirit who guides us into all truth.

We look to the gospels for truth about Jesus:

The Humanity of Christ in the Gospels

Compassion (Mark 4:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13; John 11:33,35,38)

Anger (Mark 3:5; Matthew 17:18; Matthew 8:26; Luke 4:39; Mark 11:15-17)

Joy (Luke 10:21; Matthew 11:19)

Agony of fear and rejection at Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46)

Has (voluntary) limited knowledge about some things

The Deity of Christ in the Gospels

Knew the thoughts of man

Knows things only God would know

I and the Father are one (John 10:30)

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:8-10)

Before Abraham was, I AM (John 8:58)

He taught as one with authority) Mark 1:27

Creative miracles

Why is the incarnation so important to orthodox Christian doctrine?

Why is this a non-negotiable?

Look what the writer of Hebrews says about this:

- Hebrews 2:9-18 - He shared their humanity that by his death he might destroy the devil and free us from his power
- Hebrews 4:14-16 - We have a great high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses
- Hebrews 5:8-9 - He learned obedience from what he suffered, that he may become the source of eternal salvation for all those who believe
- Hebrews 9:11-15 - By his own blood he obtained eternal redemption, that is why he is the mediator of a better covenant

God did not change into a man. It is not an appearance of God in man, nor a metamorphosis of God into man, nor a manifestation of God's presence in a human life. Jesus is not a divine being less than God who mediates between God and humanity. He is God in humanity; two natures in one person. The one person is the preexistent Christ, the two natures are divine and human.

The nature of Christological heresies:

Trinitarian heresies concern the relation between Christ and God while the Christological heresies pertain to the relation between the historical Jesus and the eternal Christ. A movement in either direction results in error or eventually heresy.

Christology from below: We begin with Jesus' humanity and try to relate to his divinity (He is not fully God)

Ebionites - an early Jewish sect or sects that acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah, began with the humanity of Jesus and then tries to relate to his divinity. One later example of ebionitism was Socinus who, in the sixteenth century, believed in Jesus' virgin birth and miracles, but not in his preexistence. Today people may even admit that Jesus "embodies what is most divine in man", yet deny the fullness of his deity.

Arianism - The belief founded by Arius that denied the eternality of Christ, stating that Christ had been created by the Father. (condemned by the Council of Nicea, A. D. 325)

Nestorianism - was a more subtle orthodoxy. Nestorius (died c.451) taught that Jesus is linked to God by means of a moral or voluntary union, not a substantial union. (Jesus is like God, but not God) Jesus is subordinated to God (monarchinism). There are two natures, two wills and, by implication, two persons. Orthodoxy holds that there are two natures, one person. (condemned in the Council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451; "without division and without separation.")

Christology from above: We begin with the eternal Word, the divine, abstract concept of God, and try to relate to Jesus' humanity. (He is not truly human)

Docetism - usually believed that Jesus Christ only appeared to be flesh. His was a heavenly body that passed through Mary. Docetists usually denied that Jesus really died as well. (those who believe this aspect include Mary Baker Eddy, Carl Jung, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Edgar Cayce).

Monophysitism - asserts that Jesus Christ has only one nature - the divine. His form is human, but his true being is divine. Some Roman Catholics are Marian maximalists and they argue that Mary provides the human side of salvation while Christ provides the divine side.

Apollinarianism - named for Apollinarius, who held that Christ had a human body, but a divine soul. The Logos took the place of the human soul in Jesus. It was God taking on a temporary human disguise. (condemned at the 1st Council at Constantinople 381AD)

Monothelites - acknowledged that Jesus had two natures but the human nature was not capable of its own distinctive acts. Jesus had only one will - divine. (condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople, A. D. 681)

** All of the Christological heresies have their source in the often well meaning attempt to rationalize or resolve the Christological paradox. They generally constitute an effort to lean toward one nature over the other (divine and human). *There is one person- the Son of God - and two natures - the divine and the human.*

Theology II: Christology

Part Three

The Preexistence of Jesus Christ

The preexistent Word is an important theme in John's gospel. But in what form did Christ preexist?

John 1:15; 17:5, 24; 6:62; 8:58; 13:3; Col. 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:47; 2 Tim. 2:9; Heb. 13:8; Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20

The dominant idea though is that the Word pre-existed but not the humanity of Jesus.

Two ideas:

Hebraic idea of preexistence – Everything of value that appears in earth has its existence in heaven. The pre-existence of the man Jesus is consistent with this view.

Hellenic idea of preexistence – Based on contrast between spirit and matter. Spirit is eternal and with God. In this view, the spirit or logos can be pre-existent, but not the man, Christ Jesus.

The person of the eternal Son of God (the Word, the Logos) is also the person of Jesus in his incarnation in history. There was a time when he became a male Jew, born of Mary. But he always existed. There was an element of humanity which had always existed. He was human in that he had the characteristics of humanity (which are present within the Godhead), yet he was not "bodily human". That happened in a specific point in time.

The Virgin Birth

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment called into question the supernatural claims of the faith. In particular, since then, the Virgin Birth has been contested. In this doctrine we see the tension of the incarnation.

In the early church the virgin birth was a powerful witness of the humanity of Jesus whereas, ironically, in the modern church, it has been important to the church's affirmation of the divinity of Jesus in the face of skepticism and liberal theology.

Virgin Birth defined:

The Virgin Birth primarily refers to the virginal conception of Jesus Christ – the means whereby the incarnation took place. Jesus was conceived apart from a human father. The virginal conception was non-sexual (unlike Greek stories of the origins of god-men). Mary was not seduced by God but mysteriously overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. God was not the physical father of Jesus but the preexistent Father.

** Not to be confused with the Immaculate Conception (Mary was conceived without sin)

Important wording from the creeds:

- Jesus was *begotten* of the Father
- Jesus was *conceived* by the Holy Spirit
- Jesus was *born* of the Virgin Mary

The Virgin Birth tells us two things:

- 1) Jesus had no earthly father
- 2) Jesus had no heavenly mother

Scriptural grounds for believing in the Virgin Birth

- 1) It is clearly taught in the gospels of Matthew and Luke
- 2) Other scriptural “hints” (i.e. Pharisees in John 8:31 - “we were not born of fornication”)
- 3) Paul’s use of the Greek word *ginomai* (came to be), rather than *gene* (to produce or beget). Also consider that Paul travelled with Luke, so his knowledge of the Virgin Birth was all but assumed.
- 4) Ultimately, it is a matter of accepting this doctrine by faith

Why it is important to believe the doctrine of the Virgin Birth?

- 1) It safeguards and communicates the doctrine of incarnation
- 2) By virgin birth, the Last Adam enters the world guiltless of the sin of the First Adam
- 3) It was universally accepted in the writings of the early church fathers (Ignatius, Aristides) and, we deduce, in the early church.

- 4) It is the fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 7:14)
- 5) It makes off the origin of Christ from the human race just as his end is marked off by his resurrection
- 6) It reminds us that the kingdom of God is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit.
- 7) God is not divorced from the material world, but completely dedicated to it!

Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person forever. How can this be?

Human weakness and limitations

- * Jesus had a human body - he was born as all infants are; he felt pain, emotions and tiredness; He still has a human body, although a glorified one
- * Jesus had a human mind - he "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). He went through the normal learning processes.
- * Jesus had a human soul - he experienced the full range of human emotions
- * People who were near Jesus saw him as only a man - until he taught and did miracles

Sinlessness

Although Jesus was fully human, he never sinned. No one ever convicted him of sin. He was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). And he himself being tempted, is now able to help us as we are tempted.

The Deity of Christ

- * The word God (*theos*) is used of Jesus
- * The word Lord (*kyrios*) is used of Jesus
- * Omnipotence - His miraculous works testify of his deity
- * Omniscience - He knew the hearts and thoughts of men
- * Omnipresence - "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."
- * His Resurrection - power over death
- * Jesus emptied himself of status and privilege, but not of divine power or attributes when he came to earth

Theology II: Christology

Part Four

Text: Colossians 1:15-20 was a great hymn of the early church, full of truth that counters and corrects doctrinal heresies in the early church (and today). It is thought to be pre-Pauline.

False teaching had taken root in Colossae. Jewish and pagan influences had detracted from the pure gospel.

"Colossian heresy"

- > living according to this world; hollow and deceptive philosophy, built upon human tradition (2:8)
- > Living in the shadows (law) instead of the substance (Christ); outward observances, special days, feasts - focussing on outward religion instead of inward relationship with God (2:16-18)
- > Living under the law - lists of rules; legalism, depending on works (2:20-23)

The answer:

The best corrective to false doctrine is a firm grip on the person of Jesus Christ. So here we have a magnificent presentation of the person, power and the preeminence of Christ. It serves to correct many false views of Christ.

Colossians 1:15

"Image" (Gk *eikon*) - not shadow or photograph, but more like "clone". Jesus is "very God of very God". If we see him, we see the Father.

- * Against the idea that Jesus was human but not God
- * Against the doctrine that Christ did not pre-exist (for by Him all things were created")

The invisible God is clearly seen in Jesus Christ

	Father	Son
Creator	Gen. 1:1	Col. 1:16
Sustainer	Job 34:14-15	Col. 1:17
Savior	Luke 1:47	Col. 1:18-20
Preeminent	Ps. 47:7-9	Col. 1:18
Judge	Gen. 18:25	Col. 1:20

"The Colossian hymn is therefore not simply a piece of information about the eternal Godhead of the Son, but a dynamic confession about God revealed in Jesus, God discovered in Jesus, God encountered in Jesus." (Lewis, 260)

Colossians 1:16

"Firstborn" - not in a chronological sense, but in a sense of preeminence, honor and supremacy. This verse mirrors John 1:2. He is different from all other created things. He is the Creator, not the creation. Not only were all things created *through* Him, but all things were created *for* Him (Romans 11:36 - from Him, through Him, to Him — He is the source, the agent and the recipient!)

* Against the worship of angels and other created beings

Colossians 1:17

"In Him all things hold together" - Christ not only is the creator, he sustains and upholds his creation - this is the doctrine of providence.

Providence is God's support, governance and guidance of the universe, and of our world in particular. Jesus is the Beginner (creation), Sustainer (providence) and the Goal of all things (culmination)

* Against blind fate; Deism (God created the world but is not involved with it now)

He is a King and He has a Kingdom in which he is sovereign - where he rules and reigns and has his way.

Colossians 1:18

"Head of the body, the church" - This is a position even greater than that of Creator of all things. This is most likely not referring to a physical head, since the 1st Century people did not connect the motor action of the body to the brain, but to the heart. Here "head" means authority, superiority, honor.

"Beginning" - The thought moves from the idea of creation to the idea of new creation. He is the Last Adam, the one who makes all things new. He is the corporate head of a new race of people, the king of a new kingdom. Here, truly, the old has passed away and the new has come. (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:45)

Colossians 1:18

"Firstborn from among the dead" - A reference to his resurrection, again a place of authority, honor and supremacy. (1 Cor 15:17-26)

* Against those who denied the bodily resurrection of Christ

Colossians 1:19

"Fullness of God" - This is a statement about Jesus' deity, but it may be more than that. All the attributes of God (His Spirit, Word, wisdom, glory) are resident in a place: "in Him" (that is, in his human body). This is also a reference to the humanity of Jesus or, more specifically, to the incarnation of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

- * Probably against a particular Colossian heresy that asserted there were levels or ranks of heavenly beings between God and fallen man. They dominated human life and needed to be placated by ascetic worship. It was thought that Jesus was but one of these. Here Paul crushes that argument with the idea that Jesus is unique in that he is the fullness of God. Verse 20 also underscores his redemption
- * Also against New Age-like Gnostic teachings

Colossians 1:20

God the offended, initiated reconciliation with man and makes it possible through the cross. The atoning work of Christ is not only man's peace with God, but the hope of creation as well.

- He reconciles man (a "new creature", at peace with God)
 - He renews the world (:new heaven and new earth")
 - This does not mean "ultimate reconciliation of all humans to God, for that goes against other scriptures (2 Corinthians 5:17 "in Christ"; Hebrews 10:27 "fearful prospect of judgment")
 - This does mean that reconciliation is possible to all who believe
 - This reconciliation includes all things in heaven and on earth (see Ephesians 1:9-10)
- * Against the Idea of blind fate or that the universe was under the control astral gods

The Key to it All

"... through his blood, shed on the cross"

All of this is made possible because of the work of Christ on the cross.

"Here it is, then: the cross forms the foundation of the eternal and cosmic peace of the new heavens and the new earth, of men and angels. The final affirmation of the great hymn of Colossians 1 is that there will be no part of God's renewed universe that will be unaffected by the cross - no place where Calvary is irrelevant."

(Peter Lewis)

Theology II: Christology

Part Five - The resurrection, reign and return of Christ

The Resurrection of Christ

The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity rise and fall together. Of the (only) four world religions that are based on personalities (Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity) only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder.

His resurrection was foretold by the prophets, predicted by Jesus himself and proven by the testimony of many eyewitnesses.

Why is the Resurrection Important?

The Resurrection seals God's redemptive plan. It was the victory (not his death, but his resurrection). And it was the constant message of the early church. (It must be ours also)

A brief study of the preaching of the resurrection in the book of Acts:

- 1:3 - Luke's record - He showed himself by many infallible proofs that he was alive.
- 2:22-24, 31-36 - At Pentecost - You killed him, God raised him from the dead
- 3:13-16 - You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead
- 4:1-2 - To the people
- 4:8-11 - Before the Sanhedrin
- 5:29-32 - Again before the Sanhedrin
- 10:39-40 - To Cornelius' house
- 13:28-31 32-35 - To those in Pisidian Antioch
- 17:30-32 - To the Athenians
- 26:23 - To Agrippa

What does the resurrection of Christ mean?

- 1) Because he rose, we are regenerated (1 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 2: 5-6)
- 2) Because he rose, we are justified (Romans 4:25)
- 3) Because he rose, we too shall rise from the dead (Romans 6)
- 4) Because he rose, we will also receive perfect resurrection bodies (1 Cor 6:14)

5) Because he rose, we can continue steadfast in our labor (1 Cor 15: 58)

6) We have power and victory over sin in our lives (Romans 6)

7) There is a (perfect, glorified, resurrected) man reigning in on the throne of heaven (Revelation 4-5)

8) We have hope beyond this world (1 Cor 15: 17-19)

9) Jesus Christ is Lord of all! (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22)

Every great doctrine calls us to a response: the resurrection calls us to live free from sin and to be heavenly minded.

The Ascended Lord

"He ascended to the right hand of God" - the place of absolute authority

* It was because of his kenosis, his humiliation, his work of atonement that Christ is exalted. (Phil 2:1-11)

* He wasn't merely resurrected, he was resurrected *to* something.

1) In his ascending, Jesus takes this place of ultimate power, supreme exaltation and ultimate glory.

Psalm 110:1 "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" - repeated 19 times - key test of the epistle to the Hebrews (4 times)

Higher than angels, principalities, spiritual powers, prophets, kings, followers, opponents. Indeed, 'right hand of God' is a metaphor for divine power and authority.

2) In his ascending, Jesus took his human nature into the heavenly realm. He is still an exalted God-man.

Because of his ascension and exaltation:

➤ *Where* he is we shall be (John 14:1-3)

➤ *As* he is we shall be (John 17:22-24)

The present day ministry of Jesus Christ

What is Jesus doing now? Reigning, mediating, interceding, the work of providence, heading the church, judging the earth...

Christ the King

Introduction

Radical Old Testament Concept: The servant-king

There was a time when Satan offered Jesus rule of all things - he refused
There was a time when the people wanted to make him king by force - he refused
Now all authority in heaven and earth belongs to him; he is "ruler of the kings of the earth, King of kings, Lord of lords, the Lamb on the throne"

Understanding the Kingdom of God

A kingdom is a state where a king rules and has his way (kingdom of God - 60 times in the 1st three gospels)

We are to pray for his kingdom (the rule of God) to come and his will to be done. We are co-laborers with God.

The kingdom of God as a present reality in the teachings of Jesus

The typical idea of the kingdom was futuristic, sometimes even outside of human history. Therefore it had very little to do with the present. It was the time in which the "kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever". Yet Jesus speaks of this kingdom, this rule of god is already here in some sense.

In summary, the teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God was apocalyptic (future) and was also present (so near that its presence could be seen).

The signs of the presence of the kingdom in the teachings of Jesus
(from *New Testament Theology* by Joachim Jeremias).

- 1) The first sign: ***the return of the quenched Spirit***

- 2) The second sign: ***the plundering of Satan's house***

- 3) The third sign: ***the way that Jesus taught about God, especially his referring to God as Abba, Father***

- 4) The fourth sign: ***the mission of urgency.***

“Present” Kingdom Texts

Mark 1:14-15 – “But after John was delivered up into prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying ‘the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the gospel.’”

"Kairos vs. chronos"

What do we see the kingdom of God looking like? In reality it is God working in the world, accomplishing His purpose and setting people free. The kingdom of God is a corporate thing, not just a personal thing. We must understand the kingdom in terms of the big picture.

This was not what they expected

The religious people are trying their best to squelch the dawn of the reign of God, the kingdom. Those who longed for the kingdom the most were the ones who resisted it when it came. Why? Was it because they expected it to come in a different form? The throne of the emperor is still secure, Rome is still in control. No political expectations were met. Was it because it does not honor man-made distinctions or castes of people (they were stuck in the cultural traditions of their day)? Was it because Jesus was considered a false prophet like many others who threatened the security in this Roman province? Was it because he was too common to be the Messiah?

The kingdom demands that we face the things that we still face as far as traditions and thinking that is opposite of that of God's thoughts. Even the disciples are offended when children are brought to Jesus. The presence of the kingdom produces conflict in us.

Jesus had authority, not based on social status (he was a poor man of questionable birth), nor educational credentials, nor Rabbinic authority (his ability to quote some finer point of the law), nor an authority based on age, but an authority of character and life... these were the words of God.

The presence of the kingdom breaks down human barriers. It challenges our expectations. It creates opposition. It draws lines. It reveals hearts.

Matthew 12:14, 22-32 - The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees rises to a new height.

Many faces of evil

Sickness, demon-possession, religious resistance all are opposition to the kingdom of God.

Therefore the kingdom comes with conflict. The presence of the kingdom of God is a direct assault against Satan and his kingdom - as it comes it expels the other kingdom, the power of Satan - and people are set free. Satan goes not easily from those he has

tormented. Another aspect of this conflict is in the form of the religious establishment. (Yet the Pharisees were not bad people - deeply concerned about obeying the law and being ritually pure, but here in this story they represent the kingdom of Satan).

Luke 17:20-21 - The Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God is coming (the Pharisees thought that the kingdom of God was either a future reality, a cataclysmic ending of history when Israel is restored or that the kingdom of God is present now in the sense of their being submitted to the yoke of the law)

There would be birth pangs, signs of the times, morality slipping, things getting worse and then Jesus would come. Much like many Christians think of the second coming of Christ today.

Jesus said that the kingdom of God does not come with observation (signs of the times, political and economic conditions, and other such speculation). Oftentimes when we look at the present as a sign of what God is about to do, we do not engage the present at all. The Pharisees disengaged from the miracles of the kingdom that Jesus was performing and missed the present kingdom while looking diligently for the future kingdom to come.

It is as if we don't see what God is doing here and we think, "God is really going to be active when he finally brings an end to this mess and brings his kingdom". We do not need to be saying, "Lo, here! Or lo there!".

The kingdom of God is *within you* (bad translation, as if it were a personal experience and inside of us), or, better, *in the midst of you* (a corporate experience - God acting in your society; it is corporate). So Jesus implies, "Look around, God is doing something in your midst - respond to it!"

Parables of the kingdom

Matthew 13:44-46

Verse 44 - the kingdom is like a treasure hid in a field. A man found it and, with great joy, sold all that he had in order to buy it. Palestine is one of the most fought over piece of ground on earth. Valuables were often buried because there were no banks. It was part of the folklore of the day (winning the lottery in our day). So this story reflects the hopes of a peasant people. A man is plowing another man's field and finds the treasure. An ordinary man doing an ordinary task this man's dream comes true. He doesn't look for it or work for it, but he finds it and the finding involves joy and full commitment.

Verse 45-46 - the kingdom is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls and when he finds the greatest pearl, he sells all and buys it. Again, he is going about his ordinary daily job and something too good to be true happens in a surprising fashion. His life was invaded by something unexpected and wonderful.

The kingdom (the rule of God) is hidden and surprising. It is the sudden in-breaking of God into our lives which brings conflict, but brings joy and freedom. The kingdom comes in such common and ordinary forms that we can miss it if we are not careful.

Application: how is the kingdom of God breaking out in our midst in surprising ways- what common forms does it take in our daily lives? Are we seeing it or missing it? Do we view it as future? Is God only present when the power of God is present in a meeting?

The kingdom parables of Mark 4

The silent and all encompassing kingdom

Mark 4:30-32 - The kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed, the smallest of seeds yet it becomes a great plant. Was Jesus justifying his own relatively small earthly ministry? "Insignificant" beginnings, as were scoffed at in Nazareth. Yet, in spite of unpromising beginnings, it produces a plant so large that even the birds can light in it. The kingdom comes in common fashion but carries a promise of the full fruition.

Mark 4:26-29 - A man plants his seed and goes away and it automatically springs up, he knows not how - it is a mystery. It grows whether we understand it or not - it has in it a life of itself. We sow the seeds and the Lord brings forth the fruit. The kingdom will surely come. It has a life of its own. Laws are set in motion by God.

All of these parables assure that God will bring the kingdom.

The Kingdom with no Boundaries

Luke 4:16-30

The kingdom knows no boundaries. It is for everyone. Culture, race, gender do not matter in the kingdom.

Luke 4 - Luke, in his account of Jesus (in the gospel and in Acts), consistently gives credence to the nobodies: shepherds at the annunciation of the birth of Christ, tax collectors, women, children, Gentiles... the kingdom is for everybody. The Pharisees rejected Jesus' interpretation of the law because it eliminated their ability to control people's access to God.

The kingdom of God burst all barriers of who is and is not valuable to God and, again, causes conflict when it does so.

Matthew 11:12 - John the Baptist, now in prison, is asking Jesus if he is the one who should come or should we look for another. Jesus, as usual, did not give a straight answer. He said to John's disciples, "Go and tell John that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor hear the good news."

In this context Jesus says, "From the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of God comes with violence and the violent take it by force." (Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth, but a sword.)

John dared to meet the powers of darkness (in the form of Herod) head on. The result was prison and eventually death.

Similar to the OT prophets, the spokesmen for the kingdom are a direct threat to the status quo. The kingdom of God, as it dawns on the earth must unseat the ruler of this age - and does so through great conflict.

We tend to think that things that are filled with conflict are demonic. We shy away from resolving conflict. Yet, the kingdom of God comes with conflict. Sometimes conflict is the very sign that God is accomplishing his purposing in a given place.

Summary of the Kingdom of God

- The kingdom is here now, although it will come in its fullness in the future
- The Kingdom is present, but in veiled form
- The kingdom brings with it liberation
- The kingdom crosses all man-made barriers and makes the grace accessible to all peoples
- The kingdom brings conflict to the kingdom of this age.

Theology II: Christology

Part Six

Eschatology

Gk. *eschatos* - "last things"

Humans cannot know everything about the future, but God does know the future and he has told us *some* things

Personal Eschatology

What will happen to individuals in the future?

- 1) Death (Once appointed to man to die)
As believers in Christ, we should not fear death, but relish it
(It is the last enemy, it has no sting)

- 2) Judgment (God has appointed a day Acts 17; Romans 14)

Jesus Christ will be the judge - 2 Tim 4:1
He will judge impartially - Rev 19:22
Believers will be judged - 2 Cor 2:10
Unbelievers will be judged - Rom 2:5-7
Angels will be judged - 2 Peter 2:4

- 3) For believers: Glorification
We will receive the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8)
Perfect, eternal resurrection bodies

- 4) For unbelievers: Hell
A literal hell prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41-46;
Rev. 4:9-11)

- 5) The Millennial reign of Christ (Rev 20:4-5)

- 6) New Heavens and Earth (Rev 21-22)

The Return of Christ

Acts 1:10-11

- * Jesus "will come back in the same way that you see him going into heaven".
- * Mentioned 300 times in the New Testament
- * There is great hope in this doctrine

GK. *parousia* - presence, or arrival

What we need to know about Christ's second coming

- 1) It will be a literal, physical return of Jesus ("The Lord Himself shall descend")
- 2) It will be a comfort to his followers (he will take them away to be with him in his Father's house)
- 3) It will be sudden ("in a moment in the twinkling of an eye")
- 4) It will be dramatic ("with a shout")
- 5) Visible ("every eye will see him")
- 6) The time of his return is unknown (Acts 1)
- 7) People should pay attention for his coming (Titus 2:13)
- 8) Those who are faithful will receive rewards (Matt 25:14-30)
- 9) There is hope and comfort in this doctrine ("comfort one another with these words")
- 10) The delay is because of Christ's patience (He is willing that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance)

All great doctrines have a practical effect on how we live today:

Believing this doctrine has a present effect: because we will see him who is pure, we should purify ourselves. (1 John 3:3) "What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11)

The ultimate result of Christ's return will be:

- 1) The judgment of unbelievers
- 2) The final reward of believers
- 3) We will live and reign forever with Christ
- 4) There will be a new heaven and a new earth

The "Day of the Lord"

Romans 2:16 - the secrets of the hearts will be judged

1 Cor. 3:10-15 - the work of all believers will be tested

1 Thess. 2:3,6; Heb. 6:10; Rev. 3:10-12 - Jesus will reward those who have been faithful to him (the first century church was persecuted church)

Romans 8:19-23; 2 Cor. 4:17; James 5:1-9; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:13 - Christ's enemies will be destroyed and his church vindicated - this is our hope.

Theology II: Christology

Part Seven

The Work of Christ on the Cross

The Problem: Man is sinful and separated from God

Man's Sinful Nature

The only way to understand the Gospel is by first realizing that we have rebelled against a holy God and have reaped all of the sad results. This has effected every man and woman without exception.

1. Sin is transgression of law (I John 3:4)

“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness”

We sometimes treat sin as if it is a weakness or inability. But in reality, sin is actual transgression of law. Those who have sinned have actually violated Gods holy law in some fashion.

2. Sin is an inner attitude (Matt. 5:27-28)

“You have heard that it is was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’

Jesus taught that sin is not only an action, but an inner attitude of the heart as well

3. Sin is not just acting wrong, but failing to act (James 4:17)

“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin”

Whenever we know to do right and fail to do it, we have sinned and fallen short

4. Sin defines who we are at the core of our being

“ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”

Sin has affected everything we are from our thoughts, attitudes, as well as our behavior

5. Sin is universal (Romans 3:9)

“For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.”

No one is exempt from being under the power and penalty of sin

6. All people sin because all by nature are sinners (Romans 5:12)

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”

Adam's sin brought sin and death upon the entire race. All sin by nature now because they are “in” Adam.

God's Wrath

Because all are sinners, Scripture teaches that all are under the wrath of God

1. God is holy and cannot tolerate sin

God's holiness means He is separate from everyone and everything in the universe. It also means that God is pure and therefore untainted by evil desire in thought, word, and deed

2. Because God is holy, he must be opposed to sin

Wrath is not a rising emotion in God that comes and goes but the settled bent of his nature towards sin. It is therefore proper for God to hate sin and oppose everything that is contrary to Him. He also must judge all who practice it. “You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong” (Hab. 1:13)

3. Because God is holy, man is under God's wrath which is evident in the following ways:

a) Man's broken relationship with God (Isa. 59:2)

“but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear”

b) Enslavement to sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1-3)

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Eph. 2:1-3)

c) Human consequences

All the sorrow, pain, suffering, and sickness as well as death are a result of sin entering this world and were not part of the creation in the beginning.

d) Eternal punishment (2 Thess 1:8-10)

“in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might”

The Gospel: God's Answer to Man's Dilemma

There is only one way for sinful men and women who are under the wrath of God to be saved. Through what God accomplished for us by the work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus Christ is the Gospel

The Gospel is occurs through the Person, history, and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. The reason there is a Gospel is the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

a) Jesus' birth was supernatural. He was God in the flesh (John 1:14)

“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...”

b) Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life (Hebrews. 4:15)

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin”

c) Jesus' death on the cross accomplished salvation. His death was a substitutionary death on our behalf (Isa. 53:4-6)

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and which his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Because of Jesus' work, we now stand justified in God's presence based solely on the gift of righteousness available through Jesus' work (Rom. 3:21-24)

d) Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so that God no longer expects us pay for them, past, present, and future (Col. 2:13-14)

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross”

e) Jesus rose from the dead on our behalf (Rom. 4:25)

“who was delivered up for our transgressions and raised for our justification”

f) Jesus ascended to the right of the Father and is coming again (Ps. 110:1)

“the Lord said to my Lord, ‘sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool”

Our Response to the Gospel

The Gospel is news; good news that calls for a response. When the apostle Peter preached the good news for the first time on this planet, many of those who heard him asked “What shall we do?” This is always the question that people must ask when they hear the good news. To properly respond to the Gospel we must understand both God's initiative and our responsibility since Scripture teaches both.

1. Chosen in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4-6)

“even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved”

God determined in eternity past to save us. This is called in Scripture “election.”

2. God calls us by the Gospel (Rom. 8:30)

“and those whom he predestined he also called”

While God is the one who draws, this does not mean that a person is saved apart from his own willing response to the Gospel. The divine summons brings about the response it requires

3. Regenerated by the Spirit (born again)

Because we are deceived and in bondage to sin, God acts to change our natures by imparting spiritual life to us. This change is called ‘regeneration’ or being “born again.” When He does impart new life to us by the Spirit, we become spiritually alive.

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him”...

4. Conversion

“Conversion is our willing response to the Gospel, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation” (Wayne Grudem)

Our response to the Gospel can be summarized under the term “conversion.” This always has two components: repentance and faith. These two, while separate, always work together.

a) Repentance

Repentance carries the meaning of turning around or changing direction. It means that as sinners who have spent our lives in rebellion to God and rejecting his rule, we have now turned back to God and accepted his rule and authority. Repentance is a command not a suggestion (see Acts 17:30). It has been said that repentance is exercised in three areas of human nature: mind, will, and emotions. By “mind” we must first have an understanding of God's holiness and of our own sin and guilt. By “emotions” we mean that we have a heartfelt sorrow for sin. And “will” means that we purpose to turn away from sin and embrace obedience to God. Repentance is a gift of God since God's grace allows us to repent (II Tim. 2:25).

b) Faith

We are saved by grace *through* faith. Faith is the instrument by which we are saved—faith must be exercised before salvation can be received. It is both a gift of God and an act of our will. It is a commitment of oneself to God, evidenced by an unwavering trust in his promises. It is always based on knowledge of the Gospel which has been preached to us. Faith is not an emotional response alone, nor can it be exercised apart from the mind. Faith requires us to have heard the word of God. When we hear the Gospel, we are called upon to assent to it as the “word of truth.” Then, we must put our trust in the Gospel, staking our lives in the fact that it is true.

5. Baptism

Baptism will not regenerate us, but it is the fitting response that one must give to the Gospel (Matt. 28:19, Mark 1:16). While it is not necessary to go to heaven (example of the thief on the cross) it is necessary if one is to be saved (full delivered from sin's power in this life). That is why Jesus said “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”

The Achievement of the Cross

This salvation is so great, many images/words are used to explain the scope of it:
Propitiation/Redemption/Justification/Reconciliation

Propitiation (God was our enemy)

Emphasizing the wrath of God

To propitiate – to appease someone or pacify their anger

- 1) Propitiation is necessary because sin evokes the wrath of a holy God
- 2) Who does the propitiating? If it was God's wrath that needed to be propitiated, it was God's love which did the propitiating. (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 4:10)
It did not change his feelings toward us (his love is unchanging) but his treatment of us (his practical relation to us)
- 3) What was the propitiary sacrifice? It was God himself, in Jesus Christ

God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger by bearing it himself on the cross.

Redemption (God is our owner)

Emphasizing our captivity

Gk. *lytron* – ransom; the price paid for a slave in the ancient world

Mark 10:45 – Jesus' job description: "to serve... and to give his life a ransom for many"

- 1) What was our captivity?
Our moral bondage/sin
The curse of the law
The empty way of life handed down by our fathers (1 Pet. 1:18)
- 2) What price was paid?
The blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9)
- 3) Therefore we are not our own, we are bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:18-20)

Justification (God as judge)

Emphasizing our guilt

Justification is not amnesty (which is pardon without principle - i.e. amnesia)

Forgiveness remits our debts and cancels our punishment. Justification bestows on us a righteous standing before God.

How could the righteous God declare the unrighteous righteous?

- 1) By grace (the source) – totally undeserved favor (Rom. 3:24)
(then is it really justice?)
 - 2) By his blood (the ground) – because Jesus paid the price (Rom. 5:9)
 - 3) By faith (the means) – not by the works of the law, but by the work of faith (Rom. 5:1; 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9)
- Justification is an eschatological event. It brings forward into the present the verdict that belongs to the last judgement.

Reconciliation (God as Father)

Recognizes our need for restoration

Reconcile – to restore a relationship implying an original relationship, broken and violated and then restored

Justified is our legal standing before our Judge; reconciliation is our personal relationship to our Father

Romans 5:1 – “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God”
God declares me “not guilty”!

- Adoption – being born again into a new family, heirs of God, sons instead of slaves (Romans 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-29)
- Access – active communion with God

What the Cross of Christ Reveals

The justice of God – (Rom. 3:21-26) “He is just, and the justifier” He doesn’t wink at sin, he punishes it. The cross demonstrates both his justice in judging sin and his mercy in justifying the sinner

The love of God – (1 John 3:16) “This is how we know what love is...”
(Romans 5:8) “God demonstrates his love for us in this; While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.”

The wisdom of God – (1 Cor. 1:17-25) God made a way for an unsolvable problem to be solved

The power of God – (1 Cor. 1:17-25) The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes”

Other Views on the Atonement

Not everyone who calls himself a Christian is a Christian. Many devout people do not understand or do not adhere to the Biblical account of the atonement of Christ. What about contemporary theologies and religious beliefs that deny the atonement?

Contemporary Theologies:

Liberalism

An antsupernatural approach to Christianity and the Bible that arose because of rationalism and the Enlightenment. Denied the miraculous element of the Scriptures, stressing the importance of reason; whatever disagreed with science was rejected. Founded by Freidrich Schleiermacher and Enlightenment intellectuals, liberalism had been terribly destructive to orthodox Christianity in the nineteenth century. Two world wars and the Great Depression killed liberalism.

Neo-Liberalism

Held a higher view of the Bible and Christ, taking a more serious view of sin. (Fosdick, Bultmann, Tillich)

Clung to the concept of personal salvation and the Lordship of Christ, focused on practical outworking of Christianity in the beginning. They were, however, devoted to evolution and began to suspect the authority of the Scriptures. The third generation or post-liberals have moved away from orthodoxy altogether. Their religious outlook is completely secular.

Robert Bultmann (1884-1976)

Emphasized Form Criticism, which holds that the written documents of the scriptures are based on oral traditions, we have to take that into account – we cannot get an accurate view of Jesus through the Gospels. They are essentially mythological accounts.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965)

Christ has no divine nature, was a mere symbol of the universal salvation of all humankind; the crucifixion and resurrection were historical, legendary and mythological; radically redefined regeneration, justification and sanctification.

Since many seminaries are influenced by this line of thought, Liberalism has infiltrated many mainline denominations (some Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodists, Baptist)

Neo-Orthodoxy

Sought a serious study of the Bible because of liberalism's failure. Stresses an experiential encounter with God and retains many of liberalism's beliefs. Kept some orthodox terms but filled them with different content.

Karl Barth (b. 1886)

Very high view of Christ, yet many Neo-orthodox theologians hold such a broad view of the Atonement that they border on universalism in their doctrine of salvation. The Bible is a book written by humans and cannot be inerrant. The Bible is not the Word of God, but a witness to the revelation of God, which is found in Christ.

Emil Brunner (d.1966)

Rejected the virgin birth, but not the Incarnation (believed the full human parentage of Christ).

Post Vatican II Catholicism

(1962-1965)

Karl Rahner, Hans Kung

No longer is Rome the sole depository of divine revelation. Salvation is attainable even by those who do not know Christ. Salvation was only available through the sacraments of the church (works, not faith, which is a problem in itself). Now, one need not trust personally in Christ, but merely emulate His character. Now the program of the church is no longer to evangelize, but to dialogue with non-Christian traditions to help them find Christ in their culture. It was once said the all roads lead to Rome, now Rome says that all roads lead to God.

Process Theology - Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) (Scientist turned philosopher/theologian)

God is impersonal and by applying the evolutionary concept suggests that God is subject to change (a theology of becoming). The supernatural and miraculous is denied. Panentheism – God is greater than all things and contains all things within Himself (as opposed to pantheism which declares that God in the world and the world in God). The Bible is subject to correction by reason and science. Denies the divinity of Christ and the resurrection.

Salvation is, at best, the achievement of self-fulfillment. Everything ends with death.

Liberation Theology

Influenced by Jurgen Moltmann and Marxism

Emphasizes social concerns, particularly in Latin America where people have been oppressed. It majors on righting social injustice through political action. (Also Black Theology and Feminist Theology)

Jesus is viewed as a fellow oppressed one (viewed as black in black theology). Jesus is not only Savior, but liberator. Sin is to be wealthy in the face of someone else's poverty. It is not so much a personal failure as a societal situation. People may be saved if they open themselves to God (influenced by Vatican II). One will be judged by one's treatment of fellow human beings. Jesus is merely a model for liberation

Theology of Success - Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller

Preaching sin and judgment is "a destructive influence in the human personality and the human life". "To be born again means that we must be changed from a negative to a positive self-image". Christ's death demonstrates the value that God places on a human being. Sin is "any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem." (An infraction against man primarily, not a violation against God)

Problem:

The proper starting point for theology is God, not man.

(We could also spend time on the "prosperity gospel" which detracts from the sovereignty of God, appeals to the lusts of the flesh and is a sort of "American dream" gospel)

Other Religious Beliefs

Mormons

Jesus' death cancelled the penalty of sin for all men (not merely believers). But His death cannot remove personal sins. It can only provide an opportunity for men to remove their own sins. Salvation must be earned, it is not a gift of God.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jesus' death paid only for Adam's sin, not for the sins of humanity. By clearing the penalty of Adam's sin, Christ opened the way for us to work for salvation.

Christian Science

Man has the power to remove the idea of sin, and hence the authority to forgive himself, although in truth, we have nothing to forgive ourselves of. Sin is not real, people do not commit sinful acts (Death and disease are not real either). Man is actually a spirit being, sinless, perfect and a part of the divine essence. We are already saved – we do not need to ask God for salvation.

Unification Church

Jesus' death actually prevented him from successfully accomplishing his mission. Salvation is through Moon and his wife (the modern day Adam and Eve) and is accomplished by works.

United Pentecostal Church

We must take three steps to obtain salvation: 1) have faith and repentance 2) be baptized in the name of Jesus only 3) receive the Holy Spirit, which is evidenced by speaking in tongues

What do most ordinary people that I know believe?