



## **“The Christ of Man’s Creation”**

### ***Preaching Christ Series, Part 1***

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The entire Bible points to Jesus. That’s what it’s about. He is the fulfillment of its prophecies, the reality of its types and symbols, the realization of its greatest promises, and the only portal through which sinful man can be redeemed and enter into the holy presence of God. After Jesus completed His time on earth and ascended into heaven, the apostles and disciples in the early church went throughout the land and, ultimately, the whole world preaching Jesus. It should be the aim and mission of every preacher today to do likewise and to preach Jesus to a lost world. There is an urgent need to do so in this sin-sick, confused, and doomed world. There is an urgent need to preach Jesus in the church as well.

**John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**

But what does it mean to preach Jesus? In several New Testament passages, we learn that preaching Jesus involved preaching a number of things about Jesus: about His will and about His kingdom. But it all begins with understanding who Jesus is: who He was when He came to earth, who He is now at the right hand of God. You may think that people understand who the Bible claims Jesus is, but that is not the case at all. Jesus may be a familiar name, but He is a very unfamiliar person to our world today. Even more tragically, He is becoming an unfamiliar person to many in the church.

We’re going to begin a new series of lessons today about Jesus because you will never know Jesus and be the disciple of Jesus until you first understand who Jesus is. Jesus is grossly misunderstood and misrepresented in our world today. Some have blasphemously caricatured Jesus while others, instead of coming to know Jesus through what His word says about Him, form a picture of Him from what modern culture says He was. Sadly, that picture is the caricature I just mentioned. Many understand that He is a unique and remarkable person in history—a man who lived long ago and said some profound

things, performed acts of kindness and mercy toward the poor and downtrodden—but that’s about the extent of it. This shallow view of Jesus extends well into the so-called church today.

A few weeks ago, I saw a news headline that truly startled me. It saddened and alarmed me. In fact, it was the stimulus for this series of sermons. It reminded me that we as preachers of the gospel have a tremendous amount of work to do and it’s time that we realized that. The headline read, “More than half of U.S. adults and 30% of evangelicals believe Jesus is not God.” I had to read that twice. The article went on to quote a poll taken by Lifeway which says that almost 1/3 of professing Christians believe that Jesus was a good teacher, a prophet, a good man, and so on, but that He was NOT the Son of God. And there’s more. Some 65% (or 2 out of 3) of professing Christians believe that Jesus was a being created by God and not eternal.

On one hand, such Bible ignorance and heresy on such a large scale is shocking. But on the other hand, perhaps it shouldn’t be because over the past several decades, we have seen a seismic shift in the emphasis of the so-called Christian community concerning Jesus. We’ve watched our Lord and Savior undergo a cultural metamorphosis until the Jesus that has been popularly preached is not necessarily the Christ of scripture at all. If we truly preach Jesus to a lost world, we must preach the Jesus revealed to us in scripture. In examining the New Testament, a picture of Jesus emerges that many modern folks are not acquainted with. In our series spanning the next few weeks, we’ll see who Jesus is set forth by God’s word to be and how that should change our lives. It’s not just a fact of history; it should be a transformational truth in every life.

There are many perceptions, opinions, and theories about Jesus Christ and there have been since He walked the earth two thousand years ago. Some actually claim that He never even existed. These atheistic mythicists have an agenda and a reason to dispute the historicity of Christ. They contend that Jesus was not a historical person, but rather the creation of early Christians and that the gospels are merely made up accounts of people who wanted to propagate the Christian message. Some say that this created concept of Jesus was borrowed from other mythical gods and that Jesus is just one of many religious fables. Some say He is a nice thought and perhaps we can glean some words of wisdom from His message, but He really shouldn’t be taken all that seriously.

These are wishful theories because nearly the entire scholarship of the world agrees that Jesus was indeed a real man. He was a Jew, a preacher, a teacher, was crucified by the Romans in Jerusalem during the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberias at the time when Pilate was governor in Judea. There’s more evidence for that than there is for the existence of many other people that the world almost universally acknowledges to have lived once upon a time.

Then there are those who acknowledge that Jesus lived but they say that man turned Him into God. In other words, He was only a man, but His followers thought of Him as deity and they made something out of Him that He really wasn’t. Acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth was a remarkable man and an incredibly wise teacher—perhaps the greatest teacher to have ever lived—they deny that He was God and deny His authority as the Son of God. It reminds me of the story of the rich, young ruler recorded in **Mark 10**. The Lord was known throughout the land as a powerful and effective teacher. People were awed by Him and the things that He said. Even those who didn’t believe that He was the Christ were impressed by His way with words and His ability to teach. He would leave His harshest critics silent with His answers to their questions and with His questions they couldn’t answer. This young man was a ruler. He was wealthy and he possessed some measure of authority. He was apparently a Pharisee, one of the

prestigious religious class of the day. So, in one of his fine robes and immaculately groomed, here he is kneeling in the dust along the roadside at the edge of town with a burning question on his heart.

**Mark 10:17 “Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”**

That may sound like the right question to ask, and it is a question we should all ask. But it seems that this man was asking it from the same vantage point that many even today ask the question. He was fastidious about all the other aspects of his life, had been successful in life, and so he would now attend to this part of his life. Here is not a broken and humble sinner seeking salvation from the Lord. Rather, a proud, well-to-do rich man wanting to know what he can do or say or perhaps buy or spend to gain eternal life. It becomes obvious that he was approaching Jesus as the wise teacher, but not necessarily as the Son of God. Jesus answers him, but not before asking him a rhetorical question.

**18 So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.”**

That passage has caused some Bible students a bit of trouble. Why would Jesus say such a thing if He knew that He was God and that He was sinless? After all, the Bible tells us that the word was made flesh, the word was with God in the beginning, and the word was God.

**John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”**

Some say that Jesus was speaking as man and not as God. After all, He was the Son of God AND the son of man, so they say that as long as Jesus was here on earth and living in a human body, He had all of the impulses and temptations to sin like everyone else, and even though He was sinless, He couldn't call Himself good as long as He was living on earth as a man. Well, I don't believe that at all. I don't believe that's what Jesus was saying. I believe the Lord was challenging this young man's faith. This man looked at Jesus as a good man, a good teacher. But did he see Jesus for who He really was? That is, the Son of God? If he had looked at Jesus that way, it would've changed the whole dynamic and the whole equation. *Why do you call Me good? If I am good, then I must be who I claim I am—God, in the flesh.* This man doesn't seem to have gone that far in his confidence in Jesus because after Jesus told him what he had to do to inherit eternal life—and that is to be willing to part with his earthly riches—the Bible tells us that he went away sorrowful.

You know, that's how many people look at Jesus today. Some will worship Him to some extent. Some will honor Him to a point. Some will worship Him in word but not in deed. Some will go running to Him saying, *Good teacher, say something that will make me feel good! Improve my life! Say something that will impart hope!* But when met with the demands of true discipleship, that's where their faith and confidence quickly end. Why do you call the Lord good if you're not going to accept what He says about Himself and if you're not going to yield to Him in repentance and obedience? For if He is good, He is God.

How do you view Jesus? Who is He? Where did He come from? Why did He come? Which Jesus do you believe today because there is the Jesus of scripture and there is the Jesus Christ of man's creation. How you view Jesus will determine everything else about you and your relationship to Him and to God. If He is merely a philosopher or a good teacher, a good man, or even a prophet, then you can take what He says, or you can leave it. Who's to say that your opinion is not as good and as valid as His? What

authority should He have in your life? After all, two thousand years have passed since He lived on the earth. There have been a lot of changes in the world. We're a lot more sophisticated and educated and cultured than the people of Jesus' day, so we think, so what authority should He have in my modern life? That's really the attitude that many people have about Jesus when you get right down to it. But on the other hand, if He is the Son of God, that changes everything.

By the way, let me point out that if He is not the Son of God, if He is not what His word claims Him to be and what He claimed to be, then He is not a good teacher nor a good prophet. He's not anything from God. He would be a liar, a fraud, out of his mind because He claimed to be God. If He is God—and He is—then that should change everything concerning how we view Him and how we relate to Him. If He is who the scriptures declare Him to be, then the modern portrait of Jesus is quite inadequate. It's quite misleading and many people who claim to know Jesus are tragically deceived.

For example, the Christ of scripture came to address the greatest problem that man has, and that is the problem of sin.

**Luke 19:10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

That was His mission to earth. He saw man as lost and doomed in sin, bound for hell. Jesus came with a redemptive plan to save man through obedient faith in Him. But the Christ of man's creation came perhaps to change the world politically, socially, economically, to deal with our temporal problems, to free people from debt, sickness, or various trials and difficulties—not to free people from the slavery of sin. Why don't we look at it that way? Because modern man doesn't see himself as a slave to sin. That's why. He doesn't see himself as lost and bound for hell. He sees himself as essentially a good person and really not in need of redemption.

The Jesus of scripture came commanding repentance and turning away from sin.

**Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."**

People today picture Jesus as simply throwing in, running around, partying, and associating with sinners. He associated with sinners on the basis of calling them to repentance. Seeking to change their lives by the power of His truth and His word. To change them from being sinners and to turn them to righteousness. The biblical Christ demands that people give up sin and live holy lives. But the modern Jesus tolerates and overlooks sin. He would never be so harsh and bigoted as to tell someone to change their lifestyle and give up their sinful ways.

The Christ of scripture spoke with divine authority and He commanded His people to obey Him and submit to Him.

**John 12:48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."**

The Christ of man's creation merely suggests and proposes ways to have a better and richer life. The Christ of scripture laid down the ultimatum that anyone who would follow Him must first deny self.

**Luke 9:23 "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."**

The Christ of man's creation tells you to love yourself, do whatever makes you happy, esteem yourself. The Christ of scripture warned of judgment and hell to all who rejected Him and refused to obey Him and therefore die in their sins.

**John 8:24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."**

Did you know that Jesus the Christ, the loving, merciful, compassionate Christ preached about hell twice as much as He did about heaven? That's the truth. But the Christ of man's creation would never be condemning, but rather is unconditionally loving and accepting.

The Christ of scripture came exposing sin and man's sinfulness.

**John 3:20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."**

But the Christ of man's creation condones sin, affirms sinners in their sins, excuses sin. The Christ of scripture offends the world with His exclusive claims of truth.

**John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."**

But the postmodern Jesus offends no one. He's politically correct and tolerant of all ideas, views, and lifestyles. The Christ of the Bible represented God's perfection, holiness, and righteousness, but the modern Jesus only preaches acceptance and love.

The biblical Jesus creates division in the world.

**Matthew 10:34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword."**

Meaning that His teachings would divide the saved from the sinner, a line that would even cleave between child and parent, husband and wife, friend and neighbor in many cases. The Christ of man's creation promotes peace and unity at all costs.

Why don't people want to believe in the first Jesus? Why don't they want to believe in the Jesus of scripture? Why have they worked so hard to replace Him with the modern version? Isn't it really obvious? The verses we referred to a moment ago state it well.

**John 3:19-20 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."**

Like the rich, young ruler, many approach Jesus with great expectations. But when they learn who Jesus really is and what that implies concerning their own lives, their tune quickly changes, and they walk away from Him disappointed and crestfallen. Or, in the case of the modern world, they simply recreate

Him into a Jesus that they can believe in. One that pleases them and nicely fits into their mindset and lifestyle. A Jesus that they're then willing to follow.

Friend, the real problem that we have today—even extending into the church—is that we don't really understand who Jesus is and who the Bible sets Him forth to be. When that becomes the case, our image of Jesus and His role in our lives changes for the worse. When we fail to preach Jesus to the world and even to our own in the church, our lives will reflect it. We can't take for granted that people who even sit on the pew know who Jesus is. When we fail to understand the claims the Bible makes about Him, our view of Him will be lowered. So, perhaps we shouldn't be shocked that nearly 1/3 of self-described evangelical Christians don't understand or believe that Jesus was God. That He was the divine Son of God and more than just a prophet or a profound teacher, a moral influence, or a wise philosopher. Instead of preaching Christ and Him crucified, when we preach a Christ of health and wealth, a Christ who came to iron out all of the world's social and political problems and to tell us all to just get along and accept everyone, a Christ silent about sin, repentance, holiness, and salvation—then we get what we have today.

**I Corinthians 2:1-2 “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”**

That doesn't mean that Paul didn't preach doctrine. It doesn't mean that Paul didn't preach about our duties and obligations to God. It means that he came presenting the crucified Christ to them instead of the vain philosophy of this world. By that preaching, they were justified, sanctified, and glorified. And when we preach the true Jesus in the world today, it will have the same effect or else we're not preaching Jesus.

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