

The Supremacy of Jesus

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Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 0 0] Well, I wonder for you, what is the most common image of Jesus at Christmas? What do you think is the most common image of Jesus? Well, for most, it's probably the image of a baby.

You know, the classic Christmas nativity scene. The one that you can just about still find on some Christmas cards in the shops where there's an antiseptically clean stable. There is some really good lighting.

There are some really well-trained and attentive animals. And Mary and Joseph are there. And so are the shepherds and the wise men and the angels. And then the baby Jesus is right there in the middle in a manger with a warm glow all around him.

That is a classic Christmas image, isn't it? And of course, we're familiar with that image because we are familiar with the Christmas story. And we should be familiar with the Christmas story because it is the world's most famous story.

Everybody across the world would know about the Christmas story. And yet there's a danger in the manger if that is the only image of Jesus we have at Christmastime.

[1 : 0 9] And that's why we read these amazing verses from Colossians chapter 1 in the Bible. Because they speak of Jesus by saying the Son is the image of the invisible God.

And so while Jesus was a baby, yep, we've got that, he was and is also God. Now, Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians in the first century.

And it was written around 30 years after Jesus was born, lived, and died. So soon after the events of Jesus' life. And Paul was writing to people who were in danger of misunderstanding Jesus.

People who, like many people still today, have an image of Jesus that is just far too small. And so Paul, in what is really like an early Christian hymn, he writes to highlight the grandeur and the glory of Jesus Christ.

And that's why the incarnation, or God coming to earth as a human being, means that Jesus can't simply be dismissed from our lives. Jesus is essential.

[2 : 1 6] That is what that second Bible reading is telling us. Jesus is essential. And here we see why. He's essential for creation and for reconciliation.

Creation and reconciliation. And that means that Jesus is essential for you and for me. So let's just see why. Creation. First of all, Jesus is the creator. Jesus didn't just show up in Bethlehem.

He has always existed. Listen, verse 15. The sun is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. So Jesus is the eternal son of God who makes God visible to us.

Which means we don't need to guess what God is like because Jesus reveals God to us. And so when we're told that Jesus is the firstborn over all creation, it doesn't mean that Jesus was born first or that Jesus was somehow created.

The idea of firstborn has the idea of supremacy or of priority. And so in the Bible culture at the time, the firstborn had a higher status than the rest of the siblings.

[3 : 30] And the firstborn received a greater share of the inheritance. And so it's saying that Jesus is supreme over everything. And that everything belongs to Jesus.

And we're told why. Listen to the next verse. For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

So everything was created by Jesus. Which is everything we can see. And also everything we can't see.

So we're talking about the macro level with the universe and the stars and the galaxies. We're also talking about the micro level with the subatomic particles and atoms and DNA.

Everything owes its existence to Jesus. But Jesus is not just the creator. He's the source of creation.

[4 : 32] And he's also the goal of creation. Because everything we read was created for him. And so we're not here by random chance.

You're not just an accident. You weren't just born into a random world with no meaning or purpose or significance. No, our origin and our purpose is explained by Jesus.

You know those name labels that you get to sew onto items of school clothing? And when I was a boy, I had labels on everything. From my blazer to my jacket, right down to my pants.

A name, Jonathan D. Groot. And it was quite useful in school at break time when you were playing football. Just to know which jumper was yours from the pile that made up the goal posts.

When the school bell rang to signify the end of break. And so what we're being told here is that there's... It's as if there's a label on everything in creation saying, Made by Jesus and made for Jesus.

[5 : 37] Abraham Kuyper, who was a Dutch theologian and former minister, prime minister of the Netherlands. He said this last century. There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, mine.

And so we're being told here there is nothing in this universe, including you and me, that doesn't belong to Jesus.

But as well as being creator, Jesus is also the sustainer of creation. So listen to the next verse. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

It's telling us that Jesus keeps this cosmos functioning moment by moment. So the way the planet Earth remains exactly the right distance from the sun, the way there is enough oxygen in the air for us all to breathe, the way that there is this thing called gravity that common people don't seem to understand but science geeks do, it's all because of Jesus.

Everything depends on Jesus. And so Jesus is not like human creators who will design a product and build a product and then they're no longer required for that product to work.

[6 : 54] Take, for example, Steve Jobs, the late Steve Jobs, who designed Apple technology. He doesn't need to be around, does he, for Apple products to work. So iMacs, iPhones, iPads, AirPods, Apple Watches will still work without him until you drop them, that is, and the screen cracks.

Then he don't work. But nothing in this universe would work without Jesus. That is how dependent our existence is on him.

Now, I suspect many people simply reject Christianity because in their understanding in their minds, they have an image of Jesus that is just far too small.

They imagine a Jesus who is small, who is insignificant, incidental, irrelevant, even unnecessary for life, rather than the real Jesus that we find here in our Bibles, who is the supreme Lord of all.

And that's why Jesus is dangerously underestimated and also disastrously overlooked. And so we should be careful not to let the humble circumstances of the birth of Jesus eclipse his true identity as the supreme Lord and creator of all.

[8 : 14] What the mystery of the incarnation tells us is that the baby who needed to be held in his mother's arms is actually the creator of the universe who holds everything else together.

And so Jesus is the creator, but, well, the question is, well, why did he come? Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins and to reconcile us to God.

So that's the first thing. Jesus is the creator, but Jesus is also the reconciler. And that's what the second half of our Bible reading from Colossians chapter 1 explains to us.

Because as well as being the creator of all things, we're told that Jesus is also the reconciler of all things. He came to reconcile all things to himself. Now, underlying Paul's words here is the entire storyline of the Bible.

And so the Bible begins with creation, where everything was created good, but then there's the fall. And the fall tells of how we, as human beings, have turned away from God.

[9 : 21] We've turned our backs on him. Because we were made to, we were made in God's image, made to reflect God and give him glory. We were created to worship him, to love him, and to serve him.

And yet instead of living for God, what we do is we live for ourselves. And so we have broken our relationship with our loving creator, which results in every other relationship being broken too.

So our relationships with other human beings are broken. Our relationship with our very self is broken. And our relationship with the created world is also broken.

Everything has fallen. The harmony has gone. And that's why we have disharmony. Why we have dislocation, discord, disease, and death. The good creation is falling apart.

And that is the world we live in, isn't it? We know it. We live in a fallen creation. It is a world under sin. And we're well aware of it.

[10 : 26] Our world is broken. And everything in some way or some sense is corrupted. Everything is falling apart to some degree or another. So there's the ongoing war in Ukraine.

But also the World Cup in Qatar brought to our attention issues like injustice and bribery and division and so on and so on. But the effects of a broken world are everywhere.

In our world, on the news, in our nation, but also in our communities, also in our schools, even in our families and in our personal lives.

And yet the good news of Christmas is that God will not allow sin and evil to reign or to have the final say. God must judge all sin.

And yet God has pursued the human race in love. Where he is in the process of reconciling all things to himself through Jesus. And so that's where Christmas comes in.

[11 : 31] Listen again. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead. So that in everything, he might have the supremacy. So Jesus is supreme over the entire cosmos.

And yet we're told he was dead. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead. The dead there is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus.

Because it's through his death and his resurrection that Jesus defeats our greatest enemies of sin and death. And his resurrection guarantees the resurrection of everybody who follows him.

And so Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of a new creation. The dawning of a new age, if you like. With Jesus as the supreme ruler.

The Lord and King. And we're told why. Listen again. This is Christmas.

[12 : 45] All the fullness of God the Father dwelling in Jesus Christ. He was born fully God and fully man.

And so whether as a cute, cuddly baby in a crib or as a bleeding and dying man on a cross. He did this because the fallen creation, fallen people like us, need to be reconciled to God.

And Jesus came to reconcile all things to himself. We're told by making peace through his blood shed on a cross. And so these verses point towards a coming together of everything that is falling apart and fractured.

Of a restoration of everything that is ruined. Of a harmony to replace all the disharmony. Of a new creation coming from the fallen creation.

Of a cosmic peace with no more suffering, no more tears, no more evil, no more injustice and no more sin. And that's why Christianity, the Christian faith, gives us a far more realistic approach to life in this world.

[14 : 00] It's realistic about the world because it tells us the world is broken and it's because of sin. But it also gives us a far greater hope. Because it promises that all things will be reconciled through Jesus.

Now when my children were small and much younger than they are now, they'd have friends over to the house for playdates. Playdates are no longer a thing in our house, but they were.

And very quickly, during a playdate, the house would descend into absolute chaos. There would be carnage, toys would be broken, and there would be a mess everywhere. But eventually, harmony was restored when everybody left and everything was put back in its rightful place.

Now that is restoration on a purely domestic level. But can you imagine restoration on a cosmic level? Well that is the ultimate outworking of the Christmas message.

Everything and everyone will come under the supreme rule of Jesus Christ. And that's why the implications of the Christmas message are staggering.

[15 : 14] For everything and for everyone. Because if Christmas is the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus to reconcile all things to himself.

And that means that you and I also need to be reconciled to God. And we need that more than we need anything else in this life.

Why? Because our sin makes us God's enemies. And God who is just must punish our sin. And yet God who is loving wants to forgive.

And so the great news of Christmas is that through Jesus, we can be reconciled to God. That sense we feel in our hearts of everything not being right.

Of being distant, of being remote from God. Of the world being full of problems that can't be fixed. All of that can be resolved through Jesus.

[16 : 11] Peace with God is possible through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. Because Jesus came living the life we should have lived. And dying the death we deserve to die.

He died in our place. And so when we believe in Jesus, he takes the punishment for our sins. And we get peace with God.

Which means we will eventually be free from all sin. And we'll get resurrection bodies that will be fit for living for eternity with God in a new creation.

I wonder if you've heard of the Christmas truce. It's a story of what happened during the First World War. Apparently it took place around 1914 at Christmas time.

When there were a series of unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front. Apparently, as the Germans and Allied forces faced each other, they were there for war.

[17 : 13] But during Christmas, somebody began to sing the carol, Silent Night, Holy Night. And then a hush fell right across the battlefield.

And so soldiers laid down their arms. They climbed out of their trenches. And they exchanged Christmas greetings with one another. And on Christmas Eve and then on Christmas Day, men from both sides ventured out into no man's land.

And then they sang together. And they exchanged souvenirs. They exchanged food. They exchanged cigarettes with one another. And they even played games of football against each other.

But of course, it was only a truce. It didn't bring peace. Because they soon went back to their trenches and then started to kill each other.

And we're well aware that our attempts at peace will always fail. Even on a domestic and personal level, we struggle to make peace with those with whom we have broken relationships.

[18 : 15] But more significantly, our attempts at making peace with God will always fail too. And yet Christianity and Christmas tell us that God has come to us.

God has come to make peace with you and me. And it's been achieved through what Jesus has done on the cross. Because that's where God can both punish our sin and provide our salvation.

And so can you see why Jesus is essential? Not just for Christmas, but for eternity. Not just for our lives, but for our cosmos. The supremacy of Jesus smashes through all the sentimentality of Christmas, doesn't it?

Because Jesus shed his blood on the cross to save us and to reconcile us to God. And that's why every Christmas we sing, from Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Peace on Earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.

And so the question remains, have you found peace with God yet? If not, ask for forgiveness for your sin. Believe in Jesus as your Savior and be reconciled to God.

[19 : 34] Christmas is the true and wonderful story of the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus. Of how he came to live and die in our place so we could be saved and live with him forever in a perfect renewed world.

And that's why we give birth, we give thanks for the birth of Jesus Christ today. Because it's only in Jesus that we truly know what it means to have a happy Christmas.

Since... Oh my goodness. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.