

KNOWING CHRIST

Knowing Christ

Key idea:

Christ is the perfect image in character, quality, and power of God with whom we are reconciled by Christ's death on the cross.

Key text:

Colossians 1:15-22

15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For 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. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And 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. 19For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

Key points:

1. By natural reasoning and perspective, we are unable to picture or know the true God, and tend to create gods that look more like us. Likewise, man-made religions tend to put the focus on people and their efforts to earn the favor of their gods.
2. Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship. You don't earn your way in, God reconciles you to Himself.
3. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. No one can "see" God except by seeing Jesus. God has revealed Himself through creation, conscience, and Scripture; but His ultimate revelation is Christ.

4. Other religions claim to know God and discount Jesus, but the fact that we can only know God through Jesus turns that notion upside down. We don't know God, but we can know Jesus.
5. Many people say Christianity is narrow, but it's only as narrow as Christ?
6. All things have been created through and for Christ. This is His universe and He is the ultimate reality. If we orient ourselves away from Christ, we alienate ourselves from Christ and make ourselves His enemies.
7. Even as his enemies, Christ loves us and goes to hell and back for us; He values us most among all His creation.
8. Christ reconciles us to God on the cross and the verdicts of "alienated, enemy, and evil" are replaced by the verdicts of "holy, without blemish, and free from accusation."

Questions for discussion/application:

1. Why is our natural tendency to create religions that mostly rely on our work to achieve salvation and/or meaning?
2. Must religious or spiritual fulfillment involve a god, or have people sometimes turned to atheistic religions or secular pursuits to achieve significance.
3. What does it mean to say that God is invisible?
4. What does Paul mean when He says that by our natural selves we are alienated, enemies, and evil?
5. How does Paul say we can know God if He is invisible?
6. Jesus says He is "the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Is that narrow?
7. What's verse 16 mean when it says all thing were created through Him and for Him?
8. What does it mean In verse 15 when it says Jesus is the "firstborn over all creation" and verse 18 when it says Jesus is the "firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy."?
9. What's it mean in Verse 17 to say, "in Him all things hold together."?

10. What's it say about His love for us that He is the head of the church? What happens when a head goes one way and a body goes another? How close is the head to the body?
11. What's it mean that He reconciles "to Himself all things ... through His blood, shed on the cross."
12. As the giver of all life, how significant is it that Christ pours out His life for us?
13. How does God see you? Does He grade on a curve? Though you were once His enemy, how much did Christ love you?
14. What's the difference between being outside Christ, and being in Christ?