

Title: Knowing Christ

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

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

I. The Religious view of God

- A. On the natural, we create gods in our own image.
- B. Rome and Grece, Hinduism, Islam, Baha'i.
- C. Religions that don't require a god - Buddhism, Jainism, Daoism, Confucianism.
- D. Secular 'isms of philosophy that promise meaning and fulfillment.
- E. They all have in common our striving to earn God's favor.

II. Christianity is different

- A. You don't earn your way in.
- B. Not a religion, a relationship.
- C. What's your image of God?
- D. What's God's image of you?

III. God is invisible

“¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”

A. No one can “see” God.

“you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form - only a voice.”

Deuteronomy 4:12

“No one *has* ever seen *God*, but the one and only Son,” John 1:18.

“whom no man has seen or can see,” Timothy 6:16

“No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God,” John 6:46

B. How can we know God if He’s invisible.

C. God has revealed Himself through creation.

The heavens proclaim the glory of God (Psalm 19: 1-4)

Romans 1:19-20

D. God has revealed Himself through Scripture.

Jeremiah “Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.”

In Exodus 20: 1 “And God spoke all these words.”

Psalm 33:4; “for the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.”

And Paul writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16; “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

E. So we can know God, but we don’t “naturally” know God.

F. We are poor listeners to the proclamation of creation and we reject His revelation in Scripture.

IV. Why can we not know God by our own reasoning and insight?

A. Alienated.

“²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”

B. We are God’s enemies.

V. So how do we know God?

A. Colossians 1:15: “Jesus is the image of the invisible God.”

B. Hebrews 1: 1-3.

“¹In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...”

- A. Most religions discount Jesus and claim to know God, but Verse 15 turns that idea upside down. We can’t know God, but we can know Jesus.
- B. Jesus Himself says if we knew Him, we would also know the Father.

In fact, Jesus Himself says “You do not know me or my Father ... If you knew me, you would know my father also.” John 8:19

And in John 14: 6 “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

- C. Does that sound narrow?

VI. Coming to the Father only through Jesus is only as narrow as Jesus

- A. How narrow is Jesus — good man, moral teacher, prophet?
- B. All things created through Him.

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.

- C. Evolutionary biologists say shared DNA with other species proves we have the same ancestor, but Scripture says all creation has the same architect.
- D. This is Jesus’ universe.

VII. All things created for Jesus

- A. This is the existential meaning of the universe and everything in it.
- B. Are you part of all things?
- C. You were created through and for Christ.

VIII. Jesus is the first born.

“¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”

- A. Being first-born in a family meant you were the heir. In Jesus' case He is heir of all things.
- B. God the Father gives God the Son the entire cosmos.
- C. The beauty of creation is the overflowing love of the Holy Spirit
- D. Jesus is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

“¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

IX. He's the head of the body, the church.

- A. Despite the beauty in all of creation, He is closest to His body, the church.
- B. Head of the body...

“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.”

X. All the fullness of God dwells in Him

“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.”

- A. How narrow is Christ?
- B. How narrow is your understanding? Baby, meek and mild? Moral teacher? Good prophet? Unknowable king?
- C. Ultimate reality.
- D. God looks like Jesus — the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, He was before all things, and He is the creator of all things. He is the heir of all things and all things hold together in Him.

XI. He reconciles all things by making peace on the cross

“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.”

- A. God is a bleeding sacrifice with His arms nailed open praying Father forgive them.

- B. We see His deity most strikingly when His life is poured out for His enemies.
- C. The Vikings were appalled by a nailed God.
- D. The text that begins with the image of the invisible God, ends with Jesus on the cross.
- E. Giving others a vision of God.
- F. The cross is not a metaphor, it is the ugly reality of our sin and the gracious kindness of our God.

X. How are you pictured by God?

- A. Does He grade on a curve?
- B. The see saw of our good / failed works?
- C. Our response to our own works is either superiority or resentment.
- D. There are many Christians who say they're trying, but you're either in or out.

XI. The three verdicts of being outside God's mansion.

“²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”

- A. The three verdicts of being outside the mansion: Alienated, Enemies, Evil.
- B. Being oriented against Christ, against creation, against reality.
- C. Even as His enemies, He thinks you're worth dying for.

X. The three verdicts of being inside God's mansion

“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...”

- A. The three verdicts of being inside: holy, without blemish, free from accusation.
- B. One reason people condemn others is they feel deserving of condemnation themselves.
- C. What would it be like to feel un-blamable?

XI. Application

XII. Communion

XIII. Benediction