



Lesson 4 – The Man, Christ Jesus

God's Redemption through Jesus

God made a beautiful planet, created image bearers, and left them in charge. But as we saw last week everything went horribly wrong when man rebelled against God. That sin led to a damaging of the image and problems for our dominion. Yet God didn't give up on His plan to have mankind ruling over His planet. Instead, he initiated a plan to fix what man broke. And surprisingly, God's plan was to still do this through a man, the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus was fully human. From the tip of His head to the bottom of His feet, Jesus was and is totally and completely human. We often think of Jesus as God, and He is. But we don't consider as often that Jesus is human. God's original plan was for man to rule the world, but man messed that up. God promised after mankind's sin that the offspring of the woman would be the answer to the solution. Man was in a mess, and God was determined to use a man to get out of the mess.

Why do we often fail to think of Jesus as a man?

What would change if Jesus's humanity was something we considered more often?

Jesus is God's answer to the problems we see in the fall. Jesus is the perfect image of God – He reflects God better and more completely than anyone ever has or ever will. Jesus will one day rule the world as the rightful king, fulfilling humanity's destiny to rule over God's creation. And not only that, but Jesus will restore us to be the image of God as we were originally designed, and He will share His rule over this world with us. The story of the Bible highlights the tragic consequences of man's sin, but the Bible presents Jesus as the one who will fix it all!

How does seeing Jesus's central role in fixing what is broken impact our thinking and behavior?

Jesus and the Image of God

We saw earlier that mankind was designed to reflect the image of God, to show the creation what God is like. The fall damaged the image, but it didn't destroy it. Yet as we look at mankind today, we get at best a carnival mirror view of who God is. You can somewhat see the resemblance, but it's pretty distorted. When Jesus came, part of His mission was to show us once and for all what it would look like to have a person who truly and accurately reflects God.

Seeing Jesus Is Seeing the Father (John 14:7-9)

Ever found yourself talking past someone? Jesus and Philip have a conversation at the end of Jesus's ministry where the two really seem to be talking past one another. Jesus makes the statement that the disciples know the Father and have seen Him. Philip is a little confused by this. He doesn't remember Jesus showing them the Father, so he asks "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us [that will be enough for us]." Jesus is a little disappointed, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Why do you think Philip wanted more than what Jesus had given him?

What did Jesus mean by saying that whoever had seen Jesus had seen the Father?

We may not have the privilege of walking and talking with Jesus in person today, but through the record of Him in His Word and through the witness of the Spirit we can come to know Jesus. As we see Jesus in Scripture, we are getting a picture of the Father as well as the Son.

Jesus Is the Image of the Invisible God

When we open our New Testament and start looking for the word "image" one of the first things we will notice is that the word image is used at least twice to refer to Jesus as the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). Now, that is perhaps a little surprising. After all, aren't we all the image of God?

Are these passages simply saying that Jesus is the image of God like we are, or are they saying something different?

Colossians 1:15 goes so far as to say that Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

How is Jesus able to be the image (a visual representation) of the invisible God?

If you've ever wondered what God would look like with flesh on, the answer is Jesus. If you've ever wondered how the invisible God would talk to people, react to people, listen to people, what He would say, where He would go, what He would do, the answer is: look at Jesus. Man's original purpose was to show to the rest of creation and to each other what God was like. While we've done that very imperfectly, Jesus has done it flawlessly. As Hebrews put it, Jesus is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." As Jesus said, seeing Him is seeing the Father.

Jesus and the Dominion Mandate

Romans 8:20-24 teaches us that all creation is groaning, waiting for the time when Jesus will set up His kingdom. God's plan is to reverse the curse; He wants this planet to be restored to what it was meant to be, and then for harvesting, building, creating, enjoying, working, resting, and all kinds of other wonderful dominion activities to take place. But all of this, the reversal of everything wrong with our planet, will come through Jesus.

Although traditionally sung at Christmas, “Joy to the World” is a wonderful song glorying in this magnificent truth: Christ will come and set up a powerful kingdom that will reverse what is broken in the world. The third verse triumphantly proclaims “No more let sins and sorrows grow // nor thorns infest the ground; // he comes to make his blessings flow // far as the curse is found, // far as the curse is found, // far as, far as the curse is found. // He rules the world with truth and grace // and makes the nations prove // the glories of his righteousness // and wonders of his love, // and wonders of his love, // and wonders, wonders of his love.”

Daniel 7 shows clearly teaches this important truth. Several large beasts emerge one after the other, representing mighty kingdoms throughout history (7:1-8). Eventually, these pagan nations who have attacked God’s people and set up rebellious empires are brought to an end, and instead we see the Ancient of Days (God the Father) give a kingdom to one called “the Son of Man.” (7:9-14). This kingdom is a mighty kingdom, a powerful kingdom, a kingdom that will never be destroyed. In Revelation 19-20 we read of Jesus returning to earth and establishing just such a kingdom, and then in Revelation 21-22 we are told of the final kingdom to be established, a kingdom that will never end.

Often we feel the weight of the fallen culture around us, and we long for the day when things are made right. The Bible teaches us that this longing is not only not bad, but it is good. God wants us to feel the brokenness of the world and to long for the future when He will make all things new.

What difference does it make for us to realize that Christ will return one day to set up a kingdom? How would such a belief change the way we look at our world today and the way we live in it?

Jesus and the Fall

Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection paid for our sins. Through Christ’s work on the cross we now have freedom from sin and a home in heaven. But while Jesus’s death, burial and resurrection is certainly not less than that, there is more. Through the gospel, Jesus is bringing redemption, not just to believers, but to all of creation. And His salvation not only saves us *from* God’s wrath; it also saves us *to* a future of ruling together with Him and reflecting perfectly the image of God. The New Testament develops both of these ideas – Jesus showing us how to reflect God and Jesus sharing His rule with us .

Jesus Shows Us How We Are to Reflect God

(Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49).

The Bible teaches us we are supposed to reflect God (Genesis 1:26-28; Ephesians 5:1), but because of our sin, we fall short of that lofty goal. If Jesus perfectly reflects God, as we have seen, then if we want to reflect God we should try to live like Christ. Not surprisingly, the Bible tells us that God’s plan is that we be “conformed to the image of God’s son” (Romans 8:28-30).

What does it mean to be “conformed to Christ’s image”?

How does the process of being conformed to the image of Christ work (check the context of Romans 8:28-29)?

What is the ultimate goal of this conformity in the second half of verse 29, and why do you think that is God's goal?

Jesus Will Enable Us to Rule with Him Forever

Earlier we looked at Daniel 7, a powerful passage that shows us the Son of Man receiving a kingdom and ruling with greater power than all the previous kingdoms of the world – Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and otherwise. But there is a surprising detail near the end of this passage exalting Christ: “and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Daniel 7:27). Jesus receives a kingdom, but that kingdom is somehow shared with the followers of God. Does the New Testament teach this as well?

As a matter of fact it does. Paul makes a quick, blink and you miss it statement that we will judge angels in 1 Corinthians 6:3, and that if we are going to rule over angels we can take care of petty legal disputes now. The disciples, having read their Old Testament, believed they would be ruling and reigning under Christ when Jesus set up His kingdom (Mark 10:35-40), and while they were off on the timing they were right in their general expectation (Acts 1:6-8). In Revelation, as Jesus is addressing the churches facing persecutions from without and compromise and apathy from within, He holds before them the promise of ruling and reigning with Him (Revelation 2:26; 3:21). Finally, the story of the Bible concludes in Revelation 22:5, with the statement that the saints will reign forever and ever.

Why do you think we don't emphasize more often that we will one day rule the world with Jesus?

What do you think it will look like for us to rule over creation with Christ in the millennium and the eternal state?

“Jesus is the answer to all of our problems.” This statement is more deeply true than we realize. Jesus will one day fix war, disease, greed, hatred, abuse, waste, and everything that is evil. While we wait for and long for the day when this will fully and finally be true, we get a taste of the future in the here and now. Even though imperfect, with the help of the Spirit we can look more and more like Christ and less and less like our fallen selves. We can take care of whatever part of the creation God has put under our control, looking forward longingly to the day when Jesus will return and set everything right and we will be able to rule with Him as God originally intended.