

Foundations 2: I Believe in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord

January 23, 2022 Sermon by Stephen Portner

Luke 2:11

¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Col. 1:15-20

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and 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.

Hebrews 1:1-3

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In a day and age where so many people, and even some churches, are uncertain about what they believe and why they believe it, it is essential for us to come back to the foundations of our faith. In order to do that we will be taking a closer look at the twelve statements found in the ecumenical version of the Apostles' Creed. Ecumenical because it is the foundational document of all Christian traditions, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike. Although the Apostle's Creed doesn't include everything a Christian believes and practices, it does give us great summary statements of our core beliefs. To help me prepare for doing this series, I have referenced a devotional series by Timothy Tennent, President of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.¹

¹ Timothy Tennent, "Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Resource for Catechesis and Disciple-Making," Copyright 2021 by Seedbed Publishing.

Today we will be focusing on the second statement of the Apostles' Creed: **I Believe in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord.**

This statement gets at the heart of who Jesus is, apart from some other statements in the Apostles' Creed which emphasize what Jesus has done for us. We will be covering those in subsequent sermons. As Tennent puts it, "You cannot be a proper Christian without a clear understanding of who Jesus is."² All the counterfeit religions who call themselves Christian deny the supremacy of Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses will claim that Christ is only a demi-god, a created being who does not share in the eternal nature of God. Mormons teach that all of us can become gods, thereby relegating Christ as someone who is no more important than anyone else. There are those who say that Jesus was a good teacher or a good moral leader or simply a good man, but that he is not to be considered as God or equal to God.

I love the quote from C. S. Lewis that reads:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."³

What real Christians believe is that Jesus Christ is part of the Trinity: one God, made known to us through three Persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We believe that Christ always existed, even at the beginning of all creation. As our reading from Hebrews put it: it was through God the Son that God the Father "*made the universe*" (Heb 1:2).

So, what is the meaning of the word, "Christ"? It's not the last name of Jesus, like I had thought when I was growing up. No, it is a title. Jesus the Christ. The word, "Christ," means, "the anointed one." Other words used that mean the same thing as "Christ" are "Messiah" or "Lord." Christ was anointed, chosen, by God the Father to come to our world to save us from our sins. It is really challenging to talk about who Jesus is apart from what he came to earth to do. But for today, I want to focus on who Jesus is, We will talk more about what Jesus does in future sermons on the Apostles' Creed.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/6979-i-am-trying-here-to-prevent-anyone-saying-the-really>

To think of God the Father sending God the Son is a concept that is hard for us to get our heads around. Why did God the Father send his only Son to our world? It had to be much better for Jesus, who is co-eternal with God the Father, to just stay in heaven at the side of God the Father. For Jesus to be born into this world, God the Son had to empty himself of many of the things he was capable of doing as God. Such as, once God the Son was born into the body of a human child, he could no longer be everywhere at all times like God the Father is able to do. God the Son limited himself when he was born into this world. Why? John 3:16 is a well-loved verse, primarily because it gives such a succinct answer to that question. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)*. Why would the Christ limit his abilities of being God? Because he so loves us! When you think of what Jesus gave up just so that he could come to this earth because of his love for us, it should fill you with awe and adoration. To think, someone would give up all that to be here for you!

When Christians think of the sacrifice Christ has made for them, we tend to think first of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. But that is not the first sacrifice God the Son made on our behalf. God the Son's first sacrifice was giving up all the wonders and beauty of a life alongside God the Father in heaven to become as one of us.

Many years ago singer Joan Osborne quipped in one of her songs called, "One of Us"⁴:

If God had a name what would it be?
And would you call it to his face?
If you were faced with Him in all His glory
What would you ask if you had just one question?

And yeah, yeah, God is great
Yeah, yeah, God is good
And yeah, yeah, yeah-yeah-yeah

What if God was one of us?
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Tryin' to make his way home?

Now, you may be a little put off that she asked what if God was "just a slob like one of us," but you have to admit that she had a good question. The answer is that God did become as one of us. Jesus didn't sin like we do, but he was tempted to sin like we are. It is comforting to know that God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to become as one of us. He has walked in our shoes (or sandals, as the case may be).

The paradox implied in this statement of the Apostles' Creed is that even though Jesus, God the Father's only Son, did come to be as one of us, we still call him "our Lord." In

⁴ <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/8223459/Joan+Osborne/One+of+Us>

other words, when Jesus walked this earth, he was not only fully human, he was also fully divine. He is referred to as God numerous times in Scripture.⁵

When God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush, he identified his name as “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14). When Jesus used “I AM” statements to identify himself, he was equating himself to God. The gospel of John records those statements:

1. “I am the bread of life.” ([John 6:35, 41, 48, 51](#))
2. “I am the light of the world.” ([John 8:12](#))
3. “I am the door of the sheep.” ([John 10:7,9](#))
4. “I am the resurrection and the life.” ([John 11:25](#))
5. “I am the good shepherd.” ([John 10:11, 14](#))
6. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” ([John 14:6](#))
7. “I am the true vine.” ([John 15:1, 5](#))⁶

Scripture texts like the one we read from Colossians point to the supremacy of Christ. Tennent points out: “Note that this text not only declares that the world was created *by* him, but that all creation was *for* him, i.e., for the manifestation of his divine glory.”⁷

Jesus Christ – fully human, fully divine. He came to this earth to be as one of us yet he had all the fullness of God within him. This is part of the mystery of God. It is also testimony of how great God’s love is for us, that he would come to us as God’s only Son as well as being our Lord and Savior.

⁵ Heb. 1:8; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1; John 20:38.

⁶ <https://www.thomasnelsonbibles.com/blog/jesus-seven-i-am-statements/>

⁷ Tennent, p. 15.