

Jesus: What?

Part II of V

“I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

1 Corinthians 2:2

“This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:17; 17:5

Three but One

CHRISTIANITY BELIEVES THE Bible reveals God as **One God in Three Persons**. The doctrine of the **Trinity** is at one time difficult to even describe, yet vital to all true knowledge. All formulations of the Trinity **begin with the Father**. For example, the Apostle’s Creed, **“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.”** Or the Nicene Creed (325 AD), **“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,**

Maker of all things visible and invisible.” This follows the Bible’s own example such as when Paul writes, “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist...” (1Co 8:6).

In this way, we speak of the Father as the “First Person” of the Holy Trinity. But why? In my *Unseen Realm: Q & A Companion*, I explain. The question asks, “Why is the first person called ‘Father?’” (Q. 6). The answer? “God the Father is the personal source of all things, the king of his creation, and from him proceed the Son and the Spirit.” The key for the question I’m asking is the last part. From him proceed the Son and the Spirit.”

Unfortunately, my language is probably not precise enough. It isn’t that they don’t both proceed; it is that they do so in different ways. Technically speaking, the Son is eternally *begotten* (as we saw last time), while the Spirit “proceeds” (John 15:26; the theological language used is “spirates” or “breathed”) from the Father (and in the Western Church, from the Son). What I was after in this question is simply the fact that in the mystery of the Trinity, and though both fully God, the Son and Spirit somehow originate in the Father, though both eternally so, they are not

created. To put that another way, the Scripture never says that the Son begets the Father or that the Father proceeds from the Spirit. There is an order to it all. Hence, we call the Father the First Person, the Son the Second Person, and the Spirit the Third Person.¹

Given this simple fact that the Father is the First Person, [I wish to ask a question](#). Today we enter the second week of a short series on Jesus. And so, my question is, and I can ask it in multiple ways, why is it that Christians focus so much *on Jesus*? Why do we say *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone)? You might think, from the order, that the one we would focus on the most would be the Father. But we aren't called "Fa-therites" or "Spiritinians" or something. We are called "Christians." Why?

It isn't because we do not worship the Father or the Spirit. Nor is it because we wish to diminish their Persons in any way. In fact, we have seen how we confess the Father first. We know that he is the one who predestines all things,

¹ Another term that *is* applied to the Son and the Spirit is that they are both "[sent](#)" by the Father. Over and over again in John's Gospel Jesus says, "[The Father sent him](#)" ([John 5:23](#); [6:4](#); [8:16](#); [10:36](#); etc.). The same is said of the Spirit ([John 14:26](#); [15:26](#); etc.). Curiously, this is the same word that is used of the Angel of the LORD who is "sent" from Yahweh even though he is Yahweh (cf. [Gen 24:40](#); [Ex 23:20](#); etc.).

who sovereignly orchestrates all things, and so on. We also believe that it is the Holy Spirit who now lives with and in us as Christians, doing so much work to sanctify us and to bring us to glory, and as such his work is the crowning work in our lives. So why the focus on the Second Person? What makes him so important?

The way to answer this question is not by asking the “who” question, as we did last time. For as it regards “who,” Father, Son, and Spirit are simply the One True God. I think the best answer comes from the “what” question. Therefore, if you want to know why he is so important to us, **you have to ask “what.”**

As it regards this question, I want to focus on **the works of Christ**. To put it another way, *What did he do? What does he do? What will he do?* This is the three-fold way I want to talk about this here. It isn't that these works of Christ are somehow greater than those of the Father's and Spirits, who each do their own works (and in many ways, do the same works, **as we will see**). Rather, it is that without the works of the Second Person, doing the things he did and will do, there isn't a human being on planet earth that would have

even the slightest opportunity to be saved, to have forgiveness of sins, to understand and know peace, or to have eternal life. That's true of the works of the Father, but it **how the Son carried out his works is most remarkable**. But if those things don't matter to you, then surely the works he will do in the future will (**judgment**).

Jesus: What Did He Do?

Creator

There is a slogan that was made popular many decades ago that has gone through different phases of faddishness. Most recently, it created a lot of money for its marketers who made bracelets and other trinkets asking the question, "What Would Jesus Do?" While I understand the sentiment, we want to know how Jesus would act in a given situation, and because he was the perfect law-keeper, his actions serve as a perfect model, it seems to me that there is a more basic question. The question is, *What Did Jesus Do?* We will look at this, the longest of our 3 questions, first.

When the Bible introduces us to the works of the Son, it often does so by describing him as **the Creator**. In other words, what did Jesus do? He created all things. For example, in the text quoted earlier about the Father, the one that becomes a prime proof-text for the creeds, it says, “**Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist**” (1Co 8:6). It is interesting to me that the Creeds skip past this in their discussion of Jesus, moving right to the incarnation.

But this is very common in the NT. When his work is introduced in Colossians it says, “**For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together**” (Col 1:16-17). After introducing the “who” of the Second Person in John, it immediately gives us the first “what” as, “**All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made**” (John 1:3). Hebrews does the same thing. Its first “what” is “**...through whom also [that is the Son] he [the Father] created the world**” (Heb 1:2).

By the way, the OT does the same thing. As the Father is working on creation, it says of Wisdom (who is Christ), “I was beside him, like a master workman” (Prov 8:26). In Psalm 136 it is the “Lord of lords,” a title given directly to Christ in the NT (Rev 17:14; 19:16) who “made the heavens” and all other things (Ps 136:3, 5, etc.). In one instance, it includes the Second and Third Persons together. “By the Word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the Breath of his mouth all their host” (Ps 33:6). But as it regards Christ especially, I think Scripture does this to root the “who” of Christ, that is his deity, in that which is impossible for any creature. Only the Creator can create, and since Jesus creates all things, he is the Creator and God.

Now, this Creating, in Genesis 1 at least, has a couple of very important functions. It does two things which are related to one another, especially for my purposes here. The first is that it sets us up to understand that the Creator God is creating in such a way as to make for himself a temple and set himself up as King. While you may not see this clearly in the way you read the chapter, perhaps because you have other things on your mind, knowing the ancient context of

it makes it completely obvious. Listen, for example, to the story of Baal ascending to the throne of the sons of El:

*Quickly his house they built;
Quickly they constructed his palace.
They went to Lebanon and its trees,
To Siryon and its choicest cedars;
Yes, Lebanon and its trees,
Siryon and its choicest cedars.
Fire was placed in the house,
Flames in the palace.*

Lo,

*A day and a second,
Fire burned in the house,
Flames in the palace.
A third and a fourth day,
Fire burned in the house, flames in the palace.*

*A fifth and a sixth day,
Fire burned in the house,
Flames in the midst of the palace.*

Look!

*On the seventh day
The fire was removed from the house,
The flames from the palace.*

*The silver had turned into ingots;
The gold had been changed into bricks!
Valiant Baal rejoiced:
'My house I have built of silver,
My palace out of gold!'
(KTU 1.4 vi 17-38)*

Notice how the “house” is being built in seven days and on the seventh day it is completed. This house is Baal’s temple. In Scripture, the universe is God’s temple (Isa 66:1).²

If the first part is that Genesis is setting you up to understand that the LORD is displaying himself as **king**, the second part is that he is creating for himself a servant lord who will rule over his kingdom in his stead as his vassal. This is the function that Adam bears in Genesis 1-3 when he is given **dominion** over the earth (**Gen 1:28**), put into a garden to “**work and keep**” it (**2:15**), and putting things in front of it to see **what he would say** about it (**2:19; 3:20**).

² You find the same thing in the Sumerian *Gudea Cylinders*. In this story, the king makes a temple for the god. The temple has all kinds of parallels with Genesis 1 such as connections with fertility (**Gen 1:22**), wisdom (**Gen 2:9, 17**), a call to build (**Gen 1:1, 3, 6, 9, 11**), the divinely revealed plan (**Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24, 26**), pronouncement of blessing (**Gen 2:3**), laudatory descriptions (**Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31**), the completion announcement (**Gen 1:31, 2:1**), and most of all, a seven day dedication (**Gen 2:1-3**). In fact, you find this motif all over the ancient world. Kings and gods build houses or temples in seven days. This is not a rare occurrence. See my sermon “Temple Building: Genesis 1:3-2:3” for more.

But there is an easier, more memorable way of putting this. When the man speaks about a thing, he is taking on the function of a **prophet** (or when he is silent, he is refusing that office). When the man works and keeps the garden, he is doing the job of a **priest**, for the very same words are used of the Levites who “serve and guard” the tabernacle (cf. **Num 18:7**). Finally, when he carries out his dominion, he is acting as **king**. Prophet, priest, and king. This is the three-fold duty that God gave to Adam in the Garden. And in giving man and his help-mate Eve these responsibilities, he created mankind in his own image and gave to every single one of us intrinsic dignity and worth.

As I hinted at a moment ago, there was a huge problem. Almost immediately, Adam went astray. Rather than speak the truth to the Father of Lies, Adam remained silent and let the serpent deceive Eve. Rather than guard the holy sanctuary of Eden from the wiles of the wicked one, Adam is nowhere to be found in the early part of the temptation story. And rather than kick the Nachash out of the garden, thereby protecting it as a king should do, he let the devil tempt his wife to the point that he even ate the fruit with her. He was completely negligent in his three-fold official duties,

thereby failing the LORD who made him in every way that was possible. This is all vitally important for understanding, believe it or not, the works of Christ.

The LORD in the OT: Prophet, Priest, and King

This can actually begin to be seen immediately. It is something that is often lost in the episode of the curse, which usually takes up all of our attention. **Someone else enters the picture.** That someone was there physically, walking in the Garden. He was somehow able to kill an animal and put the skins of the creature on our first parents. His name is Yahweh. Listen to what some in the church have said about this person.

The God and Father, indeed, cannot be contained, and is not found in a place, for there is no place of His rest; but His Word, through whom He made all things, being His Power and His Wisdom ... went to the garden and conversed with Adam [...].

(**Theophilus of Antioch**, *To Autolycus* 2.22)

And first, in that which is written in Genesis, *viz.*, that God spoke with man whom He had formed out of the dust ... God then spoke with man in the appearance of a man ... I do not see how such a walking and conversation of God can be understood literally, except He appeared as a man ... Who then was He? ... possibly ... [it] indicate[s] the Son as speaking to the first man.

(Augustine, *On the Trinity* 2.10)

It is generally agreed among Divines, that Adam in the State of Perfection knew God in Trinity and Unity ... Jerom Zanchi [1516-1590, perhaps the major Italian Reformer] ... asserts, that ... Jehovah the Son exhibited himself visibly to him, and talked with him, and made himself known to him, as his God and Governor, before he gave him the precepts of obedience, as he did to the Jews, before he gave the law to Moses. And he tells us, that several of the ancients, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, [Epiphanius], and many more, were of that mind, that it was Jehovah the Son who created Adam, placed him in Paradise, appeared visibly to him, discoursed with him, and whose voice he heard, and at which he trembled when he had transgressed.³

³ Gerard De Gols, *A Vindication of the Worship of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Supreme God, in all the Dispensations, Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian Demonstrating that Christ was So Known and Worshiped in all Ages, from Adam to this Day* (London: J. Darby and T. Browne, 1726), 105.

The idea here is that this is the very first appearance of the Angel of the LORD, whom we saw last week is the Second Person of the Trinity.

But importantly, what does the Angel do here? **He does three things.** He **speaks** to the serpent, to the woman, and to the man. The words he speaks are judgment from the LORD himself. But he also tells of something much, much greater to come, not through judgment only, but through grace. **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15).** These are the duties of a prophet. **He casts all three out** of the Garden of Eden and places cherubim at the door to guard its entrance. He also mediates between God and man by killing a sacrificial animal which becomes the skins they may use to cover themselves and receive forgiveness of sins. These are the jobs of a priest. Finally, does this all on the authority of that which he established when he took his rest on Day 7. He acted as king and did what any king should have done.

Prophet, Priest, King in Prophecy

We could spend hours looking at how the Son does these kinds of things in the OT. Prophecy is so voluminous in the OT that it alone takes up probably a quarter of the entire Bible. All of these words came to the prophets by the Word of God, who therefore prophesied them before Isaiah or anyone else did. From the divine intercession of the Angel at the Flood both in judgement and in grace, to his interceding on behalf of Abraham whom he told to sacrifice his only son, to his giving the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai, there is so much priestly work that he did in the OT. And then there is his continual, unbroken grace in taking a rebellious people out of sin to be his own treasured possession, from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Jacob to David and to the nation itself, as he sat enthroned above the flood and on his ark, the whole OT is about his work as King.

But truly, it is his work in the NT that really is the reason why we are called Christians. As glorious as his works of old were, it is his new works that are even greater. To help you see how amazing that work is, I think it can be really helpful to understand that this NT work, which is the same kind of work we've just described, is actually predicted in prophecy. But I wonder, maybe you have forgotten how

amazing biblical prophecy actually is? So, to impress upon you what we are about to see, let's look at a couple of famous predictions made by Nostradamus. He predicts,

From the depths of the West of Europe,
A young child will be born of poor people,
He who by his tongue will seduce a great troop;
His fame will increase towards the realm of the East.

Who is this mystery man of the future? Robespierre. Wait, Napoleon. No, Lenin. Hmmm, Mussolini? Ah, Hitler. Yes! Hitler, obviously. So say the true believers of the pagan prophet. Except that Hitler was born to a middle class family, not a poor one. Other than that, it is reasonable to be talking about Hitler ... or a whole bunch of other people it is so generic. *But wait, they say. Another quatrain states,*

Beasts ferocious with hunger will cross the rivers,
The greater part of the battlefield will be against Hister.
Into a cage of iron will the great one be drawn,
When the child of Germany observes nothing.

Hister sounds just like Hitler! See how specific that is? Great, and “dessert” looks almost the same as “desert” when you spell them. The fact that Hister is actually Latin for the Danube River is a yummy fact that should leave believers in a hot, arid place.

The prophecies of the Messiah are not like this. Some explain that he would be born a virgin ([Isa 7:14](#)). Pretty specific and exactly fulfilled. Others that he would come from the city of Bethlehem ([Micah 5:2](#)). Again, totally specific. There are so many more of these we could take the rest of our time and not exhaust them. The odds of one person fulfilling them all are statistically impossible, unless it is a pre-ordained plan.

Three of these are these offices of [prophet](#), [priest](#), and [king](#). The Messiah would be the Prophet to the world, the one who would speak God’s truth to the ends of the earth. “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him” ([Deut 18:18](#)). Jesus directly fulfills this in [Acts 3:22](#) and [7:37](#).

The Messiah would be a high priest over a royal priesthood. “[The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind,](#)

‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek’” (Ps 110:4). This one is shown to be fulfilled in Hebrews 5:6. This promise, incredibly, is made to the Lord of king David, by his LORD! But who could that possibly be except the eternal Son of God?

Finally, Messiah would be a king and have a kingdom. This is found, for instance, in that very verse, “The LORD (Yahweh) says to my Lord (Adonai): ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’” (Ps 110:1). In Psalm 2, this same promise is “decreed.” “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession’” (Ps 2:6-8). These two are the two most quoted OT passages in the NT, both about Jesus.

The fact that these prophecies were made by various men over the course of a thousand years, all pointing to one future individual sometime over a millennium before he would be born, is stunning. But, only if the prophecies actually came true. So how did they?

What Jesus Did: Prophet

This is where the work of Christ trust sets him apart and shows the glories of God in ways the world had never known before. We saw the prophecy, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him” (Deut 18:18). These words are quoted by Peter in Acts as he gives a sermon about Jesus. After recounting the last few days of the trial and death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter says, “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tell you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people’” (Acts 3:22-23).

We saw last time that the Father said near the end of Jesus’ life at the transfiguration that “This is my Son.” He goes onto say, “Listen to him” (Matt 17:5). Peter was there, and he heard this. So, listen to him what? Listen to him prophecy. For example, immediately after this event, as they were still walking down the slopes of Hermon, Jesus tells them for the umpteenth time, “I tell you that Elijah ha already come,

and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands” (17:12). But Peter knew that even after all this, he did not listen. Jesus told Peter just a little later on that before the cock would crow, he would deny the Lord three times (22:34). But he did not listen. He never listened to Jesus. Until the events finally came true and he finally saw Jesus as the Prophet.

Throughout his life, Jesus was not only predicting, but was also teaching. Particularly, he was teaching about life in the kingdom of heaven. Through his many parables he taught them. But he taught them often as the prophets did in their parables, in fact even quoting one of the prophets in one of his parables, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive” (Matt 13:14; cf. Isa 6:9-10). Listen to him. They didn’t listen. Until it was proven true, and then masses of them finally did through the proclamation of these very things.

On one great occasion near the beginning of his ministry, as Jesus was reenacting the life of Moses of old (having a king seek to kill him when he was two, going down to Egypt, coming out of Egypt through the water, going into

the wilderness for a period of 40 and finally coming to a mountain where the law would be given), he rose to a beautiful mountain, and from this pristine paradise overlooking the tranquil Sea of Galilee, he gave the people a sermon on grace and law. Grace in the Beatitudes. Law in form of teaching the people all that was there—that he himself put there when he gave it to Moses in the first place—making it clearer than it had ever been seen before, speaking as one with authority, telling them of the righteousness of God. This is what prophets do, especially the Great Prophet who through these many events throughout his ministry was cutting a new covenant with a new covenant people on tablets that would be made of flesh rather than stone.

What Jesus Did: Priest

While the [prophetic work](#) of Christ tells you [how to live](#) and [where to find life](#), it is [the priestly work](#) of Jesus that is responsible for making both of those possible. And frankly, this is the work that more than the other two is the reason why we are Christians. For that prophetic work seals up that he is divine, and that kingly work makes this work possible.

But it is the priestly work itself that is so precious to the Christian. **What is this priestly work?**

The prophecy again was, “**The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek’**” (**Ps 110:4**). Hebrew cites this verse multiple times, all in the context of Jesus’ earthly priestly ministry. It does so because the great problem of that ministry is how could he even do it when he is not from the tribe of Levi. The answer? Levi paid tithes to the priest-king Melchizedek in the loins of Abraham. In other words, Melchizedek and his priesthood are greater than Levi and his!

It says, “**In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death**” (**Heb 5:6**, immediately after quoting the verse in **5:5**). This verse shows **two priestly works**. First, his **prayers**. Jesus acted as in intercessor, but here he interceded for himself! Terribly (because it is a burden to the Christian and because it lessens the glory of Christ and because it does not understand the paganism involved in the behavior), some teach that saints or Mary make intercession for us. But Paul says, “**there is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**” (**1Ti 2:5**). And it

is Jesus, not the saints who “always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). Intercession is *priestly* work. It is a standing in the gap between man and God as a mediator.

Second, it talks about *Jesus dying*. Specifically, it says Jesus did this in the days *of his flesh*. This is vital on so many levels. Men need mediation, because they are sinners. But God owes something to man for this sin. Namely, justice. Our death is that justice, and the “wages” (what God owes us) of sin is death (Rom 6:23). So these is this relationship between humans and God that needs reconciliation if any hope of salvation is to be had.

Thus, in one person perfect substitution and atonement was made. Jesus became man to receive the payment of death due to man. But Jesus is God in order that he might be Just and the one who justifies those who have faith in him. Jesus had to be both God and man, to at one time pay that which man owes and at the other to accept that which is paid!

This becomes his sin atoning sacrifice for sin, a substitute like the sacrifices of old in accordance with so much OT law, typology, and prophecy. This is why he is the *lamb* of God. It is so he can do the work of a sacrifice, but this time a perfect human sacrifice that can actually pay off the debt and

bring reconciliation between God and man. Last week my key verse was, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ...” (1Co 2:2). The second half of that is “... and him crucified.”

Beloved, the cross is everything. We stake everything here, even as he was literally staked there. “By cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross...” (Col 2:14). Without it, there is no hope. Without it, justice is not given by God. Without it, man has not paid the debt of sin. Without it, there is no sacrifice that takes away sin. Without it, there is no glory and resurrection and newness of life. Like the phoenix, it is only after death that new life can begin. It is only after the sacrifice that a new covenant can be cut in blood. It is only after the foolishness of God dying that the wisdom of God in salvation and grace is revealed.

Another great work of Christ as mediator is his destruction of the works of Satan. This is actually said in the very next breath of the Apostle. “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (15). Long ago, Ambrose wrote, “For that dread Leviathan, that is, the devil, He smote, and struck

down, and laid low in the last times by the adorable Passion of His own Body.”⁴

What you have to understand is that from his many miracles casting out demons, to his descending to the place of the dead to proclaim liberty to the captives in hell, to his leading a host of captives on his train to heaven, Jesus was destroying the works of the devil by dying to set us free from the Evil One, to being raised to new life and proclaimed as the Son of God to the world. This is in fulfillment of that first part of the **Genesis 3:15** work, and it is priestly work indeed. It is a **cleansing** of that which is unclean, even as Jesus’ other miracles of healing the sick and raising the dead were too. This is typified in the law in not being allowed to touch dead bodies or needing the priest to pronounce someone with a skin disease clean or unclean, etc. You see, his entire ministry is a priestly intercession from his baptism in the waters which ordained him into his priesthood, to his death on the cross as a sacrifice. And he becomes the perfect mediator, the only one who has or will ever exist

⁴ **Ambrose of Milan**, “Exposition of the Christian Faith,” in *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth, vol. 10, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1896), 288.

who stands between man and God. It is why you must come to him and him alone. It is because of his glorious works as the Great High Priest.

The Lord in the NT: King

The Scripture says, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.’” From his very first moments on earth, Jesus Christ was known even by foreign pagan wise men, to be “king of the Jews” (**Matt 2:1**). His genealogy goes straight back to David through all the kings of Israel (**Matt 1**). Herod the king of the region knew it and tried to kill baby Jesus (**Matt 2:14ff**), thereby causing him to flee to Egypt, all of this done in fulfillment of multiple specific prophecy (see **Matt 2:2** and **Num 24:17**; **Mic 5:2**; **Hos 11:1**; etc.).

At the culmination of his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ came to Jerusalem to enter what would be his final week in the flesh (**Matt 21:1ff**). He did so to the fanfare of the celebrations of the kings of old, as he rode in on a donkey like

his father Solomon before him (1Kg 1:33), to the shouts of Hosanna to the Son of David (i.e. the King), in more fulfillment of kingly prophecy (like Zech 9:9; Isa 62:11).

At his trial, the very man responsible for his eventual death—Pontius Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king” (John 18:37). In other words, Pilate knew it too. And he proved it later that day when he had a plaque made that said that very thing (Matt 27:37), to the hot anger of the chief priests of Israel (John 19:21).

During the trial, when a prisoner was to be released like the great scapegoat of old, Pilate presented Jesus as the king to the people themselves. “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” (Mark 15:8). But the people and the soldiers stirred up by the priests would have none of it. Those same soldiers during the trial of Jesus mocked him with the language, “Hail, King of the Jews” (Matt 27:26-29). Another batch did it again on the cross telling the “King of the Jews” to come down from there (Luke 23:37).

It was at this moment, when Christ was staked down to Mt. Calvary with a hammer and nails piercing through his flesh, that the LORD set his Son on that holy hill. For all the

waiting eyes of the world to witness, he declared to them all that this is the King. The culmination of a life of perfect obedience, perfect teaching, perfect sacrifice. The culmination of all the “whats” Jesus did.

Jesus: What Does He Do?

Now I want to move to [the present tense](#). Now that you know what he did, you should know what he does. The first thing you need to know is that [Jesus saves](#). Jesus is a beautiful savior, a savior of any and all who turn to him. The way he does this is by justifying you in the court of heaven. The accuser of the brothers has been thrown down, and the Advocate stands at your right hand as your defense.

This is such an offensive doctrine, that the infamous Charles Finney calls it “[a legal fiction](#),” “[impossible and absurd](#),” “[false and nonsensical](#),” and “[a different gospel](#).”⁵ But it is rooted in the perfect obedience of Christ, his perfect work of keeping the law, and his substitutionary death on your behalf. If you will not have this, then you cannot have

⁵ Quoted in Michael Horton, “The Sola’s of the Reformation,” in *Here We Stand: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals*, ed. James M. Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 124.

life, for there is no other life outside of the work of Jesus Christ. But for all who trust in him, he will justify and save you.

This means he will **forgive you of your sins**. While he cancelled the debt that men owe at the cross, sins are not forgiven until someone comes to faith in Christ. This is why even the elect are born under God's wrath (**Eph 2:1-3**). But beloved, when you turn to Christ, *all* of your sins—once for all, no matter what or how many they are—are forgiven by Christ, and they will not be held against you, because Jesus died for them. As John says, “**I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his Name's sake**” (**1Jn 2:12**). As Paul, “**... in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**” (**Col 1:14**).

Presently, Jesus also intercedes for us. He does so through his Holy Spirit whom he gives to all who call upon him in faith. And I wish we had time to talk about the Spirit's present work in your life. But just so you understand, it is the Spirit of Jesus who does this, and therefore,

because they are One, the work of the Spirit is also the work of Christ in as much as he gives his the Holy Spirit to you.⁶

Jesus: What Will He Do?

Finally, as you think about your own response to these things, I want to ask about the future. What will he do? One of the things Jesus told us is that he was leaving so that he might go to his Father to prepare a place for his people. This work, while having begun 2,000 years ago when he ascended, continues today and on into the future, until that moment when the Lord Jesus Christ will descend with the clouds of heaven in his Glorious Second Coming. At that Coming, two things will happen.

First, **Jesus will save his people to the uttermost**. There will be a final vindication for the elect that is rooted in the perfect accomplished work of Christ. He will tell them, **“Well done, my good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21)**. He will give them new, eternal, sinless bodies that will be like

⁶ In a similar sense, we could say that the work of Christ while in the flesh was the work of the Spirit, in as much as it was the Spirit who came upon him at his baptism and upheld him in all things. It isn't that the Spirit becomes flesh or that Jesus Christ lives in our hearts, but that, because they are one and cannot be separated, each (along with the Father) are working as the others do their specific works as well.

his own resurrected body. And they will rule with him for eternity.

But Jesus is **also coming to judge the living and the dead**. To those who have received him and believed in his name, he will give them crowns based on their faithful obedience to him in this life. They will be judged, in Christ, for the things done in the body. And their sins will not be held against them.

But because they stubbornly refused to believe in him, or simply because they persisted in their rebellion and sin against God, *the Lord Jesus* will cast into outer darkness those who did not love the Son in this life. There they will weep and gnash their teeth, the worm will not die, and the fire will not be quenched. Make no mistake, as it was in the days of Noah and Sodom, when Yahweh called upon Yahweh to send fire to devour, it is the Son's judgment of the world that will be final and just and true. For the Father **“has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man”** (John 5:27).

“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does

wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” (John 3:18-20).

Therefore, I implore you, having heard of these marvelous past, present, and future works of Jesus Christ, having learned now the “what” of Jesus, do not let another moment pass without having gone to him in prayer to forgive you of your sins and justify you before the Father. Continue to do so all the days of your life. He will do this, for today is not the day of judgment, but of salvation. For this is the great work of Jesus for sinners.