

COLOSSIANS 1:13-20

13 [God the Father] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 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. 17 And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

There is something strange about the death of this man Jesus on the cross. It's an execution, it's capital punishment, a death sentence being carried out. But this one is strange, like no other.

When we think of an execution, if there's one thing that's certain, it's who is being executed and why. A murderer in the chair—everyone knows who he is and what he did. There's no confusion on this stuff. It would be ridiculous to imagine a man in the electric chair, the warden ready to give the final order, but then people start asking: Who is this guy in the chair? Why is he here? What's he done? Where did he come from?

No questions like that! Everyone knows who he is. It was reported at the trial, the evidence was in the testimony, no confusion. And the same about what he did. His crime, and why it's right for him to end up in the chair—no confusion. At the judge's verdict, no question remained: who the man is, what he did—it's all public record.

So how strange it is when Jesus is being executed. It's all questions.

"Are you not the Christ,"
asks one of the criminals crucified next to him,
"then save yourself and us."

Before that, at one of his trials, the High Priest Caiaphas had said, *"I adjure you by the Living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."* [Matthew 26:63]

At another of his trials, Pilate the Roman governor had asked him, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*”
[Matthew 26:11]

Then an exasperated Pilate followed up by asking him, “*What have you done?*”

How strange, a judge so out in the dark about this man that he has to ask the defendant what the charges are that he’s being accused of.

Then, confused, Pilate asked, “*What is truth?*” [John 18:38]

“Are you not the Christ,”

and,

“I adjure you by the Living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

and,

“Are you the King of the Jews?”

and,

“What have you done?”

and,

“What is truth?”

In all the transcripts of all the courtrooms of world history, there has surely never been a man convicted and executed with the judges, the accusers, and even the fellow Criminals being so confused about who he is, what he did, and why he must die.

Who is this man on the cross?

And what is God’s concern in all this, in these ignorant proceedings and verdicts of Caiaphas’s courtroom, Herod’s courtroom, and then Pilate’s courtroom, and then on that bloody hill, Golgotha? Psalm 8 gives us God’s concern in these proceedings:

What is man that you are mindful of him,

And the son of man that you care for him?

[Psalm 8:4]

This man on the cross, God the Father is *not* mindful of him, he has forsaken him.

Because, this Man on the cross is the **Son of Man**. That title, Son of Man, proclaims that Jesus is standing in for all men, for mankind, for every man and woman and child born of the lineage of Adam and Eve, and is he taken down with their sin.

Into this death for the sin of mankind, the Son of Man was baptized.

When John the Baptist was washing sinners clean in the Jordan River by baptizing them into repentance and the forgiveness of sins, John then took Jesus into that water, and put all the sins *on him*.

The sins are washed off of the sinners, then put on the head of the Son of Man.

The one on the cross is the Son of Man, standing in for all, for you and me and our children. And when all the sin of every sinner is put on him, he is put to death for it, and the Father forsakes him.

This man on the cross, who is he?

Colossians 1:15:

He is the image of the invisible God.

God, who is invisible, makes himself visible to human eyes. He becomes flesh, an image that we can look at. We can hear his human voice, and even strike him and kill him. He is the image of the invisible God on Earth, he is God the Son in the flesh, he is Mary's little boy, Jesus. That's who's on the cross.

Colossians 1:16:

By him all things were created, in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

He is the creator of all, of you and me and our children.

Along with his Father and the Holy Spirit, he created all things in those first six days before which nothing existed except God, so that even the hill he is dying on, the dirt and the rocks, were made by him. He created the tree for the wood of the cross comes from a tree he made, and the hands and arms of those crucifying him wouldn't even exist, except that he created them. He created all, and now he hangs on a cross, spilling out the blood to redeem the creation he cares for, to forgive the sinners he loves.

Colossians 1:19:

In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

This man on the cross, who is he?

He is the fullness of God.

What is seen on the cross is the frame of a man—the same flesh and blood as you and me. He hungers, he thirsts, he hurts, he cries when he sees death—he's our brother. Yet, he's full God. The eternity, the creative power and omnipotence, the omnipresence—there is nothing of God that is not found in him: he is God, incarnate, in the flesh.

As the church confesses it in the Athanasian Creed:

He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages;

and he is man, born from the substance of his mother in this age ...

Although he is God and man, he is not two, but one Christ:

*one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh,
but by the assumption of the humanity into God.*

Why is this good news to you and me?

Because, we cannot reconcile ourselves to God. The sinner cannot make himself holy. The one living in the domain of darkness and death cannot deliver himself into the kingdom of light. The one covered in shame cannot stand up in honor.

But all the fullness of God dwells bodily in Christ Jesus so that God, coming to us as the Man Jesus, was reconciling to himself all things, whether on Earth or in Heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. [Colossians 1:30]

That's why this is good news to you and me and our children. *God the Father has delivered us out of the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.* [Colossians 1:13]

In him bodily dwells the fullness of God.

With Jesus, you get it all; you don't get pieces, fragments, or reminders of something that's not quite there.

With Jesus, you get it all. He, who is true Man, and whose humanity has been taken up into his divinity, says to us,
Take and eat, this is My body.

With his Body, you get everything. For in that Body dwells the fullness of God, nothing left out. Jesus doesn't say, *Take and eat, this is a piece of my flesh; take and eat, this is a part of my Body*, as if he is doling it out piece by piece, and hopefully everyone gets a little bit.

Rather he says, *Take and eat, this **is** My body.*

It's a little piece of bread the Christian takes into the mouth, it's just a few words delivered into the ears, but given there is what Jesus says it is—it is the whole Body, the whole Jesus, everything he did in that Body on the cross, everything he did by being bodily raised up from the dead, the fullness of God dwelling in that Body, the whole Jesus freely and abundantly handed out to each person receiving him.

We come in our bodies, with nothing but sin. Bodies marked by death. But into our bodies is given the gift. Joined to our bodies is the Body of Christ Jesus. It's all there: sins forgiven, life bestowed.

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