

Believe It:
Jesus Christ

Just who is Jesus Christ? The first ever poll on the subject was taken by Jesus Himself over 2000 years ago. He didn't use a random sample of 1375 adults with a margin of error at 3%.

He used a straw poll and only surveyed 12 adults. Since they all happened to be His disciples they definitely weren't a random sampling. He actually asked them 2 questions.

The first was non-threatening. The Bible says, *Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?"* (Mark 8:27) What's the word on the street?

His disciples played it safe. *So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."* (Mark 8:28) They could have added "Some say blasphemer, imposter, or Sabbath breaker" but they decided not to go down that road..

But Jesus really wasn't interested in popular opinions like a politician who wants to tell people what they want to hear. So He hits them with a little more personal polling question, *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"* (Mark 8:29a)

This second, unexpected question catches them completely off guard. There's silence and they stand there looking at each other. The Greek text makes it clear that all of the apostles responded to the first question, but only one person, namely, Simon Peter, responded to the second question.

This one was a lot tougher and Peter answered with divinely given wisdom, *"You are the Christ."* (Mark 29b)

Now fast-forward 2000 years to another opinion poll about Jesus. This one was a Gallop poll on American religious beliefs. Here's the result of that poll:

Eight in 10 Americans consider themselves Christians but when they were asked, "Was Jesus divine in the sense that He was in fact God living among men?" only 4 in 10 answered "yes."

In their day the disciples were still trying to figure things out. We've got the whole story to help us out but still 3 out of 5 Americans don't know who Jesus is.

We're in a series we're calling *Believe it!* And what we're doing is taking some time to review the basics of Christianity. We're using the FCC statement of faith as our guide and we're

taking each point and asking ourselves, “What is it that we really believe, why do we believe it, and what difference does it make in our life?”

The Bible is practical. It tells us about eternity and it tells us about this life. And if you don’t think the eternity part is practical remember, this life is like one pixel on a timeline that never ends. Finding out about how we can spend that eternity with our Creator is intensely practical.

The Bible says that what you believe about Jesus Christ ends up determining where and how you spend the next life. What you believe about Jesus will shape your life today and it will determine your life to come.

Follow along with me as we read what our statement of faith says about Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity: The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God who became flesh and lived on earth. He was sinlessly perfect and gave Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice by dying and shedding His blood on the cross to pay for all sin (past, present, and future). He then rose from the dead, a victor over sin and the grave. His eternal life is given to all who trust in Him for salvation.

Turn to Colossians chapter 1 page 1154

What we’re going to do today is use this very Christological passage as our basis for studying the person of Jesus Christ. Colossians is a very Christ oriented book so it really suited for answering the question, who is Jesus?

As you’re turning there I want you to think about this. The essence of Christianity isn’t a list of rules, it isn’t a particular lifestyle, it isn’t forms of worship.

The essence of Christianity is Jesus Christ and that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions.

I. Jesus Christ Is Our Savior

Read verses 13-14

All other religions are ethical systems. Their founders were significant but not foundational. You can take the founder from other religions and the religion still stands. All you have to do is just follow the rules.

Biblical Christianity is Christ. You take Jesus away from Christianity and you’ve lost Christianity. Here’s why...

Ask most people what their most serious problem is and they'll say something like, "No job, my marriage, my health, my lack of money." Most people will immediately identify their most significant problem as something they're experiencing.

The Bible has a radically different take on things. It says that the most significant problem any of us faces is a sin problem.

Now I know that sounds antiquated and passé to use a word like "sin" but that's exactly what the Bible says.

The Bible says, *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* (I Corinthians 15:3)

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree... (I Peter 2:24)

Now listen to this: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16)

If God loved the world by sending His Son to pay for sin then the whole world of humanity must be sinners.

Sin is by far the greatest problem of all because sin brings death in hell and eternal condemnation.

We hear that and we think, "No way. I may not be perfect, but I'm not that bad."

If you and I weren't that bad then why did God love us by sending Christ to die for us on the cross? If we didn't need it, then God messed up royally. Jesus suffered for nothing if there's all kinds of people who are just fine.

According to the Bible, no one is fine. We all have a problem that could never be solved by a philosopher or a religious teacher. What we need is a Savior.

Thirty six times the Bible refers to either God or Jesus Christ by the term Savior. Sinners need a Savior.

Who is Jesus Christ? He's the Savior. The Bible says, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.* (Acts 16:31)

If you look at verses 13 & 14 again you'll see that there's 4 saving actions compressed into these 2 verses.

1. Jesus Christ delivered us. The word translated "delivered" means "to rescue." And what

does He rescue us from? “The power of darkness.”

You might think, “I don’t need to be rescued. I’m not being held captive by the power of darkness.” But God says all of us are without Jesus Christ. We can’t see it because we’re in darkness!

It would be like growing up in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It’s the poorest country in the world. Most people make less than \$1 per day.

You’re dirt poor but so is everyone else you know. You could not even begin to imagine a 7-11 let alone a Wegmans. Now suppose someone delivered you out of your situation and took you to the US so you could see for yourself. I believe even then you’d be so overwhelmed that you’d have trouble believing what you’re seeing.

When you’re in something that’s the everyday norm for you it’s hard to even imagine what’s beyond.

The Bible says without Jesus Christ we live in the kingdom of darkness but it’s like our eyes are so used to the darkness we don’t realize how dark it really is.

2. When we place our faith in the Savior He delivers us out of darkness and brings us into the kingdom of light. Verse 13 says He conveys us.

The word that’s used in Greek is a word that was used to describe the deportation of a population to another country.

That’s us. We have a new citizenship and a new king and that king is Jesus. Believers are living in the kingdom of God right now. One day in the future those who have faith in Christ will be living in the literal kingdom. The Bible says Jesus Christ will rule from David’s throne in Jerusalem and faithful believers will rule with Him.

Is that hard to fathom? Without Jesus we’re in Satan’s kingdom. That doesn’t mean we went around wearing pentagrams and upside down crosses, holding black masses. It means we were deluded into living for self.

Then one day we heard the Good News. We understood that we were sinners. We understood that we needed a Savior. Then we trusted Jesus Christ. We didn’t feel it, but in that instant we were ushered into a new kingdom.

So Jesus delivers, conveys, and number 3 He redeems. That’s in verse 14. Here’s why there’s always so many attacks on Jesus Christ and His work. Get rid of Jesus and the cross and

Christianity evaporates into just one more ethical system.

If you redeem something you buy it back. You pay a price. Here's what it took to redeem sinners like us. It took the blood of our Redeemer.

There's only one type of blood that could pay for our sins. That's sinless blood. There's only one person who ever lived who had sinless blood. That's God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

And notice the last saving action at the end of verse 14. He forgives those who trust in Him. The word translated forgive, *aphiemi*, means "to send away."

Another beautiful word picture. Who is Jesus? He's the one who sends our sins away. The Bible says, *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* (Psalm 103:12)

I. Jesus Christ Is Our Savior

II. Jesus Christ Is Creator

Read verses 15

Listen carefully because this really gets to the very heart of the question, "Who is Jesus?"

New Testament books like Colossians weren't written in a vacuum. They weren't just theology lessons. They were letters written to address problems in people's behavior and problems in their belief systems in the early church.

Jesus' question, "Who do men say that I am" had wrong answers early on. We don't have a corner on the market of bizarre biblical interpretations in our day. Cults sprang up quickly in the first century.

The cultish teaching that was infecting the church at Colosse in Asia Minor was an early form of Gnosticism. It was called Gnosticism from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*.

Gnostics were like typical cultists who think they have special knowledge that no one else has. They believed that the spiritual was good and the physical was bad, so God could have never taken on flesh. A good God wouldn't take on evil matter.

Of course the Bible never says that the physical is evil. It was created by God. You don't become spiritual by getting away from the material world.

In the 5th century a monk named Simon Stylites lived on top of a pillar for 37 years to get away from the evil world so he could be alone and contemplate God. That pillar was located

right outside of Aleppo, Syria that we hear about almost daily in the news now because of the fighting.

That plan didn't work out well for Simon because he became such a famous holy man that crowds of people made pilgrimages to his pillar.

Living on a pillar is not the biblically recommended way to spirituality, although you've got to give the guy credit for sincerity!

But notice, verse 15 describes Jesus as *the image of the invisible God*. The Greek word for image is *eikon*, which today means "statue."

The point is this. Jesus walked the planet as God in human flesh. Jesus said, *He who has seen Me has seen the Father*. (John 14:9)

The Bible says that Jesus is, *the brightness of His (God's) glory and the express image of His person*. (Hebrews 1:3)

It really doesn't matter what 6 out of 10 Americans say when polled, Jesus is divine in the sense that He walked the earth as God among men.

Not only that, He was the firstborn over all creation. He wasn't the first created because Jesus Christ is eternal. But He has the Old Testament title of "firstborn" to show that He holds the place of priority, dignity, and superiority.

How do we know He wasn't the first created?

Read verse 16

By Him all things were created. The entire universe material and immaterial, stars, earth, people, angels, everything that is, owes its existence to Jesus Christ. He's the Creator. He's not created.

And here's where things get real personal. That includes me and that includes you. We all owe our very existence to Jesus Christ. Everything was created through Him and for Him. You were created through Him and for Him.

You know why at times life doesn't make sense to us? Because we think we're here for us. We worship ourselves. We elevate ourselves. We live our life all centered around ourselves. We put ourselves in the place that Jesus should hold.

Verse 16 answers the 2 greatest questions in life; where did we come from and why are we here?

We were made by God's and we're here on assignment from God. Our whole purpose is by Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ.

And not only did He create everything but He keeps it all going.

Read verse 17

The Bible says in Hebrews 1 speaking of Jesus Christ, *By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together.* (Hebrews 1:3 CEV)

If everything is held together by the might of Jesus Christ, just think what would happen if He let it all go.

What keeps the planets and the stars in their orbits? What is gravity? Here's the answer from the NASA/Goddard web site. "We don't really know. We can define what it is as a field of influence, because we know how it operates in the universe. Some scientists think that it is made up of particles called gravitons which travel at the speed of light. However, if we are to be honest, we do not know what gravity "is" in any fundamental way - we only know how it behaves."

Here's another question. If gravity is a force that causes all matter to be attracted to all other matter, why are atoms mostly empty space inside?

If you'd take all the space away from the atoms that make up your body all the matter would fit on the head of a pin. What holds it together?

All the protons in the nucleus of an atom have a positive charge. Like charges repel. What keeps atoms from flying apart? *In Him all things consist.*

One day Christ will take His hand off creation. This is what happens. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.* (II Peter 3:10)

That's the ultimate atomic explosion.
Who is Jesus Christ?

I. Jesus Christ Is Our Savior

II. Jesus Christ Is Creator

III. Jesus Christ Is Head Of The Church

Read verse 18

When you look up the word “church” in the New Oxford American Dictionary here’s the first 4 definitions:

1. A building used for public Christian worship
2. A particular Christian organization
3. A hierarchy of clergy of such an organization
4. Institutionalized religion as a political and social force

What a difference when you look in the Bible. According to the Bible the church is the body of Christ. The church is made up of all people who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.

He is the head of the body and believers are the arms, legs, hands, and feet here on earth.

What’s really interesting is when you trace the etymology of our English word “church” all the way back, it had it’s origins in the Greek word *kurios*, which is the word for “Lord.”

Jesus Christ is Lord. The church is His body. This isn’t about buildings, and external organizations, and hierarchies. The church is all about Jesus Christ. In all things He has the preeminence.

Amazing how we turn everything around and make it about us.

Jesus Christ is our Savior so in our minds that means His whole focus must be on us. We think, He gave His life for me. He loves me. (Which are both true). But our conclusion is false. We think, That makes me preeminent. God loves me so life’s all about me and my way.

We read that Jesus Christ is Creator and that we’re the crown of creation. Once again, we figure that makes us the most important thing going. We’re the most important thing to ourselves, so we must be to God.

Then we get to the idea of church and what do we do? We focus in on what happens here and we say, “Hey, this is all for me. That means I’d better like what goes on when the body meets for worship. I want a church that meets my needs.”

The Bible says, He’s the head and we’re the body. He has the preeminence and we’re supposed worship and serve Him. A body is responsive to its head.

In the London Olympics there's athletes who have trained for years to get the opportunity to compete. They are so well trained and so well disciplined that their bodies respond instantly to their head.

Here's a question; When the world looks at the Body of Christ do they see that same beautiful, astounding coordination that they do at the Olympics?

How about when the world looks at this body? Is it all about us, or is it all about our Head?

God has a purpose for His Son as Creator, Savior, and Head. His purpose is that Jesus Christ be magnified and exalted.

Biblically, who is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Who should He be personally to us? He should be our life, our message, our purpose for living, our strength, our hope, our head.

Who is He to you today? Have you responded to the preeminent Creator and sustainer of the universe who humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross?

If you never have, you need to come to Him by faith today.