**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 ***Define Jesus Christ for Me?***

 **Colossians 2:9-11**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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Paul never gives-up on defining and describing who Jesus is and His mission. Paul constantly connects the attributes and qualities of the nature of Jesus’ person to the application of the Believer. The message is clear. . . why have “The” God-in-the-flesh-incarnation if there is not any beneficial application to people? This is the unique element of “The” God of creation. And is in contrast to the manmade idol pagan systems. . . where their made-up rock-wood-gods are to be feared with people paying homage to them to gain their favor.

**How does “The” God of creation work?**

God’s love reaches-out to fallen humanity first and offers a redeeming relationship through faith to which we surrender versus being merited/earned.

The Incarnation is God’s unique initiative, and it is the great statement of grace and love that does not require a merited response from people. A surrendering heart and mind to God is a spiritual response . . . no added work-ingredients required.

**Christ Defined in Colossians 2:9-11**

Evidence of Paul’s description of Jesus are as follows. . .

 **9** For **in Him**

all the **fullness of Deity** dwells in bodily form,

 **10** and **in Him**

**you** have been **made** **complete,**

and **He is the head** over all rule and authority;

 **11** and **in Him**

you were also circumcised

with a circumcision made without hands,

in the removal of the body of the flesh

by the circumcision of Christ;

**What does verse 9 communicate to us?**

But wait, I just want you to know that I realize this is not a review about which most people will think. However, this topic is in the mainline theological books. Your understanding of this topic has nothing to do with salvation. Now. . . for a real pastoral statement.

I say, for the most part, this is a discussion for theologians who like to split the hairs of a gnat and for doubters who like to chisel away at anything.

**Paul describes Jesus as fully God (fullness of Deity) in the flesh. . . not partial.**

What is the first question in what makes God fully God? This answer goes to the heart of who God is (His Nature) that sets Him apart from us mortals. The first and foremost is that God is love (1 John 4:8). We see the definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13. I have read 1 Corinthians 13 over many times. I readily came to the conclusion that us temporal mortals can never live-up to the principals and attributes of God’s love. Believers hold and possess the greatest value. . . *love*.

Most of us know the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-31). And in the order they are given in Scripture. . . *love* God. . .*love* your neighbor . . .are to be managed by keeping God’s commands (John 14:15). At the end of the day. . .as they say. . . what is the value of a person’s life? Life is valuable enough for God to Incarnate Himself into this fallen world and go to the Cross to pay the price for the sins of the world. Therefore, it can be said that all human life is valuable and worth the price of the Cross. Life in the ultimate sense (original intention) is perfected in God’s love (1 John 4:18). But to live life to its highest value, God’s Spirit must be present. There is only one way “to be all you can be”. . . allow God in your heart.

Paul writes for God in 1 Corinthians 13 defining and placing a value on *love*. Paul assesses love to be the highest value over all other gifts and temporal possessions. God is *love* and, as Jesus, He is the power and authority over judging who surrendered to God’s *love*. We have a view to God’s final authority and power at the Great White throne judgement presented in Revelation 20:11ff.

**Jesus Fully God**

The question is how could Jesus, “of the Incarnation time”, be fully God and at the same time empty Himself of certain attributes? Part of the answer is. . . that whatever attributes He emptied himself, those were not attributes that made Him fully God.

Theologians can point to Philippians 2:7 regarding how God “emptied” Himself to become a man. The standard answer here is that God emptied Himself of the ability to be all-knowing, all-powerful and ever-present (Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence of God). Here are the most common verses to support this view:

**1.** Jesus did not know everything (Matthew 24:36).

Jesus said He did not know when the Second Coming was to take place.

**2.** Jesus was limited in His own power (John 5:19).

Jesus said He could not do anything without the Father.

**3.** Jesus’ body could not be in more that one place at one time when he became

flesh (John 1:14, 1 John 4:2).

Jesus was the physical embodiment of God on earth for thirty-three and one-half years, and, at the same time, not physically present in heaven.

Now we go back to the observation that whatever Jesus emptied Himself did not diminish His “full” God nature. So, what made Jesus fully God in the Flesh? **In addition to love and His sinless nature (1 John 3:5)** . . . there are attributes of God’s nature that set Jesus apart as God even though Jesus was in the flesh that no other being possessed. We read in John and Matthew that all things had been handed over to Jesus during the Incarnation time. What does “all things” mean?

**John 13:3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,

**Matthew 11:27** "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

We cannot list all of Jesus’ Godly attributes here. Consider these:

1. In the Sermon of the Mount, we see Jesus bring original intent to specific parts of the Law that the Jews misunderstood. **Jesus claims to be fully God by saying**. . . “*But I say to you*”. Only God can claim to be the judge (clarifier) of His moral code and the Jews knew this. That is why they eventually killed Him.

**Therefore, God, as Jesus, is the One who determines and defines what is good. Jesus is the God of Creation and sets the moral standards for the creation and life.** All the teachings (parables) of Jesus were about moral standards of life in how to conduct relationships with God and neighbor. From giving the “woman at the well” eternal-life-water. . .to saying, *“It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."* (Matthew. 15:11) . . . Jesus is claiming to be God and determines the moral standard for life.

1. Since Jesus is the moral creator and compass. . . He is also “**The” Judge** of creation and life from the beginning of time to the end. **Jesus during the incarnation was the judge and clarifier of His moral code**. We see this when Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple (Matthew 21:12). Jesus declared in the “Apocalypse” (revealing, uncovering) of John, that He is the Alpha and Omega. This title makes the declaration that Jesus, even in the Incarnation, was/is the judge with all rule and authority. This is fully God.

**Revelation 1:8** "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

**Revelation 22:13** "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

**Revelation 21:6** Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

**Isaiah 41:4** "Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He. "

**Jesus’ Spirit Limited?**

With this said. . . clarification needs to be made about the abilities of Jesus’ Spirit. And yes, just to be clear, Jesus’ Spirit is the Holy Spirit. Question. . . could Jesus’ Spirit be more than one place during His earthly ministry time? Before the Resurrection ministry, Jesus said. . .

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I’m there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20).

 Hence the “Spirit of Christ” was not limited during the Incarnation.

No doubt, God placed Himself, as Jesus, in a human physical body that had limitations. The human body is fragile and can be extinguished by a number of natural events that occur routinely in a fallen world where the whole creation calls-out to be redeemed (Romans 8:19-22). In addition, the human body can be subjected to mistreatment, like the Romans did to Jesus in causing His temporal death on the Cross.

Scripture provides reasons for these limitations in Philippians 2:8. *God, incarnated as Jesus was in appearance as a man, . .* .[now the reason is stated]*. . . but He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* This act was completed to show God’s power that Jesus possessed. Only God can Incarnate himself to be a “limited-in-body-man” in order to be the suffering servant that intentionally goes to the Cross to pay the price for all humanity’s sins. That is a “God act”.

We read in Mark 14:26, “*Not my will but Yours*”, which is Jesus’ statement highlighting the “God act” in a limited body. And with this statement, Jesus is witnessing to us that in our own limited temporal bodies, we too can surrender ourselves to the Spirit of God pursuing His will for our lives. The physical body of Jesus was limited but not the Spirit. Jesus said, “I and the Father are One” (John 10:30). Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh (in body), and the Jewish leadership took great offense to His statements.

**John 10:33** The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because **You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."**

Prior to Paul’s statement in chapter 2 of Colossians concerning the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus. . . Paul had already defined the substance and mission of Jesus the Christ.

**Colossians 1:19** For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to **reconcile** all things to Himself,

having **made peace** **through the blood of His cross;**

through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven

 These two verses point to the main central desires of God’s love and the Incarnation. (1) God desires to reconcile everyone to Him. (2) All people broke the life-covenant with God, but God chose the act of the substitutionary spilling of blood on the Cross to make payment for people’s sin that started with Adam. (3) This “God act” intended to create peace with God and our neighbor. Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), came to the City of Peace (Jerusalem: *Salem* is Hebrew for peace) to bring peace to all.

**John 16:33** "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (Isaiah 9:7)

**John 14:27** "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

**Colossians 2:10** is straight forward with two components: Jesus makes Believers complete, and Jesus is the head of everything.

**10** and **in Him**

**you** have been **made** **complete,**

and **He is the head** over all rule and authority;

Many English Bibles use the word “complete” in translating the Greek word πεπληρωμένοι (pepleromenoi). This word technically means to “fill”, to make “full”. However, this “filling” can only be accomplished by God who will make a person complete. This is why verse 10 declared that “in Him” you have been made complete. It is not you who made you complete.

**Philippians 1:6** For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

**Philippians 2:13** for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

The second half of verse 10 is a simple statement where Paul is consistent with Old and New Testament passages including **Matthew 28:18. . .**

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

 (Daniel 7:14; Matthew 11:27; John 3:35, 13:3)

Authority and rule over what? I see this is one of life’s ultimate questions. The short answer is. . . salvation and judgment. Jesus and God are one (John 10:30, 17:11, 21), and, in this oneness, the salvation and judgement of life and eternal life reside. Temporal life is meaningless without eternal life and pointless if value is not applied to our existence. As beings created in God’s image, we hold and possess life’s intrinsic value. . . that is, the ability to *love* and be loved.

**Colossians 2:11**

**Redemption Without Hands?**

**11** and **in Him**

you were also circumcised

with a circumcision made **without hands**,

in the removal of the body of the flesh

by the **circumcision of Christ;**

**Why Does Paul Use This Terminology?**

Paul’s pharisaic background had imbedded in his heart and mind the Torah. . . the Law. . . the Pentateuch. These are the names given for the first five books of the Old Testament. They refer to the same books. Deuteronomy is the fifth book (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). When Jesus or Paul or any of the New Testament writers refer to the Law, the first five books of the Old Testament is what they are referencing. This is important to know because in Deuteronomy 30:6 there is a direct correlation to what Paul is saying in **Colossians 2:11.**

6 "Moreover the LORD your **God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

 **7** "The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

 8 "And **you shall again obey the LORD**, and **observe all His commandments** which I command you today.

 It is undeniable. . . the consistency of how God offers salvation is throughout the Bible. God’s plan of salvation never changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Hebrews 11 clearly states, starting with Abel, that faith is the conduit that “approves” people to God. I know. . . Jeremiah 31:31 states. . ."Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It is easy to be misled when the titles of Old and New Covenant were added to the Bible centuries ago. Let’s look at what God tells us in His Word that does not include titles added by traditions.

Hebrews 10 teaches us that the Old Covenant of the Law Code never had the intent to remove sin. Paul says the Law was a tutor (Galatians 3:24) leading to Christ so that people can be justified by faith. The Law pointed to the fact that people will always fail and fall short of keeping the whole Law (Romans 3:10; Psalm 14:1; Ecclesiastes 7:20) and thus need a Savior who is sinless (1 John 3:5; Hebrews 7:26). In fact, Hebrews 8:6-7 states, “6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.”

See Hebrews 9 for details pertaining to Christ being the High Priest that supplants the religious officers and the Jerusalem Temple that was made with hands.

Therefore, Jesus Christ is the greater High Priest that has the power and authority to justify each Believer with His perfect blood. The work of Christ as High Priest is accessed by the surrendering faith of the Believer to gain redemption. . . that is right-standing with God. Paul witnesses to the church in Corinth. . .

**2 Corinthians 3:5-6** 5 **Not** that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; **for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

**Back to the circumcision of Christ** (second half of verse 11)

We cannot place enough emphasis on the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4 and Ezekiel 11:4, 36:26 to the New Testament. And it is noted that *circumcision of the heart* is a spiritual act of transformation (repenting) that cannot be carried-out by man. This is the same *cutting of the heart* in Acts 2:37 that impowered the surrendering Jews to repent. These Jews were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit. . . then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 2:29** But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

**Jeremiah 4:4** **"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart**, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

**Ezekiel 11:19** "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

**Ezekiel 36:26** "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

 We need to receive these Scriptures in their correct Biblical context. At first glance, it may appear that God forces the issue of placing His Spirit inside a person and giving a person a new heart. But no. Ezekiel 36:37 is clear and is consistent with Romans 10:13 “for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Quote from Joel 2:32)

 Paul’s Roman letter contains the same message Ezekiel writes. “Call upon the name of the Lord”. In Ezekiel. . . ask Him to give you a new heart and place His Spirit in you. A person asks God to circumcise their heart because they surrender to His power and authority.

**Ezekiel 36:37** 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

 "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them:

I will increase their men like a flock.

**AMEN**