

“So, Who in the World Are We?”
(More importantly: Who Is Jesus?)

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Have you ever wondered, “Who am I?” “Why do I exist?” “Why am I here?” “What am I supposed to be doing?” or, “What will happen to me after I die?” Of course you have!!! This is why books such as Rick Warren’s bestseller “The Purpose Driven Life” fly off the bookshelves and into millions of homes. Who could honestly look in the mirror (while making all kinds of weird faces in a suit in the restroom at a funeral home), and not ask “Who in the World Am I?!” Am I the only one who has ever done such a thing? If you haven’t done this, and can’t even imagine doing such a thing, then it must certainly come to your mind even now to ask “Who are WE, to be so different from each other while visiting a restroom at a funeral home?” There have been many books written to answer the question, “Who Am I?, but I would like to add to the response with a more broad question and a fundamental, biblical answer based on the cardinal Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son. I almost hesitate to say “Christian” because from most of those you know to be Christians, you may not have heard such a response from the bible in your life. However, I believe you will be encouraged to see just how “plain” the answer to this question really is, and to understand why you REALLY already have some clue to the answer.

I would like to read from the book of **II Cor 5:14-21**, which gives us clarity on the subject: **5:14 For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 5:15 And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. 5:16 From now on,**

therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 5:17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 5:19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 5:20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. *(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)*

II Corinthians is a second letter written by Paul the Apostle to the Church in Corinth. It was a church filled with troubles because of the various personalities, idiosyncrasies and differences in the people there. You would have gone to that church and asked “Who in the world are we?!” The reason for his second letter to Corinth is to defend his leadership within the Church. After writing his first letter, the church in Corinth bucked against Paul’s right to tell them what to do, so he wrote a second letter to follow up with a little more authority and to reinforce the Good News of Jesus Christ (**II Cor 2-3:1-6, 6.**) What is interesting to note about this particular passage is how Paul addresses who the Corinthians really are, and by extension, who we are also as human beings. Paul does something very differently than we do when addressing the question “Who are we?” We tend to think of ourselves in isolation or separation from God, with a need to

get connected to Him. Whereas there is a real distinction between humans and God, Paul is clear that there is no distinction we have as humans that is not already in union with God in Christ!!! Check out verses 13-21 in this light and really take seriously what is being said. It sounds kind of crazy because of how we typically think, but Paul even addresses the craziness of how it sounds. Let's break it down into its foundational points:

1. **V.13** – Paul is basically saying, “If it sounds like we are out of our minds with this Good News we are preaching, it is for God (We are willing to sound crazy for God! If we are in our right minds as we express this message, this is for your encouragement. The Gospel, though radical sounding to the human mind, is encouraging through and through.”
2. **V.14-16** – Paul is saying “The love of Christ urges us to preach this Good News to you and we're convinced that this is what it is: You are so connected to Jesus Christ that whatever happened to him, happened to you! When Jesus died, all of humanity died! When Jesus rose, we all rose! We no longer recognize anyone according to the flesh (or how they act, their idiosyncrasies, their race, ethnicity, sex, the faces they make in restrooms at funerals, etc.), we see everyone more accurately in Jesus Christ. God did this so that we would no longer live to ourselves, like isolated human beings, wondering who we are, instead we could praise Him and live knowing Who we REALLY are in Jesus.” That is NOT how most of us typically think about our lives or answer the question, “Who are we?” is it? In the West, we tend to see ourselves as so distinct from God that unless we do something to get connected to God (admit we're sinners, believe, repent, pray, study the bible, etc.) then we think we will be forever separated from God. Paul is convinced of the truth – we are all connected to

God in Jesus, the Son of God. He is convinced of this because He is an Apostle that understood that it is in Jesus, the Son of God, that all things “live, move and have their being.” – **Acts 17:28**. There is no such thing as being separated from God. This is where the importance of holding to the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation come in to play. The doctrine of the Trinity says that God is One God in 3 Persons, Father, Son and Spirit, Who are so intimate with each other and so in Unity that it would betray their union to think of them as anything less than One. However, The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son, and the Father and the Son are not the Holy Spirit. They each have distinct personalities but the same motives, intentions and love – the same Essence and Being. Since we live, move and have our being in God the Son, it is impossible to think of humanity as being separated from the Godhead. This Son of God became human, without losing His divinity (**John 1:1-18**), and actually made the connection He already had with us even stronger!!

Here is a good human analogy of what we should understand about God. If God the Son was a “cup”, and He created creation to be “water inside the cup”, then whatever happens to the “cup” necessarily happens to the “water in the cup!” That is a good picture of how our connection with God actually works. Jesus created us in Himself and sustains us in Himself. When the cup (Jesus) became human and lived, that is when the water in the cup (creation) actually became what it really was destined to be and when it REALLY had life. When the cup went into the grave, the water inside the cup went into the grave with it. When the cup came out of the grave, the water inside

the cup came out of the grave, too! When the cup (Jesus) went back and ascended to the Father and the Spirit, the water inside the cup (creation) ascended to the Father and the Spirit in Him! Whatever happens to the Cup MUST necessarily happen to the water inside the cup!! That makes sense, doesn't it? That is what the Apostle Paul understood so well and is explaining in these scriptures. One thing should be pointed out about this analogy. We are NOT so swallowed up in God and everyone else that we have no distinction. That would be New Age philosophy! We are our own distinct selves connected to the rest of creation in Jesus! We will always be distinctly individuals, AND yet, we will always be in union with God. That is how God is, and that is how we will be!! If God the Son already had a union with us when He was only the Son, then what happened when He literally became a human, which He will be forever - **Col 1:19**? The word "dwell" in that passage literally means "to house permanently." It means that now humanity's connection with God, in the Son, is Eternal, Permanent and even more strong!! How is that for Good News?

3. **V. 17-19** – Paul goes on to clarify in these verses that EVERYTHING has been made New due to it's connection with Jesus, God's Son made flesh!! This is a gracious gift from God that was not earned nor ever could be! Neither is it a gift that can be turned downed or changed, even though it can certainly be opposed and rejected in our distinction. What we should really love about **verse 19** is that right when certain people want to make this sound like something that has only happened to Christians, Paul sticks like glue to the Gospel and states explicitly that what Christ did was something done to the entire world, NOT just Christians! Everyone in the world has his or her being in Jesus! God, the Trinity, is not counting anyone's trespasses against

them, and we, the Church, or those who believe this Good News, are supposed to be telling everyone about this marvelous reconciliation that has happened between God and Man in Jesus!! We needed reconciliation because we had come to believe the lie that God was somehow against us, when God never has been against us!

Because of how our minds have been influenced, and the failure of the church to preach the Good News properly, you may have doubts about how true this news is, but let's take seriously this question: If everyone believed all things were New and reconciled to God in Christ, and that God the Trinity was this gracious and wasn't counting our sins against us, don't you think the world would be positively transformed? How could it otherwise be?? Do you see why the bible is filled with so many commands to repent and believe the Good News? This is exactly how you should understand "faith" and "repentance" in the bible. God already saved everyone in the Whole World in our connection with Jesus, God's Son, but we can only experience this Salvation as truth when we believe it as truth!! If we don't believe we are New, even though we really are New, then we can't live and act like we are New. We are like a dog that is bound without a leash! We can only live in the pain, lies and misperceptions that bring on a condition called, well, hell! Our beliefs are VERY important for experiencing the Truth!

In a very real sense, there is no such thing as an "unbeliever." Everybody believes something, usually very strongly! We either believe the Truth that we are connected to Triune God in Jesus, OR, we believe the lie that our sins are keeping us disconnected from God. If we believe the Truth, we actually experience a foretaste of all of our

blessings in Jesus. If we believe the lies, then we are probably on a religious treadmill of trying to earn or work our way back into God’s favor so that we can “get blessed” or “stay blessed”, or we have given up the facade all together and are trying to have all of the fun we can before we “go to hell!” The Truth is, we already taste hell if we believe lies; the hell of believing something other than the Good News! **So, what do YOU believe – the Truth of your connection in Jesus, or Lies?! What do YOU experience – the assurance, rest and confident connection of your union with God in Christ (as Paul did), or do you experience the anxiety, fear and worry of the lies that say you are separated from God?**

4. **V. 20-21** - Admittedly, there are other verses in the bible, written by Paul, that seem to state the very opposite of the truth of all of humanity’s union with God in Christ, such as in this very passage where Paul says that we are to encourage people to “be reconciled.” There is really a very simple key to reconciling passages of this type. Please notice that Paul says “be reconciled” NOT “get reconciled.” You will notice this with other verses about salvation, too, such as **2 Tim 2:3-6**. Triune God’s desire, and His desire through Paul, is that we believe who we really are in Jesus, so that we can “be that.” Have you ever seen someone involved in a sports game that wasn’t playing up to their potential, and maybe you or someone else encouraged them to get “in the game,” or to, “get their head in the game?” The person was REALLY in the game but something was so obviously wrong in their thinking and game play that we actually made the accusation that they weren’t in the game (even though they really were!!) That is exactly what is going on in the scriptures! It is one thing for

something to be true; it is a whole other thing for something to be EXPERIENCED as truth!! This is why the bible urges us to repent. Repent comes from the Greek word “metanoia” and literally means to “re-think” or “think again.” We have believed lies but are encouraged to rethink and believe the Truth, or Good News, so that we can experience that joyous Truth in our distinction!

Conclusion: Besides giving you the assurance and encouragement the Gospel is designed to bring, this message is also an attempt to help you understand why the first few hundred years of the Church were a “dogfight” to hold to the basic tenets of Christian faith, and that is that God is a Trinity and that God the Son became Incarnate, being Fully God and Fully Man in one Person without confusion. It is also an urge to you to continue holding to those truths as “tenaciously as a bulldog!” To deny the full deity of Christ, such as Arius did, leaves us with a Christ Who is in the same boat as us – one unable to really touch our situation as God and redeem our fallen minds back to the Truth. To deny the full humanity of Christ, such as the Alexandrines of Egypt did, leaves us with a God who doesn’t really touch our humanity either. As Gregory of Nazianzus rightly stated, “the unredeemed is the unhealed.” If God didn’t literally undo our sin from within us, then He didn’t really make us righteous in Himself or undo our sin situation at all. Thomas F. Torrance summarizes it this way: “What are we then to think of the Person of the Mediator himself? Jesus Christ is the Mediator in such a way that in his incarnate Person he embraces both sides of the mediating relationship. He is God of the nature of God, and man of the nature of man, in one and the same Person. He is not two realities, a divine and a human, joined or combined together, but one Reality who confronts us as he who is both God and man. We are not to think of Jesus Christ, Athanasius used to argue, as God in man, for that could be

said of a prophet or a saint, and stops short of what the Incarnation of the Son of God really was. Rather we must think of Jesus Christ as *God* coming to us *as man*.” *T.F. Torrance, The Mediation of Christ, p56*. The Truth of the Good News, and the answer to “Who In the World Are We?” is to first ask “Who in the World is Jesus?” and when we do that, faithful to the cardinal doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, we will say along with Paul, **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” – II Cor 5:21.**

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