

We Believe in Jesus

LESSON
ONE

THE REDEEMER



THIRD MILLENNIUM

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We Believe in Jesus

Lesson One

The Redeemer

INTRODUCTION

There's an old story about a little boy who built a toy boat. He carefully painted the hull and made small sails for it. When the boat was ready, he sailed it in a stream. It floated easily for a time, but then got swept away by the current. The boy searched for his lost boat, but never found it. Sometime later, he was surprised to see his little boat in the window of a shop. He rushed inside and said, "My boat is in the window!" The store clerk replied, "I'm sorry, son, but you'll have to pay for it." The boy worked for weeks to save enough money to buy back his boat. As he left the store with the boat in his hands, he told it, "Little boat, now you're mine again. I made you, I searched for you, and I bought you back."

In many ways, the relationship between Jesus and his people is similar to the relationship between this little boy and the boat. The Son of God created us, but we strayed into sin and were lost. But he never forgot us. He came to earth to seek and to save what was lost. And after he found us, he paid the ultimate price to redeem us — the price of his own death.

This is the first lesson in our series, *We Believe in Jesus*. In this series, we'll explore the area of theology known as Christology, the doctrine of Christ. Throughout these lessons, we'll examine many different truths about the person and work of Jesus Christ that his followers have affirmed for thousands of years. We've entitled this first lesson "The Redeemer" because we'll focus on how Jesus redeems sinners from sin, and ensures the final restoration of creation for our enjoyment and for the glory of his Father.

In this lesson on Jesus the Redeemer, we'll explore the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, during four different periods. First, we'll consider his existence and plan in eternity, before the creation of the world. Second, we'll survey his activity during the initial period of creation. Third, we'll speak about the era of redemption that began after humanity's fall into sin and stretches through the present age. And fourth, we'll examine the consummation of history that will take place when he returns. Let's begin with eternity.

ETERNITY

Most of the time when Christians think and talk about Jesus, we focus on the life he lived on earth, and on the work he's doing in heaven right now. Sometimes we even consider the Bible's teaching about what Jesus will do in the future when he returns. And these are all very important teachings. But the fact is that the Second Person of the Trinity, whom we know as Jesus Christ, is our eternal God. So, when we think about him from a theological perspective, it's often helpful to begin much further back in history, to

see that he has been planning and working on our redemption throughout all history — and even before history began.

Theologians are not entirely agreed on the nature of eternity prior to the creation of the universe. Some even suggest that time itself is an aspect of creation, so that it's impossible to speak of time before God's act of creation. So, in this lesson, we'll identify eternity as the existence of God prior to the creation of the universe. In eternity, only God existed. And he existed in Trinity as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Our discussion of eternity will divide into three parts. First, we'll examine the biblical teaching about Christ's divinity or deity. Second, we'll look at his role within the Trinity. And third, we'll describe his eternal counsel. Let's begin with the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

DIVINITY

Now, the Bible doesn't come from eternity. It was written during time and history. And it doesn't clearly reveal Jesus as a distinct person of the Trinity until the New Testament. Even so, Scripture teaches that Jesus has been God from all eternity. So, the things that it reveals about his divinity in the New Testament were also true of him before the creation of the universe. And they will continue to be true about him forever. As we read in Hebrews 13:8:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Jesus' divinity is evident in the New Testament in many ways. First, Scripture contains several explicit statements that he is divine. Second, some New Testament passages apply the Old Testament to him in ways that demonstrate his divinity. And third, some passages ascribe divine attributes to him. We'll look at some examples of each of these types of proof for Jesus' divinity, beginning with explicit statements.

Explicit Statements

Several passages explicitly teach that Jesus is divine by directly referring to him as God. For example, in John 20:28, the apostle Thomas called Jesus "my God." In Titus 2:13, Paul called Jesus "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ". In 2 Peter 1:1, Peter called Jesus "our God and Savior Jesus Christ." And in 1 John 5:20, John called Jesus "the true God and eternal life." But perhaps the best-known passage that explicitly attributes divinity to Jesus is John 1:1, where we read these words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

This verse specifically says that the "Word was God," and that he has been God since the beginning, that is, before the universe was created. And later in this chapter, in verses 14-18, John clearly stated that the Word he was talking about was Christ. In this way, John

left no doubt that Jesus is God. He always has been and always will be fully divine, in every way.

Old Testament

Second, in addition to making explicit statements that Jesus is God, the New Testament also demonstrates Jesus' divinity in the way it handles several Old Testament references to God.

On a variety of occasions, New Testament writers identified Jesus as God by equating him with the Lord of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself to his people by the name Yahweh, which is normally translated "Lord." And at several points in the New Testament, the writers referred to passages that were clearly about Yahweh, the Lord, and said that these passages were talking about Jesus.

For example, Mark 1:2-3 refers to Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3, which say that a prophet or messenger will go before the Lord. But then Mark said that these prophecies were fulfilled when John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. In this way, Mark indicated that Jesus was the Lord, Yahweh, about whom Malachi and Isaiah had prophesied.

Paul drew a similar connection between Jesus and Yahweh in Philippians 2:11, where he mentioned the fundamental Christian proclamation that Jesus is Lord. And in John 1:1-3, John identified Jesus as the Word of God through whom God had created the universe in the beginning. This was a clear reference to Genesis 1:1, where Moses wrote "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This reference to Jesus' participation in creation indicates that he is, in fact, God himself.

Divine Attributes

Third, besides using explicit statements and the Old Testament to assert that Jesus is God, New Testament authors also ascribed divine attributes to him — attributes that only God can possess. For instance, Hebrews 1:3 says:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

Here, the Son is equated to God and his glory in ways that imply the Son's divinity. Moreover, the Son wields God's infinite creative and sustaining power. No finite being can possess infinite power; only the infinite God can. And therefore, the Son must be God himself. And John 1:1-2 affirms Jesus divinity in a similar way when it says:

In the beginning was the Word ... He was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-2).

When John said that the Word existed “in the beginning,” he meant that the Son had existed from all eternity before anything was created, just as Genesis 1:1 teaches that God had existed from all eternity before creation. In other words, the Son is uncreated. He has existed with God the Father for all eternity. And since only God can possess the attribute of eternal existence, the Son must be God himself.

Now that we’ve seen that Christ possesses full divinity, we’re ready to turn to the relationships between the Son and the other persons of the Trinity.

TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is vital to the Christian faith. On the one hand, the Trinity is one of those doctrines that teach us that God is far above all our abilities to understand him. It teaches us that God is both mysterious and wondrous, and so it inspires us to worship him. But on the other hand, this doctrine sets Christianity apart from all other religions. While some religions see God simply as one person, and others believe that there are many gods, the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that God is three in one sense, and one in another sense. And historically, this uniquely Christian doctrine has been at the very heart of our confession of Christ.

The term trinity doesn’t appear in the Bible, but it expresses the biblical concept that God has three persons, but only one essence. The term “person” refers to a distinct, self-aware personality. Scripture teaches that the three persons of God are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And the term “essence” refers to God’s fundamental nature or the substance of which he consists.

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity teaches that one God eternally exists in a unity of being as three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It took several centuries of wrestling with the Scriptures for Christians to arrive at this understanding of God. The primary impetus for the development of this doctrine was early Christian worship of the risen and exalted Christ; the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is divine. They expressed this by saying that the Son is of the same nature as the Father. How then did Christians reconcile worship of Christ with the oneness of God? The key was a distinction between person and nature. Eventually Christians were led by Scripture to affirm that God the Father and God the Son are one in being, yet distinct in person. To summarize, one God eternally exists in a unity of being as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

— Dr. Keith Johnson

Theologians have commonly described the Trinity from two perspectives. On the one hand, they’ve spoken of the ontological relationships between the members of the Trinity. And on the other hand, they’ve also talked about the economic relationships.

We'll look briefly at both of these ideas, beginning with the ontological relationships within the Trinity.

Ontological

The word “ontological” means “relating to being.” So, when we consider the ontological relationships between the persons of the Trinity, we're concerned with how they're integrated with each other, and with the fact that they share a single divine essence or nature. Because all three of God's persons share the same divine essence, they all possess the same divine attributes, such as infinity, eternity, and immutability.

In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul talked about this aspect of the Trinity in this way:

Christ Jesus ... being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

This passage says many things about Jesus. But we want to focus on the statement “being in very nature God.” In this phrase, Paul explicitly taught that the Son shares the divine nature or essence with God the Father. And other passages indicate that the same is true of the Holy Spirit, too. They are all the same divine being. As Jesus said in John 10:30:

I and the Father are one (John 10:30).

The unbelievers that heard Jesus make this astonishing statement understood that he was claiming to be God, and they tried to stone him for blasphemy.

Now that we have considered the Biblical teaching about the ontological Trinity, let's consider what the Scriptures teach about the economic relationships within the Trinity.

Economic

The word “economic” means “relating to household management.” So, when we speak of the economic relationships within the Trinity, we're interested in how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit relate to and interact with each other as distinct persons. As we've seen, from an ontological perspective, the Son possesses the same divine essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit. But within their economic relationships, the Son submits to the will of the Father, and has authority over the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said in John 6:38:

I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me (John 6:38).

And as he said in John 8:28-29:

I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him (John 8:28-29).

Within the economy of the Trinity, the Son always defers to the Father's authority and will. And just as the Father has authority over the Son, both the Father and the Son have authority over the Holy Spirit. The Son spoke of his authority over the Holy Spirit in John 15:26, where he said this:

When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father ... he will testify about me (John 15:26).

Just as the Father has authority to send the Son, the Son has authority to send the Spirit.

Now, of course, there's never any conflict between the persons of the Trinity. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit always agree. They are of one mind. Even so, within the economy of their relationships, there is a clear order of rank, with the Father possessing the highest authority, and then the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit.

It's impossible for us fully to understand the nature of the Trinity and the relationships between the persons in the Trinity. We know by faith that what Scripture reveals is true. But we have to confess that many aspects of the Trinity are beyond our comprehension. Even so, we can take comfort and encouragement in the reality that all members of the Trinity work together to bring about our salvation. The Father forgives us on the basis of the Son's atonement. And the Father and the Son both send the Spirit into our lives to regenerate us and to renew our lives until the Son returns to complete our salvation.

We've explored Jesus' person and work in eternity by looking at his divinity and at the Trinity. So, now let's turn to his eternal counsel.

COUNSEL

The theological term eternal counsel, often called "eternal decree," refers to God's plans for the universe, which were set before his work of creation. God's eternal counsel is mentioned in places like Acts 2:23, Romans 8:28-30, and 1 Peter 1:2.

Different theological traditions have different beliefs about the nature and extent of God's plans. Some believe that God's eternal plan includes every detail of history. Others believe that God has fixed certain things and not others. But we all agree that what Christ accomplished is central to God's plan — that God ordained salvation in him, and that Christ won't fail. As we read in Ephesians 1:4, 11:

[God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight... In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:4, 11).

What God did in Christ wasn't an accident or a fix for an unforeseen problem; it was set by God's eternal decree. Now, as we think about God's eternal counsel regarding Christ, it's helpful to distinguish two aspects: foreknowledge and purpose. One passage where both these aspects of God's eternal counsel are evident is Isaiah 46:10. Listen to what God said there:

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please (Isaiah 46:10).

Regarding his foreknowledge, God said that from the beginning, that is, before he created the world, he knew what was still to come. And regarding his purpose, he said, "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Let's look at both these ideas in a little more detail.

On the one hand, we might define the term foreknowledge by saying that it refers to God's knowledge, prior to creation, of events that would occur in the course of history. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all-knowing. And their knowledge even extends into the future. In addition to seeing this idea in Isaiah 46:10, we also find it in places like Isaiah 42:9, and 45:11-13; and Acts 15:17, 18.

On the other hand, God's purpose for creating the universe can be described in many ways. In this lesson, we'll summarize it by saying that God created the universe in order to display and increase his glory through his kingdom in Christ. We see this purpose expressed throughout Scripture, including Psalm 145:1-21, 1 Timothy 1:17, Hebrews 1:1-13, 1 Peter 1:20-2:9, and Revelation 1:5-6.

In recent centuries, some theologians have found it helpful to describe God's eternal decree regarding his glorious kingdom as a covenant of redemption. Scripture indicates that before the creation of the world, the persons of the Godhead entered into a solemn arrangement to secure redemption, and to apply it to the fallen creation. In particular, the Son promised to become incarnate and die in order to redeem fallen humanity from the consequences of sin. And the Father promised to accept the Son's sacrifice in payment for the redemption of sinners. Some theologians also include the Holy Spirit's promise to apply salvation to redeemed sinners.

It was an agreement in which the Father plans the work of salvation on behalf of his people. He also determines that he will provide for the Son a body, a physical body in which the Son will come and be incarnate. And the Son agrees to come to this earth, lay down his life on the cross — a perfect life — lay that perfect life down on the cross and be a substitute for God's people. Also, part of that covenant of redemption is the sending forth of the Holy Spirit who takes the work of Christ and then applies it to God's people.

— Dr. Jeff Lowman

The covenant of redemption is important to our understanding because it explains and outlines the things Jesus has already done and continues to do in his incarnation. The promises involved in the covenant of redemption are mentioned in places like Psalm 110, and Ephesians 1:3-6. And they're assumed in places like 1 Peter 1:20, and Revelation 13:8. As just one example, listen to Jesus' words in John 6:38-40:

I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:38-40).

Redemption is an issue that relates to an eternal purpose that was formed in God, before the creation of the world. We can't plumb the mysteries of all of this. Obviously, God is infinite and some things remain hidden from us and God has not revealed them, but we want to understand everything that God has revealed about this, and we have indications throughout Scripture that there was a covenant that was formed within the triune God that would be a manifestation of his glory in eternity. So beings other than God would be enjoying his glory, and it would be a never-ending increase of enjoyment. And it appears from Scripture that the way God did this is through a redemptive purpose, to take sinful human beings who were deserving of punishment and to redeem them. And so as far as we can tell from Scripture, before the foundation of the world, before the world was ever created, this covenant arrangement was made in which the Father would elect a people, the Son would come to die and redeem the people, the Holy Spirit would then draw that people removing the corruption of sin from them so that they would repent and embrace Christ.

— Dr. Thomas Nettles

God's eternal counsel should be an incredible source of comfort for all believers. Before God made the universe, he designed creation to display his glory, and to be a suitable place for humanity to live under his benevolent reign. And because of his foreknowledge, nothing surprises him. God wasn't shocked by humanity's fall into sin. And our salvation isn't his last-minute attempt to fix something that broke unexpectedly. On the contrary, everything happens according to his plan. And as amazing as it seems, this same God — the architect and creator of the universe — became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. He entered creation in order to restore it, and us, according to his eternal purposes.

Now that we've discussed the Son in eternity, let's turn our attention to the initial period of creation.

CREATION

For our purposes in this lesson, we'll define the initial period of creation as beginning with the creation week, and ending with humanity's fall into sin and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. These events are referred to frequently throughout the Bible. But the primary place where the Bible describes them is Genesis 1–3.

We'll explore the work of the Son during the period of creation by looking at two topics: first, the creation week when God first brought the universe into existence; and second, the fall of humanity into sin. Let's begin with the creation week.

CREATION WEEK

Now, when Christians talk about God creating the world, our minds normally go to the person of God the Father. But Scripture teaches that the Son was at the Father's side during creation, and that the Father created the world by or through him. These facts are taught in places like John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 1:2.

When we think about God the Son being the creator of the universe, the passage that comes to mind is in Colossians 1, which is a rich passage, and it reminds us that all things were made by him, all things were made for him, and in him all things hold together, and it gets to the real practical part. What that means is that we can be confident that the same one who fashioned and shaped this creation and who sustains it through some combination of natural law and his own divine will, that this one here at ground level knows what it is we're going through as part of that creation and as re-created by his spirit. So there is a blessing of connectedness with God's original purpose and God's provision today.

— Dr. James D. Smith III

For instance, listen to what Colossians 1:16 has to say about the Son's involvement in creation:

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created by him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

In this passage, Paul explicitly said that creation was accomplished by the Son, or as some translations put it, "through" him.

At the beginning of creation the Son existed as the Logos, the true Word. So in Genesis 1, God said, "Let there be light." God said, "Let

the waters be gathered, and let the dry land appear.” Then, in the Gospel of John, John declared that, “The Word became flesh.” Therefore we understand the universe in the same way — from the Creator to the creation, from God to human beings. Why? Because we comprehend the world by God’s governing principle. And this principle is not imaginary. It is the truth, the Word, the Logos. Thus the whole universe can be understood as it is governed by the Logos of God.

— Dr. Stephen Chan, translation

You know, when we read the New Testament, we find so many surprising things, and we read the Old Testament in a whole new light. One of the things we discover, for instance, from the prologue to the Gospel of John, is that Christ is there from the beginning. Christ is in every verse of the Old Testament. But we go all the way back to creation and John tells us that it was Christ, the Word, the Logos of God, who was the creative agent through whom God made the worlds. And then you come to something like Colossians, and Paul tells us, not only did the Son create the world, he brought everything into being, we’re told in Genesis that God spoke — it was a verbal creation. It was a Word by which he spoke. We come to understand that Word is Christ.

— Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

Interestingly, the Bible’s narrative of creation doesn’t begin with a focus on what happened before the creation of the heavens and the earth. Instead, it spends its time talking about how God ordered and filled the universe in ways that pleased him — in ways that were in keeping with his eternal plans for the universe. Genesis 1:1 is the title for the creation account, telling us that God was the creator. Then Genesis 1:2 tells us about the very early condition of the world. As we read there:

The earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep (Genesis 1:2).

Before God ordered and filled the universe, it was formless, having no shape or order; and it was empty, with no creatures to inhabit it. In this condition, the world wasn’t fit to be God’s glorious kingdom. So, he spent six days filling and ordering his creation. And the way he did this revealed some of the basic dimensions of his eternal purpose for the world.

During the first three days of creation, God formed or gave shape to the world. Through the power of his word, he separated light from darkness, sky from sea, and dry land from water. And he created vegetation as food for the creatures he would later make.

During the second three days of creation, God filled the empty world, so that his kingdom would be properly ordered and governed. He created the sun, moon and stars to mark the seasons, and he assigned the sun to rule or govern the day, and the moon to govern the night. Then he created the fish and other creatures of the sea to inhabit the waters, and the birds to inhabit the air, and all the animals that live on the earth to fill the dry land. And then he created humanity both to fill the earth, and to rule over all the creatures of the water and the sky and the land. Listen to the account of humanity's creation in Genesis 1:27-28:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).

The Scripture, especially the book of Genesis, of course, tells us that the original relationship of humanity to God is richly described in these terms: First of all, human beings are the absolute pinnacle of God's creation. At the end of the sixth day it says, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image.'" And in the image and likeness of God he made man, both male and female. So human beings have this pinnacle kind of relationship, the capstone of all that God wanted to do, to place his image, his likeness, into this creation. And therefore, the second chapter of Genesis describes that same reality in these terms: that God fashioned Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, God sharing his divine life with Adam. Therefore, the original relationship of humanity to God is probably best described in these terms: Human beings are meant to be friends of God, children of God, partners with God in creation, to serve God, but not just to serve God, most importantly, to know God and to love God.

— Dr. Steve Blakemore

By the end of the sixth day of the creation week, God had created the universe to be his special kingdom, and he had appointed humanity to govern the earth in ways that brought him glory. With this in mind, let's look again at Colossians 1:16, where Paul wrote these words about the Son's role in creation:

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

Notice that in this passage, Paul emphasized thrones, powers, rulers and authorities. In the Bible, creation isn't just about existence. It's also a matter of political power. The world exists in order to become God's special kingdom, under the authority of his special Son. We see the same connection in these words from Hebrews 1:2:

[God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe (Hebrews 1:2).

Here, the author of Hebrews connected the idea that God the Son was active in creation with the fact that he was the "heir of all things," that is, that he was the king that would inherit ownership and rule over the entire creation. In fact, this theme runs through the entire chapter.

The Bible consistently teaches that the purpose of creation is to serve as God's special kingdom. And the New Testament makes it clear that this kingdom is to be ruled by God's special Son, through whom and by whom creation was accomplished. We might even say that the Son's creative work was an expression of his kingship and authority. He has authority over creation because he created it. And therefore, every created thing is obligated to submit willingly and obediently to God the Son as its King.

One of the intriguing truths of the Christian faith is that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ not only redeems us, but he had a vital role in the creation of the universe. Our Lord and Savior is the Redeemer, but he is also more fully the Creator and the Redeemer. This has a number of significant implications for us. One is that it reminds us just how great our Savior is, the Creator of all. It's a staggering thought, really, it is. It also makes sure that we will never be misled to think that the Son is somehow less than the Father, but a full participant in the creation of this mighty and amazing universe of ours. I think it also is a reminder that the heart of Jesus Christ extends not only to his church but to the entire created order and all creatures, and that the redemption that we anticipate fully at the end time through Christ will be a redemption of this groaning creation as well. It's a reminder, I think, finally that those who follow Jesus Christ should rightly have a heart that beats in sync with his and care about this world and its inhabitants just as much as the one who made it.

— Dr. Glen Scorgie

Now that we've considered the Son's work in creation from the perspective of the creation week, we're ready to turn to the fall of humanity into sin.

FALL OF HUMANITY

Humanity's fall into sin is a sad but well-known story. In Genesis 2, God had created our first parents, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the beautiful Garden of

Eden. Their job had been to tend the garden, and to produce enough descendants for the human race to be able to expand the garden to fill the entire world, so that the whole planet would be fit for God to inhabit. But in Genesis 3, Satan took the form of a serpent and tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And once Eve had eaten it, she gave some to Adam, and he ate it too. This was the first act of disloyalty from humanity. Adam and Eve trusted the words of the serpent and acted in disbelief towards God's provision as well as his command.

So, in Genesis 3, God responded to this sin with the curse on Adam, Eve and the serpent. The judgments in this curse summarized the consequences for the disobedience of humanity, and delayed the fulfillment of God's purpose for creation.

But what was the role of God the Son in all this? We can summarize the Son's work by saying that he participated with the Father and Holy Spirit in cursing humanity when they sinned, and that he was the promised Redeemer that would eventually come to save humanity from these very same curses.

We'll examine the work of God the Son during the fall of humanity in three ways. First, we'll explore the personal consequences of the Fall. Second, we'll look at its universal consequences. And third, we'll briefly mention the hope that was given to humanity after the Fall. Let's begin with the Fall's personal consequences.

Personal Consequences

Well, according to Romans 5, some of the effects of man's fall into sin, it says that by one man, talking about Adam, sin entered into the world and death passed on to all men for that all sinned and the meaning is all sinned in him. He represented the whole human race. And when he sinned, then his guilt was transferred to the whole human race. And also, his corrupted nature was transferred. Think of it that when God created Adam, he put a little bottle of poison in him — this isn't right, but think of it that way — He said to Adam, if you ever go against my will, that little bottle is going to break. Well, Adam went against his will, and the little bottle broke, and it poisoned his mind — he didn't think right, poisoned his heart — he didn't love the right things, poisoned his will — he didn't choose the right things. Then when Adam had children, that corrupt nature was passed on to his children so the whole human race came into existence with this corrupted nature and rebellion against God.

— Dr. Frank Barker

Broken Fellowship. There are many ways to describe the personal consequences of humanity's fall into sin. But for our purposes in these lessons, we'll focus on four ideas, beginning with broken fellowship between God and human beings.

Humanity's fall into sin was basically rebellion against God — breaking of his moral commands which are a reflection of his

character. And that rebellion led to a tragic separation at every level — first and foremost, separation from God. We, as his creation, made in his image, intended to glorify him, don't do that. We invariably fall short of the glory of God, and when we rebel against him, he intentionally curses this creation and brings about a separation between God and his creation. So, humanity's experience of separation, being cut off from our ultimate source of security and significance and identity and being God's creation, and so, we're separated from God. We're even separated from one another because human beings are intended to be finding all of their joy, their identity, their satisfaction in God and when we don't do that we seek it in the things of the world. And people, then, rather than being objects of affection and love, become competition for the things of this world we're seeking for our identity, and so we're separated from other people.

— Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

God designed this world to be a place where he could dwell with his creatures. But Adam and Eve's sin alienated them from God; their fellowship with him was broken. Their disobedience created a sense of shame, and they lost their contentment and confidence in God's presence. So, instead of walking and talking with God in the garden, they hid from his presence. And this fellowship wasn't just broken from a human perspective; God also rejected their presence, and banished them from the Garden of Eden. As a result, one of humanity's greatest needs is to have this relationship restored.

Further, as a consequence of humanity's broken relationship with God, Adam and Eve's fellowship with each other was also broken. This is evident in the fact that they became ashamed by their nakedness, and covered themselves with fig leaves. And we also see it in God's curse on humanity in Genesis 3:16, where we are told that sin is the source of strife in marriage. So, humanity also needs redemption that can restore these human relationships.

Guilt. A second personal consequence of the Fall is that humanity bears the guilt of Adam's sin. Listen to Paul's description of this problem in Romans 5:18.

The result of one trespass was condemnation for all men (Romans 5:18).

Paul taught that Adam's one act of disobedience condemned all humanity. In other words, God reckons Adam's sin to the account of every fallen human being, so that we're all guilty of that first trespass. This happened because Adam was the covenant head of all humanity. He represented not only himself, but also his wife, and every other human being that would descend from them through natural human generation. As a result, we need redemption that frees us from this guilt, and from the eternal punishment it brings.

Depravity. The third personal consequence of the Fall we'll mention is depravity. The theological term "depravity" refers to sin's corruption of human nature. Different theological traditions understand the extent of depravity in different ways. But all evangelical Christians agree that it prevents us from gaining favor with God. Scripture speaks of the depravity of human nature in many places, including Romans 3:9-18.

For example, listen to these words from Romans 3:10-12:

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one (Romans 3:10-12).

In these verses, Paul combined various references from the Old Testament in order to highlight Scripture's consistent teachings about human depravity.

In Romans 3, Paul taught that our behavior is depraved, so that no one is righteous and no one does good. Our intellect is also depraved, so that no one understands. And our will has been affected, too, so that no one seeks God. In fact, Paul went so far as to say that human nature has become worthless before our holy God. We aren't worthy of his blessing, and there is nothing we can do to redeem ourselves. We need someone else to rescue us.

You know, when the twentieth century began, there was so much optimism in the world, especially the Western world, that due to, because of, the advancement of science, because of the wide availability of education, because of all the discoveries — technological, progress, and so on — there was among philosophers and social scientists and even liberal theologians, there was this great aura of optimism that the twentieth century would be a century of peace in which there would be war no more. Twentieth century would be a century in which the human reason would rule, and reasonable beings will not go killing each other. So, in this enormous expectation, that we were arriving in a century in which there would be peace. You see, the problem in this kind of thing ... and that was the problem in Marxism, it had an optimistic anthropology that ended in social disasters because it didn't have the doctrine of sin. And so what happened? You had the First World War. You had the Bolshevik Revolution. You had later the Holocaust, Second World War, Hitler, Nazism, and we could go on. And so, as a result, to sum it up, in the twentieth century, some 112.8 million people had been killed in warfare. I'm talking just warfare. Civilians and soldiers, as far as recorded data permit us to calculate. That is four times as many as in the previous four centuries cumulatively. What does that tell us? That something is wrong. Not only social conditions, with all of the knowledge, advancement of science and providence of civilization, there is something fundamentally wrong with human nature. And this is what we are, Christians, calling "sin." Now that's not a very

popular word in the media, in the academy and so on, and yet as Reinhold Niebuhr said, the Christian doctrine of sin is the least popular of all doctrines, and yet the one for which we have the most overwhelming empirical evidence everywhere.

— Dr. Peter Kuzmič

Suffering, Pain and Death. The fourth personal consequence of the Fall was that all humanity began to experience suffering, pain and death.

Before humanity's fall into sin, life was perfect and fulfilling. Human beings didn't experience pain, or hardship, or sickness, or death. But after Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed them and all their natural descendants.

Well, as a result of the Fall, God judged men and women and indeed, the whole of creation. So, for example, work, which was something that Adam and Eve were engaged in prior to the Fall, became toil, and hence, human beings have a love-hate relationship with work. The relationship between the man and the woman, again, was corrupted and perverted. Childbirth is — again, another gift of God for the re-creation of more images of God — became painful, and basically, the overall result was that the good things that God gave for Adam and Eve to enjoy continued to be enjoyed, but actually then were also twisted and perverted in some sense, and weren't enjoyed in all their fullness.

— Dr. Simon Vibert

God's curses on humanity are recorded in Genesis 3:16-19, where we read these words:

To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children..." To Adam he said ... "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you ... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground" (Genesis 3:16-19).

These curses didn't just cause humanity pain and suffering; they also hindered them from fulfilling the tasks God had assigned to them. Humanity began to experience hardship in their tasks of multiplying and filling the earth, in working the ground and taking care of it, and in ruling over the earth and spreading God's kingdom.

Even worse, all humanity would begin to experience death. And these curses extended throughout all human generations. So, if we are ever to fulfill God's purposes for humanity, we need a Redeemer that can rescue us from these hindrances and restore us to a blessed, joyful existence.

The results of humanity's fall are that the human race has turned its own way. Sin is disobedience of God's commandments, and human beings are not perfect. They can no longer reach God's standard. Thus, after the Fall, we are separated from God, and the entire human race was and is faced with the reality of death. With no exceptions, no one is righteous in God's eyes. Although human beings are still images of God, they are corrupted. Without redemption in Christ, no one can naturally seek after him. And we cannot live up to God's standard of goodness.

— Dr. Stephen Chan, translation

Human beings need a Redeemer and indeed need God to be their Redeemer for this reason: the nature of sin against God. God is not some impersonal force that launched the universe into existence. God is personal being — the doctrine of the Trinity, God is Father, Son, Holy Spirit. God is intimately, profoundly personal. And therefore, our sin is against God personally. Our sin is like a betrayal of our Creator more than it is like anything else, as I understand what the Scripture is trying to tell us. And therefore, since our sin is like a betrayal, there's nothing we can do to fix it. Betrayal is the sort of thing that only the betrayed party can ever do anything about. And so only if God provides us redemption, only if God takes the brokenness of the relationship and fixes it, can we be redeemed. But we also need a Redeemer because of what sin has done to the human condition. It has trapped us. As we turn away from God and turn in on ourselves, it has trapped us in a kind of gravitational pull that apart from God's graciousness to allow us to escape and be able once again to have our hearts and lives turn toward God, apart from that we could not escape from our own sins. And so only a Redeemer who can first of all make things right with God can save us, and also only a Redeemer who can reach into our sinful situation and undo the power of sin can save us.

— Dr. Steve Blakemore

Having seen the personal consequences that result from humanity's fall into sin, we're ready to turn to its universal consequences.

Universal Consequences

Humanity was so central to God's kingdom purposes that our rebellion brought a curse on the entire universe. Since that time, human society has continued to live for its own glory rather than God's. We've treated each other with injustice and inequity. And

we've constantly rebelled against God's will, so that his kingdom on earth has failed to display his perfect glory as its benevolent King and Creator. The natural world has been affected too. Decay and death have corrupted and diminished the earth and all its creatures. Every aspect of creation needs salvation and redemption.

In this lesson, we'll focus on two universal consequences of the Fall, beginning with the fact that it delayed the coming of God's kingdom.

Delay of God's Kingdom. As we read in Genesis 2:8, when God created the world, the Garden of Eden was the only part that was a paradise. The rest of the world was undeveloped and wild. According to Genesis 1:28, it was humanity's job to subdue the earth, that is, to cultivate it and establish human societies throughout it, so that the entire world would resemble God's special garden. We were also supposed to rule over it as God's servant kings, ensuring that his glorious heavenly rule was properly extended throughout his earthly creation. When this work was done, it was God's plan to inhabit the world as his special earthly kingdom.

But humanity's fall into sin delayed the proper cultivation of the world and our rule over it. And therefore it also delayed the coming of God's kingdom. Our attempts to cultivate and rule were tainted by sin, and so the world we made wasn't fit for God to inhabit. Without a doubt, human beings have successfully filled the earth. But the societies we've built are far from the perfect world we were commanded to make. Wars, crime, strife, hatred and false religion are rampant, and even in the church we often find people who lack faith and commitment to God. And as a result of all this sin in the world, God's kingdom still hasn't come in all its fullness. Peter addressed this problem in 2 Peter 3:11-12 when he wrote:

You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming (2 Peter 3:11-12).

In one sense, God can bring his kingdom to earth whenever he pleases, since he has the power to purge the world of sin whenever he wants. But God's plan is to do this through the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. And in this passage, Peter taught that by fighting against the corruption in the world, we can actually begin to move creation toward its original goal, and speed the day that God comes to dwell on the earth.

The second universal consequence of the Fall we'll mention is that all creation is now subject to futility.

Subjection to Futility. When pain and suffering entered human experience, the peace and productivity of the rest of creation was also disrupted. The ground was cursed, so that it began to produce thorns and thistles, and the entire creation was troubled with chaos and corruption.

In Romans 8:20-22, Paul described this curse by saying that the creation was subjected to frustration, that it's in bondage to decay, and that it's groaning as in the pains of childbirth. In other words, creation no longer produces the good things it was intended to produce, and it's no longer even capable of becoming the perfect world that God intended.

A casual glance at the world around us confirms how true this is. Hurricanes ravage our coastlines. Earthquakes destroy cities and villages. Floods sometimes wash away whole villages. Insects, animals and disease destroy crops. Sickness and injury cause suffering and death for millions. The effects of the Fall are everywhere. And the only way for the world to be made right is for God to redeem creation from this curse.

The consequences for creation and humanity when Adam and Eve sinned are wide reaching because of what humanity was created to be. In Genesis we're told man was created, male and female, to have dominion over the earth. And so, as a mediator between God and the creation, what humanity does has ramifications for the whole creation. So, this is shown in the way that Adam is created from the dirt, so there's this connection that the destiny of the created reality is bound up with what kind of actions humans make. When Adam and Eve sin then we see weeds and the world is now hostile to life and creation. And so, instead of driving creation or leading creation in God's order and in relationship to God, you have the opposite happening of misleading creation under human rule, human misrule, to destruction and leading away from God. Paul returns to this in Romans 8 when he says, the sufferings going on in the world – that can be natural disasters, that can be sickness that we have – these things are all related to creation being subjected to futility, having been put into our hands and we then basically forfeited it under a whole sinful regime. But in personifying creation there he says, "Creation is waiting with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." That's because, just as creation was in a sense doomed because of what humanity did, creation can be saved, all of creation through humanity functioning properly under God, which we haven't seen yet, but we do see when the second Adam returns and Christ takes up the job that humanity was created to do and he orders creation as it ought to be under God's rule and its proper dominion in that way. And we see that anticipated in Isaiah 11, where he is restoring peace in the animal kingdom and between humans and animals and so we're looking for a glorious ordering of creation as things are supposed to be. And it's all based on humanity having this mediation role under God to the creation of bringing God's will to bear as his image bearers.

— Dr. John McKinley

Now that we've considered the personal consequences and universal consequences of the fall of humanity into sin, we're ready to turn to the hope that the Son gives us after the Fall.

Hope for Humanity

God didn't take long to reveal his plan for humanity's redemption. In fact, the first glimmer of hope for humanity came in the fact that God cursed them. In Genesis 2:17, God had threatened to kill humanity if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they didn't immediately die. Instead, God showed a measure of mercy by delaying their deaths. And he showed even more mercy by allowing humanity to continue to serve him in the meantime. Rather than removing them from his plans for creation, he continued to keep humanity at the center of his work.

And then God did something even more merciful: he promised to send a Redeemer that would crush the plans of the Devil and restore God's people to faithfulness. The first mention of this Redeemer is often called the "first gospel," and it's found in God's curse against the serpent after Adam and Eve had sinned.

Listen to this curse in Genesis 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).

In the Fall, Adam and Eve aligned themselves with the rebellious serpent rather than with God. But even then, God didn't abandon his people. In this curse on the serpent, God promised that eventually the offspring of the woman would rescue humanity by defeating the serpent.

Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 teach that the serpent was actually the Devil. So, Evangelical theologians have consistently understood that this first gospel was more than the promise of retribution against a simple animal. Instead, God's promise to send a Redeemer to crush the serpent's head was a promise to rescue humanity from the consequences of their sin – to turn them away from their allegiance to the devil, and to restore their fellowship with him as faithful citizens of his kingdom.

These early gospel images continue in Genesis 3:21, where God provided Adam and Eve with garments of skin to cover their nakedness and shame. Not only did this demonstrate God's continued love and provision for humanity, but it anticipated a day when a fuller sacrifice would be made to redeem the people of God and to cover their sin. And as the New Testament makes clear, this sacrifice would be the Son of God himself.

Now that we've considered the Son in eternity, and his work in creation, we're ready to turn to our third major topic: the Son's work in redemption.

REDEMPTION

Adam and Eve's fall into sin had terrible consequences for humanity and the rest of creation. But God is even greater than our sin. Immediately after our first parents cast the human race into ruin, God revealed his plans to rescue us. From the very beginning,

the Father appointed his Son as the Redeemer that would bring salvation to sinners and restore the entire created world.

We've identified the historical period of redemption as the entire age that began immediately after the Fall in Genesis 3, and that will continue until the consummation of the heavens and the earth when Jesus returns. The Son's work during this period of redemption is characterized especially by the forgiveness and salvation of sinners. The Son began to save sinners immediately after the Fall, when Adam and Eve received mercy from God on the basis of the future redemption that one of Eve's sons would bring. And he has continued to save sinners in every age — as many as have repented of their sins, and turned to him in faith.

We'll consider the Son's role during the period of redemption by exploring three main ideas: first, the Son's motive for redeeming sinners; second, the Father's promise to the Son that ensured the redemption of sinners; and third, the work the Son performed in order to accomplish this redemption. Let's begin with the Son's motive for redeeming sinners.

MOTIVE

The Son's motive for redeeming sinners was complex, and can be described in a variety of ways. He was motivated by his desire to bring glory to the Trinity. He was motivated by a desire for the creation to fulfill its purpose. He was motivated by his desire for justice and mercy. But one of the most well-known words Scripture uses to describe the Son's motive in redemption is "love" — love for God, love for creation and love for human beings. And this love wasn't limited to the Son; all three persons of the Trinity shared it.

God is motivated to redeem us because God is love. Scriptures are clear about that — 1 John, "God is love." John 3:16 used to be one of the most well-known Bible verses in the world, "For God so loved the world." So what motivates him to save and redeem? It's his love. His desire and his design for his creation, especially his human creation, to know him, to live in relationship with him, to be fulfilled in him and thereby providing a platform in which people could know him, and he can be glorified as the loving altogether good God that he is. So the love of God for us is what motivates him to redeem us.

— Dr. Steve Blakemore

We'll explore God's love as the motive behind the Son's role in redemption by looking at three ideas, beginning with the love between the three persons of the Trinity.

Trinity

There is no doubt that God chose to redeem humanity because he loved us. But one of the details we sometimes forget is that God's redeeming love for human beings is

an aspect of the Father's love for the Son. Listen to the way Paul described the Father's decision to save us in Ephesians 1:4-6:

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves (Ephesians 1:4-6).

Three times in this short passage Paul mentioned that God chose to redeem us in him, through Jesus Christ, and in the One he loves. And one of his points was that God's love for us results from the Father's love for the Son. Their inter-Trinitarian love is the ultimate motive for our redemption. We find similar teachings in Romans 8:39 and 1 Timothy 1:14.

The New Testament frequently calls attention to the fact that the Father's love for the Son is critical to our redemption. The Father made it evident at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, as we see in Matthew 3:17, and 17:5; and 2 Peter 1:17. Jesus referred to it when he described his authority to redeem and to judge in John 3:35 and 5:20-23. And Paul described redemption itself as citizenship in the kingdom of the Son the Father loves, in Colossians 1:13-14.

And this love isn't directionless. It includes a desire for the members of the Trinity to be honored and obeyed, for God's glory to be magnified and exhibited, for his purposes to be fulfilled, for his kingship over all creation to be acknowledged and praised. And because humanity is central to God's purposes for creation, our redemption is a natural result of the love within the Trinity.

It's important to realize that God doesn't redeem us because he couldn't live without us, or he doesn't redeem us because he was just lonely without redeemed humanity. God is independent. He has no unmet needs. He doesn't need us or the rest of creation for anything. So we know God doesn't create out of need. He doesn't redeem out of need. He redeems and he creates and he does everything, ultimately though, to glorify himself, to display his character, so all of creation, from the heavens that declare his glory to human beings made in his image who are intended to reflect his glory, he's about showing his character, displaying his holiness, and his worth and beauty. Everything he does is for that ultimate end. But, why does he redeem? He redeems so that he can display his glory through redeemed creation.

— Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

Creation

Second, God's love for creation also motivated the Son's role in redemption. That the Son's role in redemption was motivated by God's love for creation is evident in a

variety of ways. We see it in his care as creator for everything he has made and especially in his love for human beings who are created in his image.

Probably the best known example of this is John 3:16-18, where we read these words:

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).

We should point out that John often used the word world in different ways. In various places, he used it to refer to the universe, the earth, all humanity, many people, people that oppose God, and human systems of values and practice. But in this case, he seems to have meant either the creation itself, or all humanity within that creation.

The basic idea in John 3:16-18 is that God's love motivated him to save the world. He still wanted the world to be his glorious kingdom, populated and ruled by his servants and images, the human race. So, he planned to send his Son to redeem a believing remnant of humanity. By saving believers, God would create a new humanity. And then he would renew the heavens and the earth as his glorious kingdom, and as the home for his newly redeemed humanity. This idea is also taught in places like Romans 8:20-22; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1-4.

Believers

Third, God's love for believers also motivated the Son's role in redemption. In many parts of Scripture, God is said to have a special love for believers. He wants to be in close fellowship with us, and to bless us. And he wants us to love him in return, and to enjoy our relationship with him forever. In fact, God's love for believers is so special that the Bible actually says God knew and loved us before we were even born. We see this in Romans 8:29-39; Ephesians 1:4-12; and 1 Peter 1:2. And Scripture also makes it clear that God's love for believers was an important part of the Father's motive in sending the Son to accomplish redemption, as well as in the Son's desire to do the Father's will. This is especially clear in John's writings, as in John 16:27; and 1 John 3:16, and 4:10-19.

It's not an exaggeration to say that everything God does is motivated at least in part by his love for his people. And God's love is most perfectly and completely displayed in his Son. We all go through struggles in life, and sometimes we even doubt that God loves us. But God doesn't love us any less when we struggle or doubt. The reality is that he knows all our sin and our struggles, and he loves us anyway. Even before we had faith in him, or ever wanted to escape our sin, God loved us so much that he appointed his Son to redeem us. And that was a huge price to pay — Jesus had to suffer and die under the weight of our sin. But he did it for love. And now in his

resurrection, Jesus has become the living testimony to God's redeeming love for his people.

Now that we've explored God's motive for redemption, let's turn to the divine promises that made redemption certain.

PROMISES

God's promises are immutable. They can never change, and he will never break them. Whatever God promises, he will certainly fulfill. Now this is important to our understanding of the Son's role in redemption because redemption is rooted in promises between the Father and the Son.

As we saw earlier in this lesson, the persons of the Trinity entered into an arrangement that some have called the "covenant of redemption," in which they promised to redeem fallen humanity. And what we're about to see is that this covenant of redemption resulted in another covenant being made to secure redemption after the fall into sin. Theologians often call this subsequent covenant the "covenant of grace." This solemn arrangement was made between the Father on the one hand, and the Son and redeemed humanity on the other hand. And it governs the entire period of redemption, beginning immediately after humanity's fall into sin, and coming to its ultimate fulfillment when Jesus returns in glory.

In this covenant, God the Father promised to fulfill his kingdom plans for creation and humanity through the Son, particularly through the Son's incarnation as Jesus Christ. And the Son promised to become incarnate as a human being descended from God's chosen line of Davidic kings, and to fulfill all the terms set forth in the prior covenant of redemption. He would die an atoning death for fallen humanity, and all those who turned to him in repentance and faith would be redeemed from the presence, corruption and guilt of sin. And in conjunction with these promises, both the Father and the Son agreed to send the Holy Spirit to apply the benefits of salvation to those the Son would save.

Theologians typically divide the covenant of grace into six administrations, according to a number of covenant ceremonies God performed throughout history to confirm the covenant of grace with his people. These administrations are normally identified with the human being that led God's people during the time the covenant ceremony was performed.

It begins in Genesis 3 immediately after the Fall with Adam as head of God's covenant people. This is commonly known as the "Adamic administration" of the covenant, or simply the "Adamic covenant." Under this administration, redemption was first offered to humanity in Genesis 3:15, which we earlier identified as the "first gospel."

Next was the covenant of renewal that took place with Noah in Genesis 6–9. In the Noahic administration of the covenant, God promised to maintain the creation in a stable manner so that humanity would be preserved until the Son's redeeming work was complete.

Following this, God made a covenant with Abraham, which is described in Genesis 15, 17, and reaffirmed in Genesis 22. This covenant assigned special privileges and obligations to Abraham's family, and promised that one of his descendants would be the redeemer. And according to Galatians 3, this special descendant was Jesus.

Listen to what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:16:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Paul observed that the promises of the Abrahamic administration of the covenant were made not just to Abraham, but also to Christ. The Son of God was the promised Redeemer who would bring all God's covenant blessings to his faithful people — especially the blessing of redemption from sin.

Next came the covenant with Israel in the days of Moses, which is described in places like Exodus 19–24, and the book of Deuteronomy. In the Mosaic administration of the covenant or “Mosaic covenant,” God instituted a sacrificial system that illustrated the sacrifice the Son would eventually make when he became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. These Mosaic sacrifices were visible confirmations of the promises the Father and Son had made before creation. And through these sacrifices, God's faithful people received foretastes of the redemption the Son would eventually accomplish.

During this time, Israel was established as a royal priesthood and a holy nation. And through their obedience to God's covenant, they were to build the earthly kingdom that the Son would eventually rule.

The fifth administration of the covenant, and the last administration in the Old Testament period, was the one under David, often called the “Davidic covenant.” The Davidic administration of the covenant of grace is mentioned in places like 2 Samuel 7, and Psalms 89, 132. At this time, God promised that the redeemer would descend from David, that he would usher in God's kingdom on earth, and that through his righteous rule he would bring redemption to everyone that had faith in him.

Finally, the sixth administration began in the days of Jesus and will continue until he returns. The Bible normally calls this administration the “new covenant,” as we see in places like Luke 22:20, and Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24. Under this administration of the covenant of grace, all the work of redemption was and is actually being accomplished. Jesus performed his promised role of dying as a sacrifice for sin. The Father accepted his sacrifice. And the Holy Spirit is applying redemption to all those who have faith in Jesus as their Redeemer.

The basis for salvation has always been through the Son. Where you are chronologically in redemptive history relative to the actual period of Jesus's ministry determines whether that focus or that glance is retrospective, as it is for us in the new covenant looking back on promises that have been fulfilled and accomplished in the ministry of Jesus. Or whether for those in the old covenant would be looking forward with not as much specificity as we have in our understanding now, but in accord with the promises of God that do terminate, that are fulfilled in the person of Jesus. So, yes, the basis of our salvation is always Jesus.

— Dr. Rob Lister

There are some people who wonder if there were different ways that people were saved in the Old Testament prior to the coming of Christ. And there have been answers that have been given like some were saved perhaps through government, or some were saved through the law, or some were saved through some other means, through the rule and being a part of the people of Israel. Some might have been saved through circumcision. But the whole teaching of the Bible is that all these things were simply preparatory for the single event that actually would save us. Even as detailed as the sacrificial system was, and as important as it was, the prophets themselves tell the people to stop offering sacrifices if they don't have hearts that are turned to God. And then the book of Hebrews makes it entirely clear that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. There was only one sacrifice that could. And that was because of the uniqueness of the person of Christ. He was God and man in one person. The singularity of this person was the only being who ever could redeem us to God.

— Dr. Thomas Nettles

Now that we've looked at the divine motive and promises regarding redemption, we're ready to examine the work the Son did to accomplish redemption, particularly through his incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth.

WORK

We'll consider four aspects of Jesus' redeeming work: his inauguration of the kingdom of God; his obedience to the Father; his resurrection; and his ascension. Let's look first at his inauguration of the kingdom of God.

Inauguration of Kingdom

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people longed for the day when God would bring his kingdom to earth in a dramatic way, completely destroying their enemies, and establishing them in everlasting lives of blessing. This was the day when humanity's original mandate would finally be fulfilled. God would completely restore his creation, and his will would be done on earth just as perfectly as it is already done in heaven.

When the Old Testament prophets talked about this restoration of Israel, humanity and creation, they often called it the day of the Lord or the last days. They also identified the messiah or Christ as the key figure that would lead God's kingdom in the last days. And according to the New Testament, Jesus, the Son of God, is the long-awaited Messiah who came to establish God's kingdom on earth.

Jesus taught that he had brought the kingdom of God to earth in his day. For example, in Matthew 12:28, he said, “The kingdom of God has come upon you,” meaning that it was already there. And in Luke 16:16, he again taught that people were already entering the kingdom of God, when he said, “Everyone is forcing his way into it.”

Sadly, many people in Jesus’ day rejected the idea that the kingdom of God had already come, because they expected it to be an undeniable earthly reality that would be acknowledged by all — an obvious and physical overthrow of the entire world order. But Jesus taught that the kingdom had come in a different sort of way.

Listen to what he said in Luke 17:20-21:

The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20-21).

To be sure, Jesus hasn’t brought in the kingdom of God in all its fullness. He has only begun that work. So, we’re still waiting for him to finish what he started — to complete or consummate the kingdom of God. But it’s a slow process. As Jesus taught in his parables in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 13, the kingdom of God is like seed that grows over time, or yeast or leaven that causes bread to rise over time. In line with these parables, we might say that the kingdom has been planted, but that the day of harvest won’t happen until Jesus returns in the future.

The New Testament teaches that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, inaugurated God’s kingdom on earth. And it confidently teaches that when he returns in glory, this evil age will end entirely, and the new heavens and new earth will bring complete restoration to God’s people. And this should give us great hope and confidence. In a fallen world, it sometimes seems like evil is winning, and that we suffer for nothing. But God won’t delay justice forever. A day is coming when he will render final judgment against his enemies. He will fully purge sin, suffering and death from the world. And he’ll reward all his faithful people with an everlasting inheritance in his kingdom. Jesus proved himself by many miracles and teachings, and even granted us his Holy Spirit as a down payment on our kingdom blessings. So, we can be certain that he’ll return to consummate his kingdom and to give us our full inheritance.

Now that we’ve seen how Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God, let’s take a look at his work of obedience to the Father.

Obedience

Earlier in our lesson, we considered the personal consequences of humanity’s fall into sin. We saw that the guilt of Adam’s first sin was passed on to all humanity, since Adam represented humanity as our covenant head. We also suffered broken fellowship with God, and depravity that prevents us from earning salvation for ourselves.

Well, in an important sense, Jesus’ role as our redeemer included succeeding where Adam failed. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father, culminating in his death on the cross. And by his obedience, he won the blessings that Adam had lost. And now he shares those blessings with all his faithful people. Paul spoke extensively of

these parallels between Jesus and Adam in Romans 5:12-19. And in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul even called him the “last Adam.”

Theologians often speak of two aspects of the obedience that Jesus rendered throughout his life. On the one hand, his passive obedience was his submission to a life of humiliation and suffering, culminating in his crucifixion. His death on the cross satisfied God’s just requirement that sin be punished by death. In his passive obedience, Jesus was our substitute. He allowed our guilt to be imputed to him, that is, reckoned to his account. And once he was thereby counted guilty in God’s eyes, he died in our place. This single act paid the penalty for all our sins, so that God’s judgment and wrath no longer threaten us. It obtained the forgiveness of our sins, and freed us from the penalty of the law.

As Paul wrote in Romans 5:18-19:

Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19).

Here, Paul explicitly compared Adam and Jesus. And his point was that because Jesus represents us in the same way that Adam once represented us, Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross frees us from God’s just condemnation, and causes him to see us as righteous.

The second type of obedience Jesus rendered was active obedience. This was his life of obedience to everything the Father commanded. In his incarnation, Jesus perfectly kept God’s law. He never sinned, and he always did what God commanded. And in the same way that our guilt was imputed to Jesus on the cross, his righteous obedience is imputed back to us. Theologians often call this “forensic righteousness,” meaning that we are declared to be righteous even though we haven’t yet been completely freed from the indwelling presence of sin. God looks at us as if we were his incarnate Son Jesus — as if we had lived his perfect life, and performed all his good works ourselves. As a result, our fellowship with God is restored. And though depravity still prevents us from earning salvation ourselves, God rewards us with the blessings of salvation on the basis of Jesus’ merit.

For us to be redeemed out of our sinful, fallen state as “children of wrath,” as the Bible says, we need God to solve our problem. We’re helpless, hopeless, unable to solve our own problem of sin. But God, in his grace, solves our problem. And the way he does that is by sending his Son to represent us. God the Son becomes a man and lives a perfect life of obedience, dies a perfect death on the cross, and then walks out of a tomb, defeating death for us. And the only way we then can be redeemed is to be part of this new creation, this first fruits of resurrected redeemed life that Jesus represents. And the way we become part of that is by trusting him, putting our faith in Christ, the new man, the new Adam, who represents this new kind of humanity that has been redeemed from our fallen condition. So, it’s faith in

Christ, the God-man who represents us in his redeeming work, that we find redemption.

— Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

Now that we've considered Jesus' work in terms of the kingdom of God and obedience, let's turn to his resurrection from the dead.

Resurrection

Jesus' bodily resurrection was critical to his work of redemption. By rising from the dead, Jesus conquered death itself, and secured the everlasting physical life of everyone that has faith in him.

Listen to how Paul described Jesus' resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:20-21:

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man (1 Corinthians 15:20-21).

Adam's sin brought death. But when Jesus rose from the dead, he guaranteed that all who believe in him will also be resurrected. And when he returns, we'll live forever in glorified bodies that are like the one our Redeemer already has.

With this understanding of Jesus' resurrection in mind, let's turn to a fourth aspect of his work of redemption: his ascension into heaven.

Ascension

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of forty days, and taught them about the kingdom of God. And at the end of this time, he was taken bodily into heaven. This event is recorded in Luke 24:50, 51 and Acts 1:3-11.

The ascension was important to Jesus' work of redemption for at least two reasons. On the one hand, he ascended into heaven in order to be enthroned as king. He now rules as the Father's servant king over all creation, and especially over his people, the church. These details are mentioned in places like 1 Corinthians 15:23-25; Hebrews 12:2; and 1 Peter 3:22.

On the other hand, the ascension was also important because it allowed Jesus to complete his sacrifice in the heavenly temple, and to remain in the Father's presence mediating and interceding for his people. In his role as mediator, Jesus reminds the Father of the sacrifice he rendered on the cross, so that the Father will continue to forgive and to bless his faithful people. We read about this in places like Hebrews 7:25-26, and 9:11-28.

Now, in one sense, the Son has always been our mediator because of the covenant of redemption he made with the Father before creation. But the Son became our mediator in a special way after he ascended into heaven.

Listen to how Paul described Jesus' role as our mediator in 1 Timothy 2:5-6:

There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, died as a sacrifice for sinners. And now he ministers before the Father's throne, ensuring that the ransom he paid on the cross is applied to our lives on a continual basis. As we read in Hebrews 7:25:

He is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them (Hebrews 7:25).

There is salvation in no one else, but in the name of the Son Jesus. First of all, none of the religious leaders reached the perfect status of Jesus Christ, and none of them is eternal. Furthermore, it is more important that Jesus Christ is the only qualified mediator between God and man. The religions and philosophies of this world can give us good principles of life. But only Jesus Christ is the one who comes from God and back to God. Only he is able to reconcile us to God, and to take our sin on our behalf. Thus, he is the mediator between God and man, not merely in a moral or philosophical sense, but in his person. In biblical terms, Jesus is the only God-man, the Redeemer for human beings and no one can reach this perfect status by personal efforts and moral behaviors.

— Dr. Stephen Chan, translation

We all go through trials and struggles in life. We all wonder at times if God even hears our prayers. But despite our doubts, the Bible assures us that Jesus died to pay the price that redeems us from sin. He was raised to ensure our eternal life. And he ascended to his throne in heaven in order to rule his kingdom for our benefit, and to make continual intercession for us. This doesn't mean life is always easy — it's not. But it does mean that our redeemer always listens to us, sympathizes with us, and loves us, and that we are secure in the salvation he brings.

Now that we've considered Jesus in eternity, and his work in creation and redemption, we're ready to address our final major topic: our Redeemer's work in the future consummation of the heavens and the earth.

CONSUMMATION

The consummation of the heavens and the earth consists of the events immediately surrounding Jesus' future return, and the final stage of our salvation that will continue from that time into the endless future. It includes the destruction of all God's enemies, the ultimate blessing of his people, and the complete renewal of creation itself, where God's redeemed people will dwell forever. In short, it's when the world will finally be God's glorious earthly kingdom.

We'll examine what the Bible says about the consummation of the heavens and the earth in three steps. First, we'll describe Jesus' return. Second, we'll look at the corresponding events that will consummate the heavens and the earth. And third, we'll describe the everlasting results of the consummation. Let's begin with Jesus' return.

JESUS' RETURN

Jesus' first appearance on earth was one of great humility. He was largely unknown in most parts of the world. And even in the places he lived, secular historians said little about him. But his second coming will be very different. As Jesus said in Matthew 24:30:

They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).

And as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:16:

The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

These and other passages of Scripture indicate at least four details about the manner of Jesus' return. First, it will be a personal and physical return. Our Lord Jesus Christ will return to this same world where we now live. And Acts 1:11 adds the detail that he will return in the same way he ascended into heaven, probably meaning that he will descend from the clouds.

Second, his return will be public and visible. Everyone will see him, and he will be announced by the global trumpet call of God and the voice of the archangel.

Third, Jesus' second coming will be triumphant. He will return as a powerful conqueror. And according to passages like Matthew 16:27, 24:31, and 25:31, he will be attended by an army of angels.

And fourth, the Scriptures also reveal that Jesus' return will be sudden; it won't come when we expect it. In fact, according to Matthew 24:36, the date of the second coming is known only by the Father. So, believers should never trust those who claim either to be Christ, or to know when he is returning.

With this understanding of Jesus' return in mind, let's look at the events he will initiate at the consummation.

EVENTS

At least three crucial events will take place when Jesus' returns: the general resurrection, the last judgment, and the renewal of creation. We'll look at each of these events, beginning with the general resurrection.

General Resurrection

At Christ's return, everyone that has ever died will be resurrected. Both the wicked and the righteous will be given new bodies that will endure forever. This is clearly taught in John 5:28-29, where Jesus spoke these words:

A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear [the Son's] voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:28-29).

We find similar ideas in places like Revelation 20:13, where we are told that the resurrection will even include those whose bodies have been lost. No one will be left out; all humanity will be resurrected in order to be judged.

Regarding the resurrected bodies of believers, Scripture teaches that they will be free from the corruption and presence of sin. Sin will no longer indwell our bodies, and we will have perfect health forever. As Paul taught in Philippians 3:20-21:

The Lord Jesus Christ ... will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21).

In our final state, our bodies will be glorious, just like the glorious body Jesus possesses right now, the one he received when he rose from the dead.

The bodies of unbelievers will also last forever, but they won't be redeemed from sin. Instead, their bodies will continue to be plagued by the effects of God's curse against sin. And in fact, the curse will actually increase when they are judged. Scripture speaks of the bodily resurrection of unbelievers in places like John 5:28-29, and Acts 24:15; and it mentions their bodily condemnation in Matthew 5:29-30, and 10:28.

The second major event that will take place when Jesus returns is the last judgment.

Last Judgment

Immediately after the general resurrection, Jesus will exercise his authority and power as king by destroying all his enemies and blessing all his faithful people at the last judgment. Every human being will be included in the last judgment; no one will escape it. This is clear from passages like Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36-37; 2 Corinthians 5:10; and Revelation 20:12-13. And these same passages indicate that just as every

human being will be judged, every aspect of each person's life will be counted as evidence in the trial. Every thought, word and deed will be evaluated.

Because humanity is fallen and sinful, every human being that stands before God on his or her own merit will be condemned in this judgment, and punished with eternal damnation in hell. But the good news is that those who have been forgiven by grace, through faith, in Christ will be acquitted, and rewarded with an eternal inheritance.

John 3:18 puts the matter this way:

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:18).

This same idea is repeated in places like John 5:24; 1 Corinthians 11:32; and 2 Thessalonians 2:12.

The Son's role as judge in his redemptive work I think is a way to balance out the tendency that we have to overemphasize the love of God, by our definition. God's nature at base is holy, and holiness has two major aspects: his righteous standards and his merciful love. So the aspect of the Son's coming to give himself out of love on the cross is, of course, central to what we mean by redemption. But in that redemption, we also have to confront the fact that he is holy and righteous, and his standards have never changed. From the garden until today, they're the same. All of us have sinned. And so the justice of the judge has to be a major part of our concept of the cross and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Without that, I think we diminish the concept of sin. We don't understand the need for a fundamental repentance and the need for a savior from that sin. It becomes simply a loving deity who comes and sort of lifts me up from my problems. That justice and righteousness of the Lord Jesus is fundamental to a full concept of his work on the cross, and his continued work in the believer's life even after a person's been saved. We're going to meet Jesus as the judge at the end of human history as well. So all of our lives come under this holiness of love and holy righteousness that his judgeship, in all of its mercy, are representative to us.

— Dr. Bill Ury

Lastly, the third major event that will take place when Jesus returns is the renewal of creation.

Renewal of Creation

Just as Jesus will judge humanity and purge the unbelievers from it, he will also purge and renew the creation itself. 2 Peter 3:10-13 describes the renewal of creation in this way:

The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Humanity's redemption will have an impact on the rest of creation because, as Romans 8:22 says, "We know that the whole creation groans as in the pains of childbirth right up until the present time. We ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan inwardly as we await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Creation was subjected to frustration as a consequence of Adam's sin. This frustration manifests itself in disorder and chaos and death. This thing that creation is now experiencing, Paul says, is like the labor of a woman giving birth to a child, which implies that there is something yet to come — out of this will be born something — and the entire creation will be redeemed and restored. And it awaits the fulfillment of that reality now as we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. And just as the believer is restored in his state of glorification and free from death and sin and decay, in the same way, creation will be liberated from its bondage at the same time as a new heaven and new earth comes to be without any death or decay or disorder that we see now around us.

— Rev. Jim Maples

According to Revelation 22:3, this renewal of heaven and earth will completely remove the presence and curse of sin. All the effects of humanity's fall will be eradicated, so that God's people will live without sin, suffering, sickness or death. Revelation 21:4 even tells us that God will wipe every tear from our eyes. All creation will be restored to God's original plan, and his people will receive the blessing of unending life in his everlasting kingdom. And the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21, 22 will be the capital of that kingdom.

Revelation 22:2 describes one part of that New Jerusalem in this way:

On each side of the river stood the tree of life ... And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2).

Genesis 2–3 record that the tree of life used to be planted in the Garden of Eden. In particular, Genesis 3:22-24 states that when God banished Adam and Eve from the garden, he did it partly to prevent them from eating its fruit. But when Christ returns,

after the final judgment, the fruit of the tree of life will be available to humanity again, bringing us everlasting peace and health under the glorious kingship of God.

There's a connection established between mankind as God's image-bearing creature and under-ruler over the creation, at the creation. So, Adam and Eve are established as rulers over creation underneath God's authority, and there's a connection between them and the realm that they rule. When Adam and Eve fall into sin, the effects then are therefore not just for Adam, but also for the creation. Similarly, at humanity's final redemption, just as the creation was plunged into bondage to decay, as Romans 8 says, with Adam and Eve's sin in the beginning, it will also be liberated from those same effects of sin as humanity experiences their final liberation as well. So there's a connection between the image-bearing under-ruler, and the realm that they rule. That effect is tied together both in terms of sin, the experience of human sin, and the fall of creation into that same experience as well, and the liberation of humans from their sin finally in a way that the creation will be liberated from that bondage also.

— Dr. Rob Lister

Now that we've looked at the manner and events of Christ's return, let's explore its results.

RESULTS

At the beginning of this lesson, we summarized God's purpose for creation by saying that God created the universe in order to display and increase his glory through his kingdom in Christ. And the results of Jesus' return will be the final accomplishment of this purpose. Jesus is returning to bring God's kingdom to earth in all its fullness, complete with faithful people whom God loves, and who love, serve and worship God in return.

God's ultimate goal in the redemption of humanity is to restore a people for himself. That restoration is going to be even more complete and even greater than the fellowship that Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden. After the fall of humanity, God gives them the *proto-evangelion*, the first promise of the gospel, and speaks of a Redeemer who will come of the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. And the rest of Scripture is the unfolding of the process of that restoration. The nation of Israel is a portion of that restoration and a picture of that restoration. The church then, being worldwide, is even a greater picture of that restoration. And then finally, in the second coming of Christ you have the restoration of the new heavens

and the new earth in which God fellowships directly with humanity, all those who have come to know Christ through faith, and they enjoy this perfect state in which no longer can Satan attack, and no longer will sin be present, and they will perfectly glorify God throughout eternity.

— Dr. Jeff Lowman

The results of Jesus' consummation of the heavens and earth can be summarized in many ways, but in this lesson we'll divide them into two parts. First, we'll consider the glory of God that results from the consummation. And second, we'll focus on the joy of redemption that human beings experience. Let's look first at the glory of God.

Glory of God

I think that the triune God, because of the working for our redemption, in eternity will receive glory. God has done this for his glory, to manifest not only his justice and his righteousness, and the immutability, and perfect holiness of his law, but to show that he is wise and he can maintain all of those attributes about himself, and yet be merciful and be forgiving and justify sinners. The prophet asked, "Who is a pardoning God like thee, and who has grace like this?" So it is for the glory of God. It is for the salvation of sinners, but the ultimate result of this and the intended result of it is that God's glory might be manifest in ever increasing measures throughout all eternity.

— Dr. Thomas Nettles

When Christ returns, his reign as king over God's kingdom will reach its highest, most honored state. And the goal of bringing glory to God will be met when all humanity acknowledges Jesus' rule and bows to his authority. As Paul wrote in Philippians 2:9-11:

God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

God's benevolence will bring him glory because, in his love and kindness, he'll pardon repentant sinners and bless us beyond imagination. And in response, we'll praise him and proclaim his goodness. As Paul said in Ephesians 2:6-7:

God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show

the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6-7).

When Jesus returns, our loyalty will be rewarded, and all God's faithful people will inherit the new heavens and earth, where Revelation 21:1-5 teaches we'll enjoy God's presence in a way that is even better than his presence was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Prior to the Fall, obviously, human beings enjoyed a free, uncluttered relationship with God. But there is a sense in which after humanity fell, God put into place a redemption that it looks forward to a relationship with God that is fuller and even greater than was even enjoyed prior to the Fall. So Adam was called a friend of God, but the privilege of every believer is to be called a son, and many have pointed to the fact that there is a greater degree of intimacy in relationship implied in that term, and the sense in which we don't go back to the garden again. We actually move to the New Jerusalem and there seems to be a progression all the way through biblical theology to whatever that great place, the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth, which is not a return to where we were before.

— Dr. Simon Vibert

Regarding the question of whether or not we're better off because the Fall actually happened, I think first it's important to acknowledge that the fall of man, the rejection of God, is a tragic thing. It's a grievous thing; it's high treason against the High King of heaven. And so, we don't want to minimize at all the great tragedy of the Fall. But as we see God's sovereign plan work itself out, we see that at the end of it all we end up with a far better result than we had if we had just stayed in the garden as Adam and Eve were in their state of innocence. Because what we end up with in redemption, is not just the state of innocence, but we're brought into the very fellowship of the Trinity itself, that by our redemption in Christ, and our faith in Christ, we are invited in to the Trinitarian fellowship that Father, Son and Spirit had for all of eternity, and we become partakers of the divine nature, coheirs with Christ. And so most certainly, when we evaluate our state in Christ, it is far superior to what we would have just had if we were in the garden like Adam and Eve. So there is a wonderful, sovereign blessing that comes about, that happens because of the Fall. It's not that it's not grievous, but it most certainly, because of God's sovereign goodness and power, produces something far greater than we would have had otherwise.

— Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

Of course, there's also another side to Jesus' return that will bring God glory, and that should serve as a great warning to all humanity. In addition to blessing his people, the Lord will curse those who have rejected him as Redeemer and King. Their punishment will bring him glory because it will preserve the honor of his holiness, demonstrate his justice, and free his people from the oppression and pain of the presence of sin. And according to passages like Revelation 19:1-2, God's righteous people will rejoice at the judgment of the wicked. But until then, Christians don't normally rejoice at these ideas. Instead, we commit ourselves to proclaiming the gospel of forgiveness and salvation in Christ, so that as many as possible might avoid this terrible fate.

Now that we've examined the glory of God that results from the consummation, let's take a look at what the Bible teaches about the joy of redemption believers will experience.

Joy of Redemption

The Bible mentions at least three sources of constant joy that believers will find in their redemption. And perhaps the greatest of these is the fact that we will have full communion with God.

After their sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve hid from each other and from God. And when God cursed them, they were cast out of his special presence. But in the consummation, Jesus will restore human nature, so that we'll be permitted into God's special presence in a physical way, so that we can see his glory with our own eyes. This is plainly taught in places like John 17:24; 1 John 3:2; and Revelation 21:3.

Listen to how the fourth century bishop Augustine of Hippo summarized this blessing in his work *The City of God*, book 22, chapter 30:

God Himself, who is the Author of virtue, shall there be its reward; for, as there is nothing greater or better, he has promised himself. What else was meant by his word through the prophet, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," than, "I shall be their satisfaction, I shall be all that men honorably desire — life, and health, and nourishment, and plenty, and glory, and honor, and peace, and all good things"? This, too, is the right interpretation of the saying of the apostle, "That God may be all in all." He shall be the end of our desires who shall be seen without end, loved without cloy, praised without weariness. This outgoing of affection, this employment, shall certainly be, like eternal life itself, common to all.

A second joy of redemption believers will experience is perfect communion with each other.

In addition to destroying our relationship with God, Adam's sin ruined human relationships. But Revelation 22:2 claims that when we are fully redeemed, the nations will be healed. Wars will cease, injustice will end, and relationships will be fully restored.

The entire world will become a peaceful, friendly, familial community of people who love and serve each other.

Finally, the third joy of redemption we'll mention is the fact that we'll reign with Christ over the new heavens and earth.

Paul mentioned this in 2 Timothy 2:12, where he wrote:

If we endure, we will also reign with him (2 Timothy 2:12).

Our reign with Christ is also taught in Revelation 2:26-27, 3:21, and 22:5.

Adam and Eve were created in God's image and placed in the Garden of Eden to reign over this creation under the lordship of God. But the curse and corruption of Adam's sin prevented humanity from doing this in a way that would accomplish God's ultimate purpose. But Jesus, because of his sacrifice and obedience, has now begun to do what Adam couldn't. He now stands as our covenant head, and he reigns over the entire creation. And in the consummation of the world, redeemed humanity will finally rule creation in a way that glorifies God and perfectly benefits all creation.

Christians can respond to our future hope, full redemption, in a spirit of hope. Hope is the confident anticipation of a positive future. And the remarkable, practical nature of hope is that it makes us buoyant, it makes us persevering, it makes us resilient, and it gives us in the present a kind of anticipative joy in the confidence that what is promised will become a reality. It buoys us up further by the sense of assured inevitability of the outcome for which we labor now, in which, in the natural might be a little shaky or uncertain from our limited perspective.

— Dr. Glen Scorgie

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on Jesus the Redeemer, we've considered the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, during four different periods: eternity, before the creation of the universe; the initial period of creation, the long era of redemption, and the future age of consummation.

Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the most interesting, complex and significant person that has ever lived. And he is still alive today. He is the King of all creation, who reigns from his throne in heaven. We can never hope to understand and appreciate him in all of his complexity. But hopefully the overview provided in this lesson can prepare us to think about Jesus in ways that honor him and benefit his people.

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