

Jesus our Lord

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[0 : 0 0] However much you see right now, there's so much more going on. When you look at that picture, you can't see what's going on all around until you see the rest.

However much we see of the person of Jesus Christ now, there is so much more. My guess is that most people, when they think of the person Jesus Christ, regardless really of whether they would regard themselves as Christians or not, would probably have certain views of him.

They would probably think, well, he was a good person. But dare I say, perhaps a lot of people, most people would say a little bit more than that. They say, well, he's somebody who changed history.

What he stood for was something amazing. He certainly changes lives. He stands for life-changing values. He's a great spiritual, moral teacher.

My guess is that most people would say such things. And the people that Paul was writing to when he wrote this letter to the Colossians some 2,000 years ago, actually there was a similar thing going on.

[1 : 2 3] That Jesus was held by many as, by this time, in the very early stages of Christian history, as somebody really important. But for many people, he was very important, but one very important voice among many.

Effectively, that the way of Jesus stood for a philosophy. But Paul was writing to them, and indeed these words speak as much to today as they did 2,000 years ago.

When Paul says that, yes, Jesus is important, but he's so much more than that. There is so, so much more. To the extent that no matter how much you look at Jesus, there is so much more that you can't see yet.

He is, says Paul, the image of the invisible God. When we look at Jesus, we see that image of something that we cannot see.

There is so much more than immediately meets the eye. A word, image, the New Testament Greek word is icon.

[2 : 4 4] And it's multi-layered. It would have meant lots of things to its first readers. Two meanings in particular, though. Firstly, it sort of meant something a bit like a portrait. There were first century letters written on papyrus in which writers, soldiers would write, I enclose, I'm sending you a recent icon, meaning a portrait, a picture.

I suppose the closest that we would think would be a photograph. So a sort of like an image, literally an image of what is not in front of you so you can see.

It also meant more than that. The word icon meant a description. So in first century legal contracts, that word would be used to describe the characteristics of parties forming a legal contract.

So whether it was an IOU or a receipt, you know, in order to identify the parties concerned, you would list a brief description of defining characteristics of each party.

And that was called an icon. So when the first readers of these words from Paul would have come across, you know, this sentence, this statement that Jesus is the image, the icon of the invisible God, those are some of the thoughts that they would have had.

[3 : 59] That you cannot see God, but what we see in Jesus is something of a portrait, a picture, a set of characteristics of the invisible God. But of course there's always so much more beyond what we see.

So much more than first meets the eye. You see, in Jesus we don't just have a sort of a frozen in time picture of who God is.

Paul goes on to say that when we look at Jesus, we see something unique. We see the fullness of God. And that's what another word that Paul uses in verse 19 of that passage there, *pleroma*, literally means the fullness of God.

In other words, when we look at Jesus, he's not just a sketch of God. He's not just a portrait, not just a summary of important characteristics. Now, when we look at the person of Jesus, we see the fullness of God.

And yet we cannot quite see that fullness yet. Jesus is the supreme revelation of God. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ in a way that he has never, ever revealed himself before and never will reveal himself again.

[5 : 24] When we look to Jesus, we see everything, everything that we need to see. Notice, when we read through this passage, how many times the word *all* is used.

Because Paul is saying that you look at Jesus, it's all there. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created.

Things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, where thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things.

And in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn among the dead. So that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.

What does this mean in practical terms? Well, in real life terms it means this. However we stand in relationship to the person of Jesus, whether you're just an inquirer and you're not quite sure, but you're just intrigued by who he is, or whether you're a committed Christian and maybe been a committed Christian for many, many years, whatever you see of the person of Jesus, there's so much more.

[6 : 42] He is inexhaustible. He is infinite. Tonight, let me share with you one last image, which perhaps helps us to understand how when we look at Jesus, we see everything.

We see all of the fullness of God. And yet there's so much more. For this illustration, I've got here a glass. And what I really wanted to do was have the ocean in this room.

But that was perhaps a little bit difficult. So I've got the next best thing. I've got a bucket of water. But for the purposes of this illustration, that represents the whole of the ocean, yeah?

When you become a Christian, you don't just change your mind. You're not just converted to a new set of ideas. The Bible says that when you become a Christian, something happens to you.

That God himself somehow comes to dwell in you. Now that's an amazing thought. That the author of the whole of creation could have a living presence in you and that you know him.

[7 : 48] That he's not just with you and by your side, although he is. But in a real but mysterious sense, when you believe in Christ, when you accept him into your life, he actually lives in you.

He dwells in you. So imagine I'm dipping this glass, not in a bucket, but in the ocean. There's a very real sense in which the glass then contains the ocean.

In this glass, there is the ocean of the world. And yet, of course, does it contain the ocean? Well, no, it doesn't.

Of course, it doesn't contain all of it. And yet, there's a real sense in which we can say, yes, this glass contains the ocean. When you accept Christ into your life, the living God, says the Bible, the living God comes to dwell in you.

You actually have the dwelling of the Lord of the whole universe in you. And yet, there's so much more.

[9 : 13] Always so much more. We're going to pray now. And as we come to pray, I want to invite all of us to ask this question, where are we in relation to the person of Jesus?

It may be that perhaps we feel that, well, we don't really know him, but we know bits about him and we want to know more. Well, the good news is you can't exhaust that.

There's always more. It may be that you feel that you've been a follower of Jesus Christ for decades, but you just want to sense that there is more of him.

And the good news, again, is that he is infinite. You cannot exhaust the experience of Jesus Christ.

So let's pray together now. Lord God, thank you that in Jesus you show us yourself.

[10 : 27] Thank you that you have come to us in him and that in him you show us the image of yourself. Thank you that there is always so much more for us to encounter of you than we have so far.

Lord, at this point in time it may be that we're in that relation with you that we don't really know you and we've never really accepted you as Lord over our lives.

And yet there's something in us that says we want to know more. Lord, perhaps it may be that we've just recently come to faith in you and we want to know more.

Perhaps it's been that we've been following you for many, many years and we just long to know more. Lord, wherever we are in our walk with you hear our prayer now as we ask you to come more into our lives to fill us more that we might know you more and keep on knowing you and growing in you and growing in more confidence in you this day and every day in Jesus' name.

Amen.