

1 TIM 1:17; 2:5-6; 3:16; 6:13-16—THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRO: Muslims look to Muhammad as the ideal and perfect example for all mankind. Although Buddhism was founded without belief in a higher power, some Buddhists now worship Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha, as a god.

However, there is one person who not only outstrips every other human being who has ever existed, but is unique compared to every other human being who has ever existed. That person is Jesus Christ. Muhammad and Buddha essentially said, **“We are not God, but if you want God to accept you and go to heaven or paradise or nirvana when you die, it’s up to you; you need to follow the five pillars of Islam or the eightfold path of Buddhism.”**

Muhammad and Buddha never claimed to save anyone from their sins or enable people to go to heaven or nirvana. They never claimed to have the *ability* to save anyone. Even if they had wanted to, they couldn’t have, since they were the same type of sinful creatures as we are. Jesus alone is different. Even his name testifies to this. The name “Jesus” is derived from the Hebrew Yehoshua, which means **“the Lord is salvation.”** Therefore, in **Matt 1:21**, the Lord appeared to Joseph and told him that Mary **“will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”** Jesus is the only person whose very name is equated with salvation itself.

Jesus himself recognized and proclaimed this. In essence Jesus said, **“I am God, come to earth as a man. If you want to go to heaven there is nothing you can do. The reason is that God is perfect and holy and cannot abide in the presence of sin. You are sinful, and there is nothing you can do to change that. Therefore, I have come to do for you what you could never do for yourself. I have come to live the life you should have lived, die the death you should have died, and pay the price for your sin that otherwise you would have to pay but never could.**

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me. And I will prove to you who I am by doing something that no one who is only a man can do, namely, they will kill and bury me but then on the third day I will bodily rise from the grave, alive forevermore. All you must do is believe who I am and what I have done, and you *will* be saved.”

Jesus’s claims are so stupendous that, if they are true, the stakes for everyone are incredibly high. Indeed, the stakes are the difference between life and death. Therefore, it seems to me, any reasonable person should check them out to see if they are true. The book of **1 Timothy** includes four different passages that focus on Jesus. As we conclude this series on **1 Timothy**, I would like to consider these four passages, as they give us deeper insight as to who this Jesus is and what he does. The four passages are **1:17, 2:5-6, 3:16, and 6:13-16.**

O/S: We are going to look at four passages in order and then consider some of the implications of them for our lives.

I. 1:17 [READ]. This is a doxology—an expression of praise to God. Although the references to **“the king eternal”** and **“the only God”** might be taken as referring to the Father, the context suggests that Paul is referring to Christ. The reasons are as follows: First, the immediate context is **v. 16**, which specifically refers to Christ and Christ’s *patience* in showing Paul mercy and saving him. Second, Christ *is* God. His heavenly origin had just been indicated in **v. 15**, which says, **“Christ came into the world.”** IOW, he is not *of* the world or *from* the world. Third, this is indicated in multiple other passages in the Bible. For example, in **John 6:38** Jesus says, **“I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”** **Phil 2:6-7** says **[READ].**

Fourth, this verse, together with 2:5-6, 3:16 and 6:13-16, fit together as a coherent whole. This verse speaks of Christ’s eternal nature; **2:5-6** speak of the specific mission Christ came to earth to do; **3:16** speaks of the overall context and result of what Christ did in accomplishing his mission; and **6:13-16** speak of what Jesus is yet to do, namely, he will come again to the earth. Taken together, all these passages provide a complete theology of Jesus Christ, in correct chronological order!

That leads us to the second passage we want to look at:

II. 2:5-6 [READ]. There is a great gap between God and humanity. God created human beings in his own image and fellowshiped with them in the Garden of Eden. God loves the world and desires that people rejoice in him forever as his people, with him as their God. Instead of rejoicing in God and fellowshiping with him, all human beings turned away from God in sin and rebelled against him—and we continue to do so.

God is perfect. He is perfectly: loving; wise; good; holy; just; and true. Because God is perfect and holy, he cannot have fellowship with sin. As Jesus said in **Matt 5:48**, **“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** We all have the power of indwelling sin inside of us. Because of our sinfulness, it is impossible for us to “earn” or “work” our way into a right relationship with God. We cannot even meet our own standards, let alone God’s.

Our sin has affected not just ourselves, but other people, the environment—everything. And the effects of our sins last far beyond what we can see, what we can know, and they last for generations, long after we ourselves are no longer here. Consequently, in his justice God will judge all those who sin. Because God cannot have fellowship with sin, the consequences of sin are death and everlasting separation from God. That everlasting separation from God is known as hell.

If we are to be saved and experience life, not death; joy, not sorrow; and everlasting fellowship with God, not separation from him, we need to look outside of ourselves for help. That is why Christ came to earth. **Verse 5** speaks of Christ as the “mediator.” A “mediator” is someone who brings together and reconciles two parties who are opposed to each other. In this case, the parties who are opposed to each other are God and us.

A mediator has to be able to relate to both parties. In the case of God and humanity, Jesus is fully God. He can therefore fully relate to God. Jesus is also fully man. Therefore, he can fully relate to us. Unlike all other people, Jesus alone was without sin. He can therefore fully represent God to man and can also appeal to God as man and on behalf of man. Therefore, only Jesus is capable of being a mediator between holy God and sinful man. He alone is capable of giving people everlasting life and reuniting God and mankind.

That is the specific mission Jesus came to earth to do. The word “ransom,” in **v. 6**, speaks of the payment of a price to secure someone or something; it came to be associated with the price paid to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free. In **John 8:34**, Jesus said, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”** Since we all sin, we are all slaves of sin. However, Christ paid the ransom price to purchase us and set us free in him. On the cross, he took our sins upon himself. He bore our sins—and paid the penalty for our sin—even though he himself had lived a sinless life.

How do we know that? Since Jesus was only on the cross for a few hours, how do we know that he endured *eternal* separation from God, which is the penalty sinful people must pay? In **Genesis 15** God ratified his covenant with Abraham, in which he had promised to bless people of all nations through the **“seed of Abraham.”** **Galatians 3** tells us that that “seed” was Jesus Christ.

When God ratified that covenant, he symbolically took the curses of the covenant onto himself. He did that by acting out the covenant ratification ceremony. That involved having Abraham gather some animals, kill them, cut them in two, and then lay the pieces side-by-side. Then God—in symbolic form—passed through the pieces of the dead animals. Abraham did not pass through the pieces of the dead animals. By doing that, God was saying, **“Abraham, if I violate the terms of this covenant—or if you violate the terms of this covenant—may I, God, become like the pieces of these dead animals.”**

Two thousand years later, on a hill called Calvary, Jesus Christ did that for real. We know that because, **Galatians 3** tells us that, on the cross, Christ **“became a curse for us.”** Jesus was whipped and beaten and then nailed to a cross where he died, shedding his blood just like those animals. But remember that the animals were not just killed, but were cut in two. **Matt 27:51** tells us that when Jesus died, **“the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”** **Heb 10:19-20** tells us the meaning of that. It says, **“We have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.”** That veil was showing that, on the cross, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Abrahamic Covenant.

But that’s not all. **Gen 15:17** says, **“When the sun had set, it was very dark”** That’s when the smoking oven and flaming torch passed through the pieces. **Matt 27:45** tells us that when Jesus was on the cross, **“from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.”**

God’s judgment on our sin is everlasting separation from him, otherwise known as hell. Hell is described in various places in the Bible as **“outer darkness.”** When Jesus was on the cross, the darkness of the sky was a sign of God’s judgment on the sin that Jesus was bearing. That darkness was symbolizing the outer darkness of hell itself, since hell is the punishment for our sin. The essence of hell is being forsaken by and eternally separated from God. So when Jesus cried out from the cross, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** that is telling us that he was actually experiencing hell itself.

By definition, hell lasts forever. Jesus did not just bear one eternity in hell, but millions of eternities in hell—the hell you have earned and deserve; the hell I have earned and deserve. They were all compressed onto him in the time he was on the cross. That is beyond my ability to comprehend. It reveals that what Jesus experienced on the cross is unimaginable. But that is what it took to redeem you and me from the penalty of our sin.

In short, Jesus lived the life we should have lived—one free from sin and fully pleasing to the Father. He died the death we should have died, and he paid the penalty of our sins, in our place, that otherwise we would have to pay, but never could. All the bad we have done and the judgment we deserve, he took onto himself.

In exchange, all the good that he deserves is imputed to us. Jesus gives everlasting life and a restored relationship with God as a gift to everyone who believes in him and turns to him as Savior and Lord. That leads us to:

III. 3:16 [READ]. In this verse, Paul describes the heart of what he calls “**the mystery of godliness**”—and it is all about the person and work of Jesus Christ. This one verse of six lines gives us the context and result of Christ’s mission. There are a couple of different ways we can view the logic and structure of these six lines.

Many commentators see v. 16 as three couplets of two lines each, based on contrasts between “flesh” and “spirit,” then between “angels” and “nations,” and finally between the “world” and “glory.” One commentator says, “**First, Christ incarnate and thus in the form of a servant is seen vindicated at his resurrection [that is Christ being revealed]. Secondly, Christ receives the worship of angels and is preached to the nations of mankind, IOW, he is brought to the knowledge of all rational beings, celestial and terrestrial [that is Christ being proclaimed]. Thirdly, he is accepted both throughout the entire created universe and in the heavenly realm itself [that is Christ being believed on in the world and taken up in glory].**” (Kelly 1960: 92)

We can also look at these six lines like this: Lines 1 and 6 form a couplet framing the whole verse. IOW, Christ’s appearance in the flesh (line 1) reaches its climax in his ascension to heaven (line 6). Lines 2-3 and 4-5 are couplets *not* based on contrast, but build on each other. So, line 2 (Christ’s justification in the spirit) leads to the appearance to angels (line 3). Both of these are in the invisible realm. Line 4 (Christ’s proclamation among the nations) results in belief in the world (line 5). Both of those are in the visible realm.

Regardless of how we specifically analyze this verse, it is clear that it focuses on the person and work of Christ, from his incarnation to his resurrection, ascension, and enthronement. This is the heart of the Christian faith. This verse, like the other verses we have looked at, is telling us that Jesus is unique—he is not like Muhammad, or Buddha, or anyone else. He is “revealed” in the flesh—he is not merely a fleshly creature like everyone else.

Being “vindicated in the Spirit” relates to Christ’s claim that he would prove that he is God come to earth as a man by doing something that no one who is only a man could do, namely, he would rise from the grave. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to who he is and to the truth of Christianity. **Rom 1:4** says that Jesus was “**declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.**” **Rom 8:11** adds that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. In doing so, Jesus was vindicated by the Spirit, who thereby vindicated Jesus’ claim to be God’s Son and humanity’s savior. This was “**seen by angels.**” It is because of the resurrection that Jesus is “**proclaimed among the nations and believed on in the world.**”

Jesus’ ascension—his being “taken up in glory”—forms the completion of the resurrection. By that I mean that Jesus came to earth to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. He came to pay the price for our sins. What is that price? As we said earlier, it is everlasting separation from God, otherwise known as hell. And that is what Jesus experienced and endured on the cross. Jesus came to earth from heaven. In his ascension, he has returned to heaven.

That is why the resurrection and ascension are so important. They are important because they reveal that God did not leave Jesus in the grave or in hell. Instead, the resurrection and ascension show that God *accepted* Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. By rising from the grave, Christ demonstrated that he had triumphed over sin, over Satan, and over death itself. By ascending back to the Father from where he had come, Christ demonstrated that he had been restored to fellowship with the Father.

Since the Bible says that Christ is in us and we are in him, his restoration to the Father demonstrates that we also have been restored to the Father. This is indicated in **Eph 2:5-6** which say **[READ]**. That corresponds to **Col 1:13** which says that God **“rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”** and to **Phil 3:20** which says that now **“our citizenship is in heaven.”** This alone gives us assurance of our salvation. If we are in Christ, in some way we are with him even in heaven now. He will not kick us out.

There is one more crucial fact regarding the ascension of Christ back to the Father. In the Bible, a “priest” essentially has two roles: he represents God to the people, and he represents the people to God. In the OT, the priests continually had to make sacrifices for the people, because, of course, the people continually sinned. When Jesus came, he fulfilled both of these roles. Indeed, he is called our **“great high priest”** in the book of Hebrews. **Heb 10:11-12** tells us something very important about the difference between the OT priesthood and Jesus. It says **[Heb 10:11-12—READ]**. Jesus sat down. That shows that his work of redemption was finished and that the Father had accepted Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf.

If Christ had not risen from the dead and then ascended back to the Father, we could have no assurance of our salvation. In fact, we would not be saved. Now, however, we have full assurance of our salvation; nothing else has to be done, because Christ has sat down—his work of redemption is complete. So if we are truly saved, we cannot lose our salvation, because **Eph 4:30** says, **“You were sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption.”** And Christ who is in us said he will never leave us nor forsake us (**Heb 13:5**). If that’s not good news, I don’t know what is! And it is all because of what Jesus Christ has done. That leads us to:

IV. 6:13-16 [READ]. In **v. 13**, some scholars identify Jesus’ “confession” as his declaration to Pontius Pilate that he was the king of the Jews. However, the words translated **“before Pontius Pilate”** can also be translated as **“in the time of Pontius Pilate.”** If that translation is correct, then Jesus’ “confession” was all that he said and did throughout his entire ministry.

In v. 14, says “you keep the commandment without stain or reproach.” Paul was specifically giving this charge to Timothy, but it obviously applies to all of us. The “commandment” is not specifically defined. It probably is general, encompassing Timothy’s—and our—commitment to Christ, a commitment to proclaim the gospel, and live lives of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, and perseverance until the Lord returns.

“Without stain or reproach” indicates that how we live our lives is a reflection of the gospel we say we believe. What he is telling us is that we are to live our lives so that—just as Pontius Pilate found no fault with Jesus—even our enemies will be able to find no fault with us.

When Paul adds “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he is specifically referring to the Second Coming of Christ. Even Islam admits that Jesus Christ is coming again, to judge and to reign. And look at how Paul describes Christ in **vv. 15-16**. The reference to **“He [who] will bring [it] about at the proper time”** fits the Father. However, it also fits Christ. The context—**v. 14**—is talking about the Second Coming of Christ. The phrase **“King of kings and Lord of lords”** is applied to Christ in **Rev 17:14** and **19:16**. **Matt 28:18** says **“all authority . . . in heaven and on earth”** has been given to Christ. So he clearly is **“King of kings and Lord of lords.”** **Heb 1:3** says that Christ **“upholds all things by the word of his power.”** Consequently, he is the **“only Sovereign.”** He is therefore **“immortal”** and **“dwells in unapproachable light.”** And when it says **“to him be honor and eternal dominion”** that is hearkening back to **Dan 7:14** which is also about Christ—the SOM—and says, **“His dominion is an everlasting dominion.”** Paul is therefore ending his description of Jesus similar to the way he began back in **1:17**.

Who is this Jesus? He is beyond our ability to fully grasp. He is more magnificent than the greatest being we can imagine. And yet . . . and yet . . . he says, **“I call you my friends.”** He loves us; he has compassion on us; he wants us; and he wants the very best for us. If we truly understand this in the depths of our being, it will help us and empower us to live without stain or reproach and to persevere until we finally see him face to face. These four passages in 1 Timothy are telling us:

PROP: There is no one like Jesus.

V. Implications for our lives. If you have not turned to Jesus as your savior and your Lord, do it. His claims about himself, and Paul’s description of who Jesus is and what he has done, are so stupendous that you need to check him out. You can receive him right now. It is as simple as admitting that you have been trying to go your own way your entire life—yet you can’t even meet your own standards, let alone God’s. Stop relying on yourself.

Acknowledge who Jesus is. Ask him to forgive you. He will. Ask him to come into your life as your Lord—IOW, the one who is now in charge of your life. He will. And he will do more than that. He will actually come to live inside of you in the person of the Holy Spirit. He will give you a new heart, a new mind, and will start working in you to make you more like himself. You will be commencing a great new adventure. Let that begin today. And then tell someone what you have done.

If you have already done that, then get real about him. Paul ended by talking about living **“without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** He is coming again, and when he does, everything . . . everything will come into judgment. We all can think of things in our lives we should change. Make a list if you need to. Develop a plan if necessary. But make those changes, and start making them now. He will actively help you, because it says in **Phil 2:12-13 [READ]**.

In the gospel of John 3:20-21 it says this [READ]. What this is saying is that, to the extent that we are doing wrong, we are afraid of the judgment—afraid of having our deeds exposed, as well we should be. But if we are **“practicing the truth,”** IOW, doing right, living as we should be living, we can look *forward* to the judgment, because then how we have lived will be manifested—shouted from the rooftops—that our lives were filled with God and he is the one who worked in us both to will and to do!

One way to help us stay on the right path is this: Try to consciously bring the presence of Jesus to your mind regularly throughout the day. We are all busy most of the time. Yet as you do whatever it is you do, it only takes a split second to think, **“Jesus is right here, right now.”** The more he is consciously in the forefront of our mind, the easier it will be to stay on the right path with him.

The final suggestion I would make is this: If Jesus is truly our Lord, then we should want to please him over anyone else. This can and should affect our relationships with others. Let me give you an example. Some years ago, there was something I wanted to do, that my dear wife didn’t particularly want to do. But then she thought or prayed, **“Lord, I love my husband, but I love you more. And if he wants this so much, I’ll do it because I want to please you by honoring and pleasing the husband you gave me.”** So she did. And that helped me to try to please her more. When we really put Jesus first, it will change us and can make a tremendous difference in our lives and in the lives of others.

CONCL: These four passages in 1 Timothy are telling us that there is no one like Jesus. No one could do what he did, because no one is like him. He is unique in all the universe. Yet we can know him and be connected with him in an intimate, personal way. Let’s get real about him. We will never regret it.