Christ Eternal

1. Introduction

a. Last week Mike shared with us from John's letter on how to discern spirits.

1 John 4:2 *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that* ***Jesus*** *Christ has come in the flesh is from God,* ***3*** *and every spirit that does not confess* ***Jesus*** *is not from God.*

b. John is clear – it's all about Jesus and who he is. Peter, when addressing the crowd on the day of Pentecost also makes it clear who is at the centre of his message.

Acts 2:22-23 ***22*** *"Men of Israel, hear these words:* ***Jesus of Nazareth,*** *a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—* ***23*** ***this Jesus****, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* ***24*** *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*

c. Jesus Himself made it clear that His church would be built on the foundational revelation of His identity.

Matt.16:15-18 ***15*** *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"* ***16*** *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* ***17*** *And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* ***18*** *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build* ***my church****, …*

d. If we are truly **His** church then we are those who believe that a **man** named Jesus, who came from Nazareth, who did miracles and healings, and was crucified and then raised to life, was also the son of God and the Christ – the promised Messiah. It's all about "this Jesus". The promised "Christ" who was both the Son of God and a man named Jesus born of a woman who lived on earth 2000 years ago.

John 20:30-31 ***30*** *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;* ***31*** *but these are written so that* ***you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

e. So how well do we know "this Jesus"? Not just the Jesus of the gospels and the accounts of his 30+ years on earth but the Jesus who exists throughout the pages of our bibles from Genesis to Revelation.

2. Jesus patterned, promised and present

a. Jesus is at the heart of the Scriptures: he is **patterned**, **promised**, and **present** from Genesis onward.

b. **Christ Patterned:** The flood and the ark, the Passover and the Red Sea, the wilderness and the Promised Land, exile and return, war and peace, kingdom and kings, prophets and priests, the temple, its sacrifices, and its rituals, wisdom in death and in life, songs of lament and rejoicing, the lives of faithful sufferers and the blood of righteous martyrs — the Old Testament is extraordinarily Jesus-shaped.

I Cor.10:1-11 *For I want you to know, brothers,[1] that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,* ***2*** *and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,* ***3*** *and all ate the same spiritual food,* ***4*** *and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and* ***the Rock was Christ****…….* ***9*** *We must not put Christ to the test, as*

*some of them did and were destroyed by serpents…. **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

c. To step back from the details is to view pictures, at ever-increasing scale, of the same pattern — the suffering and rising Christ. Paul teaches us the gospel patterns of the Old Testament but also he is at pains (in verses 4 and 9) to point out that Christ was not merely patterned — he also was promised and present to the Old Testament believers.

d. **Christ Promised**: Old Testament saints were not simply pieces of a jigsaw, witnessing, unwittingly, to a gospel pattern of which they were ignorant. They too looked forward to the fulfilment of these patterns. How? Through the promises. This is how Jesus, Paul, and Peter saw it.

***Luke 24:25–27** **25** And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

***Acts 26:22–23** To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: **23** that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."*

***1 Peter 1:10–12** Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and enquired carefully, **11** enquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. **12** It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

e. Each of them characterises the Old Testament shape as proclaiming "Christ's sufferings and glory," yet, at the same time, each of them maintains that this message is what Moses and the prophets themselves "wrote," "said," "prophesied," and "predicted." All along, true faith was messianic faith, centred on Christ himself. He was the one held out and the one trusted by the faithful.

f. **Christ Present**: But more than just patterned and promised, perhaps the most underappreciated facet is that Christ also is present. It's surprising how explicit the New Testament authors are about Jesus's presence in the Old Testament:

i The "I Am" in whom Abraham rejoiced was Jesus

***John 8:56–58** Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."*

ii The Lord who motivated Moses was Christ

***Hebrews 11:26** He (*Moses) *considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward*

iii The Redeemer who brought them out of Egypt was Jesus

***Jude 5** Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those who did not believe.*

iv The Rock in the wilderness was Christ

1 Corinthians 10:4 *and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*

- v The King of Isaiah's temple vision was the Son

John 12:41 *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.*

g. Jesus is not merely patterned and promised in the Old Testament; he is present. This is vital since the essential character of neither God nor faith has changed from the first covenant to the new. God has always worked in the Trinitarian pattern: from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. He did not begin to be triune — the Father did not begin to need a mediator — at the Incarnation. True faith does not merely rest in a divine plan, nor trust detached promises; faith embraces a promising Person.

h. In this series my desire is that we should encounter Jesus. To see Him in the pages of Scripture – in the law and the prophets and the apostles teaching. We are going to look for Him throughout the scriptures, beginning with the Old Testament where He is present in the storyline, promised or prophesied (over 300 times) and patterned or pictured.

3. In the beginning

a. It would be wrong to think that Jesus only appears in the New Testament as some sort of second chance for God's people. Scripture is very clear: Jesus existed as part of the Godhead from the very beginning. The bible clearly teaches that Jesus is eternal. There is never a time in the past when He did not exist; there is never going to be a time in the future when He does not exist.

John 1:1-3,14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ***2*** *He was in the beginning with God.* ***3*** *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made…….* ***14*** *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

b. John opened his gospel with a pretty astounding statement: Jesus was with God in the beginning. In fact, He was and is God, and He is the one through whom all things were made. Paul wrote essentially the same truths in his letter to the Colossians, calling Jesus the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation.

Colossians 1:16 *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him*

c. But these staggering declarations are not just New Testament inventions; the Old Testament implies a tri-unity within God in the act of creation.

Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let* ***us*** *make man in* ***our*** *image, after* ***our*** *likeness.*

a. God the Father was not alone in the beginning. The Trinity is one of the great mysteries of the faith. The doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is One in Three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three Persons share one nature. The three Whos (persons) each share the same What (essence). So God is a unity of essence with a plurality of persons. Each person is different, yet they share a common nature

b. To fully try to explain the Trinity would be to remove the mystery. To quote Johnathan Edwards:

"I am far from pretending to explain the Trinity so as to render it no longer a mystery. I think it to be the highest and deepest of all Divine mysteries still."

c. There is only one God, but Scripture speaks of Him in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. One essence, three persons and personalities. A fellowship of three in a being of one. A perfect, loving community at the heart of all reality. A way to express love within God's own nature. An eternal story before human history ever began. God in His very essence is relational. To gaze on the Trinity is to see the true expression of love.

d. What is also clear from Scripture is that at creation it was Jesus who spoke everything into existence. When we think of the magnificence and complexity of our solar system, of nature, of the human body – He spoke all this into being. Not only that but He sustains it – by His word everything holds together. This is Jesus – the creator and sustainer – bringing forth the will of the Father by releasing the power of the Spirit. All of creation is by Him, through Him and for Him. He owns it all. This is the Jesus that we worship!

e. Jesus is eternal, divine, and has creative power, and the world was made through Him and for Him. In other words, the answer to that question so many human beings have asked—"What is life all about?"—is Jesus. Not a cause, not a principle, not a theory, but a Person. Jesus is present from the very first verse of the Bible.

f. So what we see in the very first verses of the Bible is Jesus – eternal. The Bible begins by establishing the existence of Jesus as God. This is critical to the Christian faith. Many try to reduce Jesus to a great teacher or prophet. However, John and Genesis make it clear Jesus existed before time. So before there was any time or any matter, there was the Word, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

g. Not only that but the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus Christ, was and is God. We worship Jesus Christ as God. We fall down with Thomas before Jesus in John 20:28 and confess with joy and wonder, "My Lord and my God!" To see Jesus is to see God. As we study Jesus in the Scriptures we come to see the essence, the nature, the character of God.

h. Our worship is not based on what Jesus did but on who He is – God. He *is* God, and he has a *relationship* with God. He is God, and he is the image of God, perfectly reflecting all that God is and standing forth from all eternity as the fullness of deity in a distinct Person. John Piper expresses so well why this truth of the divinity of Jesus is so important to our faith.

Since we see in a mirror dimly and we know only in partial ways (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12), we should not be surprised that this remains to us a mystery. But don't throw it away. If Jesus Christ is not God, he could not accomplish your salvation (Hebrews 2:14–15). And his glory would not be sufficient to satisfy our everlasting longing for new discoveries of beauty. If we throw away the deity of Jesus Christ, we throw away our soul and with it all our joy in the age to come.

i. If we didn't know this about Jesus, we might consider Him only to be a great teacher or prophet—a miracle worker empowered by God, but still only a man. But the Bible assures us He is more than a man. He is divine, and worthy of worship.

j. Jesus wasn't just a man sent from God. He was God in the flesh and continues to be "God with us." This means we can pray with the confidence and faith that Jesus has the authority and power to accomplish all of His purposes for our lives.