



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 1 / Issue 7

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

This weeks reading is Psalm 70 (ESV). Titled, *O Lord, Do Not Delay*, To the Choirmaster. Of David. For the memorial offering.

*Make haste, O God, to deliver me!
O LORD, make haste to help me!
2 Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life! Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt!
3 Let them turn back because of their shame who say, "Aha, Aha!" 4 May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!" 5 But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer. O Lord do not delay!*

This short Psalm is an individual lament, an urgent prayer for rescue from gloating enemies.



The Watchman's Notes
Offering biblical messages, perspectives and views on
Biblical & moral issues and current events.
A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor – Bible Teacher

"For thus the Lord said to me: Go, set a watchman; let him announce what he sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]
April 29, 2020

Dear friends:

Who is Jesus to You? *To some people, Jesus is a religious icon; to others, He is a prophet, a good teacher, the first socialist; and to others He is the first "hippy" chanting peace and love. In our postmodern/secular culture – today, Jesus is whoever we want Him to be!!*

There are at least 5 or 6 major New Testament Scripture passages in the Bible [among hundreds] that speak clearly to

the Greatness and to the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Please read these: Romans 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:1-5; 14:18; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-8; Matthew 16:13-16. *It's a good start to understand who Christ really is!*

"What do You think about the Christ?" is the title of this Issue. And I am going to summarize *"My personal reasons"* why I believe and know Jesus is God.

"What do you think about the Christ?"

(Read Matthew 22:41-46)

A phrase often used by Jesus to introduce a question designed to test someone was, *"What do you think...?"* It was used earlier by the Pharisees when they questioned Jesus in (**Matthew 22:17**): *"Tell us what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"* "What do you think?" is used by Jesus again in: (**Matthew 17:25; 18:12; 21:28 (NIV)**). Jesus was put to the test many times by all the *political and religious groups of His day (The Pharisees,*

Herodians, Sadducees, Scribes and the Sanhedrin (Jewish Ruling Party).

However, Jesus also had a test question for them. (Matthew 22:41-42) *“What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son, is he?” “They said to him, the Son of David.”* The phrase, “Son of David,” was the most common Messianic title for Christ in usage at that time - it meant, *the Anointed One*. The Hebrew word *Yeshua [Jesus]* means *“The Lord Is Salvation.”*

The question I have for you today is: What do YOU think about Jesus, the Christ?

I am a Christian because of Jesus Christ! I am not a Christian because of the Church or my family or my birth. The Church doesn't save anyone, and the Bible doesn't save anyone, and being born into the right family doesn't save anyone – Jesus Christ saves you and me! *By faith, I do believe that Jesus is not only God in the flesh sent from heaven, but He is the Savior of the world – and He is the answer!* You say, the answer to what questions? The key questions to life are:

Is there a God? - Who is God? -
What is truth? - What's the purpose
of life? - Why am I here?

Jesus is the answer to ALL these questions that really matter – in a way that goes far deeper than you can possibly hope or imagine. I believe what the Christian Faith teaches about Jesus is intellectually, morally, emotionally & spiritually credible. So, I ask you - *What does Jesus Christ mean to you? What do you think about the Christ? Is Jesus Really God? Most people, don't really know what they believe or who to believe anymore.*

The French philosopher and scientist [physicist], Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), once said: *“Jesus is the center of all - the object of all: whoever knows not him,*

knows nothing aright [correctly], either of the world or of himself...In him {Christ} is all our happiness, our virtue, our life, our light, and our hope. “Whoever knows him [Jesus] knows the reason for everything.” In other words, real knowledge is found when we know Christ. We know in our experience and in our spirit and we know also in our mind.

“In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Now, granted, not everyone believes what we believe. There are Agnostics [those who are not sure what they believe or if they believe in God] and Atheists [those who don't believe in Jesus or in any God]. There are many in the Church, *church goers*, who don't believe or know for sure that Jesus is truly God in the flesh.

Many today have bought into a world philosophy or secular worldview! And this is one of the reasons for the mess we are in today in this world! If one listens to the voices in the world today – *God is not given much mention, value or thought.*

I can give you answers to questions of the Christian faith: *why I believe in God, Creation, Can you trust the Bible, the Church, Sin, Heaven, Hell, the Virgin Birth, the Crucifixion, Resurrection, etc.* – but all of these questions “lead only” to the one ultimate answer. And that is: I believe in these things... because of Jesus Christ.

I will never forget an incident that happened to Sue and I in the early days of our marriage. Sue and I had just moved to the Milwaukee, WI area, and I was in the Insurance Sales business [Post-FBI]. We had two children by this time in 1974. We were *“Cultural Christians”* at the time – that is, we attended church and believed in God, but had no personal relationship with

God in Christ. *We were playing Church!* We were attending a nice Protestant Church in a Milwaukee suburb and ended up in the Pastor's Membership Class. This was a church filled with successful people, business people – a wonderful place for me to make some contacts for insurance.

At our first evening membership class session, Sue asked a rather *harmless question*, so I thought. She asked the Pastor: “What does this church believe about Jesus Christ?” *In other words, Who Is Jesus to You?* I gave her one of those *“husband looks...like why in the world would you ask that question in a Christian church?”* The Minister's reply was, *“Well, we accept a number of different views. Some here believe Jesus is a good teacher, a good moral man, a model to follow, a prophet of God, a master teacher of moral teachings. And some believe He is God in the flesh – the God-man.” We accept various views!*

Now, I am thinking, *“Sounds good to me!”* Let's move on to the next question. I felt I could live with any one of those views. After all I was a free thinker, one who practiced toleration of all faiths and views [*this is way before political correctness folks*]. Besides, what does one's view of Jesus have to do with being a church member? *I sensed Sue was not a happy camper* – we were married for 8 years by then so I could read Sue like a book. She did not like the Pastor's answer. As we left the church, while we were walking to our car – Sue blurted out, *“Well, we're not joining this church – we're not coming back!”* “What? – Why not?” I asked. She replied, *“because of what the minister said about Jesus – they don't believe or teach that Jesus is God.”* Being the sensitive guy that I was at the time – I responded, *“Wadda you mean?”* *“So, what! Who cares?”* *“Look, I am not about to make a*

career of church shopping and attending membership classes. Either we join this church or forget it!" Well, we didn't join that church. And Sue did not forget it! We never went back!

One thing I failed to mention – Sue had been attending a Women's Bible Study at our neighbor's house next door for several weeks up to that time. She was learning all about Jesus in that small group – enough to change her heart and mind. That was the beginning or a part of the beginning of our search for the true Jesus – the truth about who Jesus is and what He claimed. Finding the TRUTH about Jesus changed our life and direction.

So, who is Jesus? To some, He is a religious icon; to others, He is a prophet, a good teacher, the first socialist; and to others He is the first "hippy" chanting peace and love. In our postmodern/secular culture – today, Jesus is whoever we want Him to be!! I don't have enough space to explain in detail, "Who Jesus is" – or all that He is – other than He is the God-Man, Savior Redeemer, Messiah or the Anointed One of God. He is the ONLY way to God the Father in Heaven!

Unlike every other religion, Christianity makes the claim about its founder that is quite unique. As Christians - we claim that Jesus is God in the flesh, *not that He simply points us to God or gives us the road map to get there. He is God in the flesh, the God who came down from Heaven to our world - in order to save us from our sin.*

Why does Jesus mean more to me than everything and everyone else? Why was St. Paul the Apostle totally sold out to Jesus? Why am I totally sold out to Jesus 100%?

In my email I provided you with some Bible passages describing who Jesus is.

Now, let me summarize "My personal reasons" why I believe Jesus is God:

- a. Jesus IS God because He is the reason for my life.

What is the void [the vacuum] in people's lives today? What is the nagging, gnawing sense of emptiness that so many people have today? Answer: It is the sense that there has to be something more than this life. Who hasn't wondered at some time about life – *is this all there is?*

Have you ever felt empty, without purpose? Sure, you have. I have. In fact, it was at that specific time of feeling totally empty, without purpose - that I came to believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. In 1975 - My wife, Sue, came to know the Lord Jesus Christ first, as her Savior & Lord by faith, and within 30 days I did as well. She led me to the Lord. And suddenly, I had purpose & meaning in life! Jesus Christ brought that meaning & purpose.

"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus." (Blaise Pascal – ca 1670)

The message of historic Christianity is that the God-shaped vacuum can only be filled with the God-shaped person of Jesus Christ. I have a purpose in life. And so, do you. Your life matters. *We have significance because of Christ. Our significance and purpose come from Christ our God.*

- b. Jesus IS God because He is the Source of my forgiveness.

Most people, *if they are honest*, will acknowledge that they are sinners. Not all will admit that, but many will – *and in fact, you cannot enter Heaven and be in the presence of a Holy God - if you don't believe you are a sinner in need of*

forgiveness! (Chew on that truth for a moment!)

If we are sinners then, who is going to pay for our sin – who is going to save us from our sins? Or forgive us of our sins? No religious founder or prophet can forgive you of your sins. Only God can do that! Jesus has to be God – as a result, His death on the Cross was sufficient to pay the infinite penalty required for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). The Bible says that we can be saved and forgiven of our sins, *if we ...repent of our sins, change our direction in life, and believe in Jesus, and the work He did on the Cross.*

Jesus (God in the flesh) came to save us from the Hell of our sins, the Hell we choose to go to ourselves – God doesn't send people to Hell – we send ourselves. When we shake our fist at God and do not ask for forgiveness – and reject Him because we want to have it our way – and infer we don't need God – *that we can do it our way – we send ourselves to Hell!*

I am not claiming that I no longer sin, nor that knowing Christ has removed from me all traces of sin [yet!]. As a Christian, I am still a sinner – but I am saved by the grace of God and my sins have been forgiven; past present, and future. WHY? Because Jesus IS God and He IS the SOURCE of my forgiveness. *Are you starting to get it?*

- c. Jesus IS God because HE is my freedom.

FREEDOM is the result of forgiveness. I have freedom in Christ – from fear, from the consequences of sin, from the Devil, from myself, from death, and from the world and the tyranny of society. We are all desperate for freedom – yet it seems like our culture and government and our leaders are taking our freedoms and

God-given rights away from us – especially our religious freedom.

The Bible's contention is that we are free through Jesus Christ. The human Will does not obtain grace by freedom – but obtains freedom by the grace of God. It is only by knowing the truth that we can be set free. The Bible's claim is that the Truth is found in a person – the God-man, Jesus Christ. *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father in heaven except through me."* (John 14:6)

d. Jesus Christ IS God because He is my Hope for the future!

As a Christ follower and true Believer – I believe I am not only free from the power and penalty of sin. But one day, I will be free from the presence of sin, both internally and externally. Because Jesus is my Hope!

What is your Hope my friends? Or are you hopeless? – without any hope? Most of the world is without hope. Hope is found in Christ – not in this earthly life, not in your career, religion, or politics or government policies or mandates. *In other words, Christ is our God and our Hope!*

e. Jesus IS God because He is my proof that God both exists and is Good.

Jesus is the evidence that God does exist and that He is love. In (Romans 8:31-35) – the Apostle Paul says, *"nothing can separate us from the love of Christ."* Listen my friends, I want a "personal God" who loves ME in a way that goes beyond words. I want a God who fills me with a sort of reassuring and magical light. I want a God who is the very expression of love so perfect that to feel all of it at once would be to lose yourself for ever in a place of sublime happiness.

You won't find that "kind of God" in any other "Holy Book" or in any other Religion! However, that is the God of the Bible! He is Love. That describes Jesus Christ perfectly! And those who reject a Christ they do not know, because they think they are too smart, too knowledgeable and too clever – are rejecting the very source and meaning of all true knowledge and intelligence.

f. Last, but not least, Jesus IS God because He [Christ] is my identity.

We live in a culture and in a time that is obsessed with identity. What is identity? *"It is a collective set of characteristics by which a person is definitively recognizable or known."* Whether that identity is racial, ethnic, political, sexual or lifestyle choice – they are all merely an attempt to answer the question, "Who Am I?" And today, more than ever, many are confused as to who they are!

For the true Christian, the answer is: My identity is found in who I am in Christ. As St. Paul told the Colossian Christians in (Col. 3:3), *"For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*

That's because, as Paul tells us in (2 Cor. 5:16-17), *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come."* In other words, Believers have a common spiritual life with God the Father and God the Son - and the world cannot understand the full import of the believer's new life – we are no longer slaves to sin – but we are reconciled to God.

Being in Christ is my Identity - and that means - I am at least two things:

- I am a child of God and
- I am a Saint [set apart to God] - though I will remain sinful until my physical death – I am no

longer a Sinner – I am a Saint (Holy in Christ)!

God identifies us by what He has made of us – and what He calls us! Not by what we do or how we act or think! That's who I am! That's my identity! Jesus Christ IS my everything!

The great test of your soul's health is, "What You think of Christ?" Christ claimed He was YHWH (Yahweh), the Hebrew name for God, that He was Deity [not just "a god" or a prophet/teacher] – but the One True God. The Deity of Christ is biblical and real! If Jesus is Your God – if He sits enthroned in your heart, if you would name His Name above all other names and sing His praise – *then it is well with your soul*. If Christ is GOD to you, you will be with Him in the end and for eternity!" Amen!

Pastor Vitel's message this week is very timely and thought provoking, *"Who is Jesus to You?"*

With the pandemic affecting the world we are constantly being bombarded with news stories and op ed pieces challenging our beliefs and causing us to make decisions based upon our emotions, fueled by the political rhetoric being populated through the media. Many Christians are falling prey to committing acts of civil disobedience fueled by political preferences and not on the Word of God. The pandemic has taken over the news and depending on what side of the political fence you fall that's where your allegiances lie. As Christians why is our allegiance so easily moved from God to man? Do we stop and think of our testimony let alone our saviours when we like hundreds of Pennsylvania residents, joined by Republican lawmakers, protested a stay-at-home order outside the state Capitol in Harrisburg this month. The protesters

declared messages like, “Jesus Is My Vaccine” and demanded a reopening of the local economy amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Granted, the article does not identify the “hundreds” as Christians but I would believe that many were because of the reference to Jesus. They are using Jesus as the justification for civil disobedience. So instead of submitting to the guidelines established by the White House, they are using Jesus as their sounding board.

In Psalm 21 the first three verses provide the way the Christian should act before the world as a testimony to God. The first three verses sum up our response as Christians toward government.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. ² Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart. ³ To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

As Christians we should be on our knees not on our feet. This is not an issue of religious freedom being prohibited that demands a voice. It's government policy concerning the well being of a nation. Granted sometimes government contradicts itself in its own mandates but we, as Christians, need to give everything over to God.

Romans 13 verses 1-5 state, *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on*

the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Fear has gripped our nation. The loss of jobs, and the collapse of the stock market has caused us to throw caution to the wind. We are not used to going without, as witnessed by the cars lined up at the food pantries, a Cadillac XT5, a BMW X5, an Audi Q7, and Lincoln Aviators.

We are in the midst of a cataclysmic event, the pandemic has and continues to wreak havoc on the global economy that may be described as apocalyptic. As a people we have become humbled and we have been brought to our knees. Could this be our best hope for a spiritual revival?

“Who is Jesus to You?” Are you willing to tell others?





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss:

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19. The family of Mary Grace Reyes.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs:

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor and Sue Vitel

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:

Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family

✓ Continuing Prayers for:

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families

✓ UPDATES

Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman. Erwin has put his condo up for sale and has moved into Bella Terra Nursing Home to be with Elizabeth.

Brian has communicated with Daniel Ruehlman and the door is still open and has made plans to talk in person as soon as the shelter-in-place restrictions are eased.

Anne Benliro - My Co-worker's (Alicia) husband--Oscar, is fighting for his life right now at the Condell ICU. He is a nurse. He was infected through his patients that have Covid19. Oscar is the only main bread winner of their family (+2 teen kids).

Mylin Lardizabal - My husband, Errol, and I are both nurses and Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month. We were told that we will be pulled to other areas as needed. Please pray for us that we will stay healthy to take care of others. Our biggest concern is not getting our girls and our friends sick and that includes our church family.

Liza Mitchell in her role as a health care worker at Vi Independent and Assisted Living Facility she has responsibility over those with Covid 19 .

Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect.

Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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