

Acts #33
The Christ Whom Paul Preached
Acts 20:1-38

In this chapter we find several references to Paul's preaching, but verses 20-21 give us the summary, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

What did Paul really preach that caused so much controversy among the religious leaders of his day? What was the context of his message that caused so much anger among the Jews? Tonight, we are going to look at *The Christ Whom Paul Preached*.

First, of all, Paul preached a Christ preexistent. In Colossians 1:15-17 He says that Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers – all things were created by him, and for him; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." That is the same thing John says in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." **Our minds cannot conceive of endlessness, or everlastingness, and eternity, because we can only think in terms of time. To man, everything is either yesterday, today, or tomorrow. Every verb that we use has tense. We cannot speak without it. We cannot think in terms of forever. It is something beyond our capability. We are limited in our finite mind. We cannot conceive of anything immaterial that does not have a body. Everything we think of has to have form and substance.**

But Christ "is before all things." **He was preexistent, before time, matter, and space was created.** Forever and forever in the eternity of the ages, Jesus was. Before the lights of a billion suns were set aflame and before the planets were flung into orbit, Jesus was. **Paul preached a preexistent Christ.** He "is before all things."

Not only did Paul preach that Christ is preexistent, but that He is the great God incarnate, that is, God in the flesh. In Philippians 2:6-7 Paul says, "(Christ) who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." The Greek word "form" here is the word "morphē" (mor-fay). Therefore, Paul tells us in Colossians 1:15 that Christ "is the image of the invisible God..."

The beauty and holiness of Jesus Christ are without compare. When Jesus walks, God is walking. When Jesus talks, God is talking. **When Jesus is teaching, God is teaching.** When Jesus sets an example before us, it is God's example. No man has ever begun to approach the glory of the intellectual life and holy beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Thinking will never transcend Him; philosophy will never outrun Him.** Genius will never supplant Him.

When Socrates gropes for the wall like a blind man, Jesus is walking in the light of the glory of the revelation of God. When Plato guesses, Jesus affirms. When Aristotle reasons, Jesus reveals. When the voice of humanity dies as the result of sin, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." When men grope in the darkness of fallen humanity, Jesus says, "Come, follow me, I am the light of the world."

We cannot expose Jesus too much. We cannot magnify Him too greatly. We cannot speak of Him too often or too extravagantly. **Why?** Because He is the great God Almighty!

Paul also preached Him as the crucified Christ. In Philippians 2:8 he says, "And, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Paul would write in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that God "hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Paul says in Romans 5:8, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." **He bore in His own body our sins on the cross.** This is the gospel Paul preached - Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me.

We cannot help but be silent before the cross. Somehow the thud of the hammer awes us. The cries from the cross awaken us. **The violent streams of vicious hatred that poured out from His enemies who walked up and down before His cross reveal to us the hellish depths of depravity of humanity.** The darkness terrifies us. There is a mystery about the cross that overwhelms us. **Why?** Because it was there that He opened for us a fountain of cleansing and blessings, that a sinner such as I could be saved and made a saint in the family of the living God of glory.

Paul preached that Christ was the living Lord who was victorious over death, hell, and the grave. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Paul said in Romans 10:9, "...if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved." Paul preached in Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were

enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life."

Listen to me tonight, if Jesus Christ is still in the tomb, we are still in our sins. It is the resurrection of our Lord that declares our justification in the sight of God. No crucifix presents our living Lord. **He is not on the cross.** He was raised from the dead. The entire citizenry of Jerusalem knew He was dead. The disciples said, "He is dead." The weeping women said, "He is dead." **They saw Him die; they buried Him in a tomb.** Helmeted soldiers paced back and forth before the tomb to see to it that no one broke in and stole the body away. But the Lord God came down and broke the seal, He blinded and paralyzed the Roman guard, and the angel rolled the stone away. **In contempt, the angel sat upon it as though a stone and a grave could keep in death the Lord of life.** He rose from the dead the third day.

That is the gospel. Jesus was crucified for our sins, He was delivered for our offenses, but He was raised from the dead by the power of God. **That is the gospel that Paul preached.**

Paul also preached Christ as the exalted Christ. Listen to Paul as he says in Philippians 2:9-11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." According to the working of His mighty power, God wrought salvation in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, set Him at His own right hand, for above all principalities, powers, might, and dominion, and gave Him a name that is above every name that is named in this world and also in the world that is to come.

When I read about the exaltation and worship of our Lord Jesus in heaven, I find that there is not a more moving and beautiful scene in literature than Revelation 5. There we see that glorious being, the Lord God, with the book of Redemption sealed in His hand. Heaven and earth is searched to find someone who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof, but there is not a man in heaven, nor one in earth, nor is there one in the netherworld who is able to open the Book and to look on it. **John weeps because there is no one who is able, no one who is worthy.** One of the elders said, "Do not cry. Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He prevails, and He is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof." **John turns and sees in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts a lamb as it had been slain.** Revelation 5:3-11 tells us that He takes the book from Him who sits on the throne, and when He takes the book, the cherubim and the twenty-four elders all bow down and sing a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, because you have redeemed us to God

by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and about the ten thousand times ten thousand." Revelation 5:12-14 says that thousands upon thousands of angels cry with a loud voice, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, head I saying, Blessings, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." **That is our exalted Lord, the Christ whom Paul preached.**

The author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." **The session of our Lord at the right hand of the Majesty on high - that is the Christ Paul preached.**

But the story is not over, because Paul not only preached a preexistent Christ, the creator Christ, the incarnate Christ, the crucified Christ, the risen Christ, the exalted Christ, but he also preached a Christ who is coming again. There is a great finale and consummation to this wonderful thing that God has wrought for us in Christ Jesus. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Paul closed his life with that same promise in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

That includes you, me, and all of God's children who life up their faces beyond the tears that we know in this life, and beyond death. All of us life up our faces, looking forward to the great appearing of the Lord Jesus. The consummation of our lives and the end of our existence is not to be fruit for the worms, to be corruption in the grave, but God has purposed some better thing for

us. We are to be redeemed saints living in His glory, worshipping Him, praising Him forever and ever. Hallelujah!

That is the gospel that Paul preached, the Christ whom he named. What a wonderful message, what a comfort and a glory for us tonight, who have found refuge in that same blessed, living, and coming Lord!

Do you know Him?