

Creation, Cosmology, and the Cross

By Jay Wegter

We are worshippers and reflectors of God by design. But, only the Word of God can accurately diagnose us, telling us how misaligned we are to our creational identity as worshippers. The Son of God was given to recalibrate us back to God. There can be no relationship to God without being united to Christ. Christ Jesus is everything we are not. He has perfect dominion over creation, perfect righteousness, perfect nearness to God, perfect obedience, and He was a perfect disciple. We must be able to explain to ourselves and others how by our union with Him, we participate in His fullness and enjoy Him as our covenant Head and Representative.

He is the prototypical heavenly man—we by faith, behold in Scripture His glorified state in order to comprehend the destiny of redeemed humanity. “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 Jn 3:2).

All created things have a design, a goal, and a function (a *telos*). Divine design determines how each aspect of creation glorifies God. How does a hummingbird glorify God is a very basic question? Everything in God’s creation has a particular nature, whether it’s a frog, a meteorite, or a zebra. It’s mentally invigorating to ask how each of the following creatures is uniquely designed to glorify God. Here’s a partial list: *giraffe, turtle, firefly, beaver, rhino, elephant, tiger, porpoise, and salamander*. And then, once you are on a roll, we pop the question, how does a human being glorify God? Again, glorifying God is only possible if we know God through Christ. We cannot reflect the One whom we do not know (alienated from Him)—there must be reconciliation with God in Christ. We glorify God by abiding in Christ, and through our Savior we are able to love God and neighbor, and we are enabled to worship, commune, enjoy and obey the Lord—this is all through Christ. EX. I asked some UCSD doctoral candidates what a human being was. All they could say was, “it depends who you ask.”

Jesus spoke about hell more any other New Testament speaker. We naturally think about hell as a place for very bad people (not public servants, pop singers, favorite actors, artists, etc.). But, perdition is the destiny of those who

have rejected their created purpose to live as the image of God. Hell is a place of divine justice in which sin reaps its eternal consequences (in our moral universe). Our created purpose as worshippers is only recovered through Christ. So how is it that in Christ we become properly aligned to God? Answer: we must be severed from the rotten root of Adam in order to be united to the righteous root of Christ. This can only take place by regeneration which is why Jesus said, “you must be born again” (Jn 3:7; Titus 3:3-5). Your nature by birth is united to the rotten root of Adam (original sin), and apart from the diagnosis provided by God’s Word, you will imagine yourself to be a decent person, not requiring a radical change to your nature. In fact, a lifestyle of justifying our sin is one of the manifestations of our fallen human condition (Lu 16:15).

Carl Sagan was the ‘poster child’ for naturalism. He made an ethical statement about the universe: that the endless beauty, variety, and order in the cosmos ought to humble us. That’s an interesting statement coming from an atheist. There is truth in what he is saying, but he had no intention of glorifying the Creator or acknowledging His existence. We have a saying in Christian apologetics: *You cannot not worship*. This is because our creational identity is that of a worshipper (it’s inescapable, even in eternal perdition). Sagan was thrilled by his study of the cosmos and literally ‘worshipped’ its beauty. But, his conclusion was that due to the immensity of the cosmos, we have no importance whatsoever; as a species we are absolutely insignificant. How opposite this is of our creational identity of being formed in the image and likeness of God.

While taking a prayer walk around Mesa College this week, I noticed that one professor had pasted up on the office windows about 40 posters from Indie/garage bands. Every band’s title utilized something meant to be offensive: anti-social behavior, chaos, sexual perversion, death, and disease. It was clear that these titles were meant to communicate an *absurdity of life* perspective—*life is but a cruel joke, so find your own meaning*—and ‘liberty’ is found in denying that there is a sacred order in creation that is binding. How ironic, that this movement to cast off all restraint is actually the devil’s formula for bondage, death, hell. Rejection of biblical cosmology is how the West has arrived at its current point of moral insanity in which we are promised that we can change our gender through medical technology (hormones and surgery). These musicians chose profane names for themselves in order to deny God’s sacred order. Why? To give full vent to their passions and impulses. Moses’ brother, Aaron found out

the hard way that golden calves do not require holiness.

According to Romans chapter one, the cosmos is filled with glory-pointers. Darwin's creation myth (evolution) was an attempt to overturn this truth. For he stated *that things in the creation really looked designed, but they are not*. Do you remember our definition of cosmology? It deals with the goal and design of both physical order and sacred order (*telos*). The natural man is a truth-suppressor; he profanes God's testimony given in creation. This suppression of God's truth is formalized in university education. Students are told, "nothing outside of you defines you." "You are not designed, you have no Maker, thus, you can create your own meaning." That is a flat-out recitation of the Edenic lie: you shall like God (have His knowledge, role) (**Gen 3:5**).

Because this is a moral universe, moral choices have monumental consequences. And, the reason this is a moral universe is because its Creator, Upholder, and Ruler is a holy and just Judge. Impenitent persons desacralize the creation by denying that it is an instrument of revelation of God's attributes. But, Scripture is clear, the creation is a teaching device: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (**Ps 19:1-2**).

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (**Rom 1:18-20**).

Everything in creation has a *telos*, whether a gnat, a nebula, or a honeybee. In Edwards magnum opus sermon, "The end for which all creation exists," he convincingly makes the point that the entrance of sin and rebellion did not thwart or derail God's glory purpose for creation. And though the creation is currently under the bondage of decay and the adamic curse, nevertheless the creation is a theater or stage upon which God is carrying out the drama of redemption.

There are two words in Romans 9 which are very weighty: 'same' and 'lump.' From the *same lump* of defiled clay, God makes vessels of honor and vessels of wrath (**Rom 9:21**). The creation is but 'clay'—God has the right of a Potter over the clay. And God makes these two kinds of vessels without destroying human freedom (you'll notice I did not say, 'without destroying human

ability.’ The fall wrecked human ability but did not destroy human responsibility). The drama of divine redemption is a golden chain of sovereign grace. “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Rom 8:28-30).

My friends, the drama of redemption is not God trying to make the best of a bad situation. No, redemption in Christ is God glorifying His grace through the gospel (**Eph 1:6ff.**). This is God’s plan; it is His purpose of the ages. “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him” (Eph 3:8-12). God’s redemptive plot will reveal, and ultimately exhibit His divine perfections so that they are made sensible to the rational universe (to the holy angels). We have a story to tell to the nations. God is putting His glory on display by reconciling sinners to Himself through His Son.

The application of our message this evening is about finding your story in God’s story. But, God’s story does not belong in some upper story ethereal category, His story encompasses the cosmos and its origin, history, and destiny. Biblical cosmology anchors God’s redemptive plot to the creation and to time-space history. This physical creation is the stage for God’s glory story. If you do away with biblical cosmology, you are left with Christianity as an upper story spiritual philosophy severed from the cosmos itself. This is how the Gnostics thought; they couldn’t cope with Jesus’ physicality, His real human nature. But, what does the Bible say? If sinners are to be redeemed, then Christ Jesus, our Representative must suffer in a real human nature (**Phil 2:5-11**). And He must obey on our behalf in a real human nature. And, if the creation was cursed because of the rebellion of a real man, Adam, then the creation can only be restored and delivered from its curse by the obedience of a real man, the Lord

Jesus Christ. Sinners can only become right with God and ultimately rule with Christ if they are severed from the rotten stock of Adam and joined to the righteous root of Christ. That is the theme of tonight's talk/discussion and talk; our union with Christ.

Living out our blessed Identification Truths in Christ

Why is it so valuable to think upon Christ from the vantage point of our union with Him? It is because the Father contemplates believers *in the Son*. He regards us according to our being *in union* with Christ. This perspective of union is truly remarkable. For, we see the beauty of Christ most clearly through the riches the believer possesses by virtue of being in union with Him. The book of Ephesians refers to these riches as 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (**Eph 1:3**). This abundance of spiritual wealth is all because of our position in Christ. But, consider that to dwell upon our union with Christ is quite counterintuitive. Why? Because we tend to contemplate ourselves in ourselves, and not in Another. Thus, to regularly think upon Christ from the vantage point of our union with Him is a spiritual discipline, and an extremely fruitful one.

The *staging area*, or *sphere* for God's grace to be poured into our life was the guilt exchange Christ accomplished by His sacrificial work (Col 2:8-15). The penal substitution accomplished at Calvary was a true guilt exchange; a kind of divine courtroom in which perfect justice under God was carried out. In that exchange, Christ accomplished His vicarious work in our human nature (**1 Pet 2:24; 3:18**). He took on our humanity that His people might have life in Him, by organic, ongoing eternal union with Him. The reality of this shared life in Christ is that believers are co-heirs, co-sons, by means of adoption and union with Christ.

This spiritual discipline of meditating on our union with Christ is essential if we are to really come to terms with how fully our Savior has dealt with our alienation due to sin. Most Christians have not delved into these glorious truths of mystical union with Christ, but they ought to, for it is a vein of gold that keeps yielding its wealth. How does Christ make our guilt His, and our death His? How does He make His righteousness ours, His life ours? How does he make His death, our death to sin? How does His burial become the termination of our old life? How does His resurrection give us newness of life and the guarantee of future resurrection? The answer is by divine decree and covenant made in eternity past.

Before the creation of the cosmos there was an eternal covenant of

redemption formed between the members of the Trinity. The Son of God agreed to the most humbling arrangement imaginable. He would enter our time-space existence as a mortal man (**Is 53:10-12; Jn 17:1-5; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 10:9-10, 14**). This covenant of redemption guaranteed that His incarnation, obedience, death and resurrection would be the source of His people's salvation, blessedness and glory. And, for His work, His Father would give Him an innumerable people whom He would represent as their Kinsmen Redeemer and High Priest. "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (**Heb 7:26-27**). Thus, there is an inseparable connection between the two greatest gifts ever given: Christ was given for sinners, and elect sinners were given to Christ.

This spiritual discipline of meditating upon our union with Christ is not solely for our comfort or theological sophistication. Meditating on union with Christ is a blessed way to fellowship with Him and enjoy His intimacy. For, the word 'communion' means commonality—something which is shared in common. Christ takes delight when His people reckon and celebrate their shared life with Him (**1 Jn 1:1-4**). For, Christ is our life (**Col 3:4**). How glorious! Though the gospel truth of possessing God's favor establishes our fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I meet many Christians who still wrestle with doubt about having God's full acceptance. They have never come to terms with the fact that by union with Christ believers have, by gracious donation, God's full favor (**Eph 1:3-14**).

We never outgrow this blessed exchange that Christ bore the guilt of our sin that we might have His righteousness credited to us (2 Cor 5:21). How frequently we need to dwell upon the gracious fact that this exchange of guilt and righteousness is the basis of our communing with Him. Puritan John Owen states it very clearly in his book *Communion with God*. "When you bring your sin to Christ and go to Him for righteousness, you are communing with God." So, when we meditate on our position in Christ, we are enjoying comfort and hope in the fact that in Christ we possess an immutable status of right-standing before God. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (**Rom 15:13**).

According to John 6:32-35, 48-58, Christ is the 'food' that sustains our needy souls. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will

not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (Jn 6:35). And, in **Colossians 3:2-3** our lives are said to be ‘hidden in Christ’ but will be revealed publicly when He is revealed. In fact, in all that Christ does publicly from now, He will be accompanied by His bride at His side. “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col 3:4). How indebted we are to the apostle Paul for these identification truths, for he truly is the apostle of the believer’s mystical union with Christ. “...God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). And, when speaking of our union with Christ, we often see the following prepositional phrases repeated in the Pauline epistles: *in Him, in Whom, in Christ, with Christ*. But, where would we go in the Old Covenant to find this radical identification with Christ? Or, where in the synoptic Gospels? No, we cannot find an abundance of definitive information about our union with Christ except in the epistles of Paul.

When we meditate on our union with Christ, we are also focusing upon the sufficiency of His finished work. So much of the book of Hebrews is devoted to what Christ has done in our human nature (see **Hebrews chapters 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13**). What Christ has done in our human nature, He has done for our human nature, even accomplishing what the future state of our human nature will be. For, the divine plan is that we shall be conformed to Christ’s moral perfection that He might be ‘the firstborn among many brethren’ (Rom 8:28-30).

British divine Isaac Ambrose has said that the church desperately needs to see Christ exhibited to them in His glorified state. There is a crucial reason for this. When by faith we behold Christ’s glorified human nature, there is no greater tonic for our flagging hearts so often harassed by the remnants of indwelling sin. When the glorified Christ is exhibited to our affections and understanding, the Holy Spirit floods our hearts with assurance and hope. The reason why is that when by faith we behold Christ’s glorified human nature, we are witnessing the destiny of our own redeemed human nature. That is the gospel promise: ‘when we see Him we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is’ (1 Jn 3:2). When Christ is displayed in His glorified human nature to the eye of faith, the saints take fresh hope that *as Christ is* in His glorified state, *we will become*. This is why according to **2 Corinthians 3:18**, that in beholding the glory of the Lord we are incrementally conformed to His image.

Now, we know what dulls our spiritual senses: it is that we are so fixated

on our own defects that we give very little attention to focusing upon our union with Christ. We are so frequently distracted, for a little voice rises up inside of us many hours of the day and says, “you know, you are not what you ought to be.” God’s answer to this is Himself, for at the heart of the universe is infinite love; redeeming, justifying love. And the marvelous thing about this infinite love is that it has the power to remove every barrier, and every disqualification to its reception. “...and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph 5:2).

God has called you to find ‘your story’ in ‘His story’. And here is God’s story: the two greatest gifts ever given in time and eternity are these: God’s gift of Christ to sinners, and God’s gift of the elect (the church) to Christ. The first gift is the giving of the Son, the second is the giving to the Son. The giving of these two gifts is at the heart of God’s glory story, or God’s plot. Every true believer, every saved man or woman has been drawn by God into His plot, His story. This is a matter of sovereign grace, for no one will come to the Father unless he or she is drawn by the Father (**Mt 11:25-27; Jn 6:44**). Being brought into God’s story or plot is all of grace; to have seen the glory of God in the face of Christ (**2 Cor 4:6**).

Now, the giving of these two gifts: Christ for sinners, and the church to Christ, is the most clear revelation of who God is. For, in the giving of these gifts, and in the gifts themselves, we see God’s perfections and attributes revealed. The theologizer (the person who proclaims and teaches the gospel) knows this, and therefore commits him or herself to the great privilege of explaining how these gifts glorify God the Giver, and how these two gifts create a forever, immutable family—known as the ‘sons of God’ (**Rom 8:21-23**).

What does it mean to live in light of these two gifts; to have one’s life controlled by these two gifts? It means that you, having been brought into God’s plot, will find your story in God’s story. You will find your ultimate purpose and identity in God’s story. What you live for will be based firmly upon God’s redemptive plot—His story (**2 Cor 4:16-18; Col 3:1-4ff.**). Therefore, the cream of your time, talent, resources, and affections will be plowed into God’s plot, His story. Your affections and spiritual sight and vision will be clearly fixed upon God’s redemptive story. And, therefore, in possessing genuine, God-given faith, your story will issue forth in a lifestyle of righteousness, love, and service.

My friends, there are no sidelines in God’s plot—every man and every

woman's 'story' is being written day by day. What you believe, love, worship and serve is daily constructing your story. And, your story will someday be read publicly when God reveals 'the secrets of men's hearts' (**Rom 2:16**). This issue of finding your story in God's story is truly 'for all the marbles'—in other words for eternity. When your story is read publicly on Judgment Day, what you have trusted, desired, and invested in will be revealed. What you have served and worshipped will be ineffably, inescapably manifested. It will be demonstrated that the man or woman of God lived by faith in the Word of God—for, the believer's story will reveal that his or her heart proved by grace to be good soil. God's Word dominated exceptionally in that person's life, enabling a crop to be brought to maturity, to harvest (**Mt 13:23**).

Scripture commands us to test ourselves and examine ourselves to see if we truly be of the faith (2 Cor 13:5). It is vital to perform this test. Are we daily finding our purpose, comfort, and goal in God's story? Are we consciously giving ourselves back to Christ daily, presenting ourselves to Him in response to the first gift—the gift of Christ to sinners. "...do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (**Rom 6:11-13**)? And, are we responding to the second gift, the gift of the Church to Christ by building up the Church, the Body of Christ through edification, and service? Are we yearning to see Christ formed in the members of His body—and taking action unto this end (**Gal 4:19; Col 1:28-29**)? Only if we are serving Christ by presenting ourselves back to Him and building up His body can we honestly say that we are finding our story in God's story.

God's story shows us that at the heart of the universe is infinite love—it is love perfectly expressed in these two glorious gifts God has given (Christ to sinners, and the church to Christ). To have tasted this divine love once, through the redemption that is in Christ is to taste that love forever (**Eph 3:14-19**). And to have tasted this love is to love the people of God, one's 'forever brethren'—those given to Christ—the glorious second gift (**Rom 15:1-4; 1 Tim 1:5; Gal 5:6; 1 Jn 4:10, 19**). To love Christ who is given to us, is to love the people given to Christ (**1 Jn 4:7-9**). And to love the people given to Christ is to gladly be spent in building up His body, the church. Is that your story?