

Christ Alone

(Part I – Christ, My Life)

Intro:

I have a congenital heart problem. Recently, after careful study, my cardiologist announced that we could put off treatment of that problem until I was around 177 years old. That was good news. While I thought he was a bit optimistic, I, being a male, agreed with his findings, as I have always favored the path of denial. Most of the things which concern us, as you know, never happen.

There is a growing concern, however, in the spiritual heart of this old man. It has to do with the centrality of Christ in our thinking, our theology, our worship, our teaching, and in the presentation of ourselves in everyday life. This short series is nothing more than a simple offering. A humble effort to help us all focus more intently on what it means to be Christ focused. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3:18 and notice these powerful words of Paul which he used to showcase the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant:

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18, KJV 1900)

Based upon that verse, I used to impress the following words upon my students: *“When the child of God looks into the Word of God and sees the Son of God he is changed by the Spirit of God into the image of God for the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 3:18.*

This verse is about a DYNAMIC. In truth, this passage comes close in estimation to my life verse. It says it all. It speaks of a dynamic. In our context, a dynamic is a principle which functions or produces work in real time. In this passage our dynamic speaks to an ongoing process which, according to Paul, derives directly from our New Covenant relationship to Christ. Further, while this is a powerful theological statement, it is an even more powerful dynamic. And that brings me to the cusp of this short series on Jesus Christ.

I am a New Covenant kid. As such, I deplore the disturbing trend I am witnessing in biblical circles today. There is a constant, albeit sincere, trend to revert to OT dynamics to redeem a fallen and corrupt national culture and to restore our compromised local churches. The Old Testament is a great place to find conviction. It is not the best place to begin when looking for solutions. This retro trend is occurring at a time when we most need a fresh baptism of New Covenant truth, not Old Covenant dynamics. I do not long for Old Testament ways and mindsets any more than I long for my childhood, as good and rich as it was. New Covenant dynamics are replete: the flow of enabling grace, the role of the Spirit in the daily walk of the abiding believer, the unleashing of resurrection power through opting for suffering, our new identity, not as children of *Israel* but as the abba children of *God* enjoying all the adult ramifications of adoption. These are not mere facts; these are the dynamics of the New Covenant. These are the things which change us. These are the truths we must have repeated and reinforced. These are the imprimatur of Christ. These are the core reasons why Christ alone is sufficient.

Now, here's our plan. We want to refresh ourselves with New Covenant dynamics. We want to come alive spiritually. We want a vital Christian walk. We want to believe Christ alone is enough – enough for our whole being. We do not want to live in the Slough of Despond. We do not want to live in bondage or defeat. We don't want to confess a sin one day only to repeat it the next. We truly want to find and experience Jesus Christ. We truly want to be changed from the inside out. We know where we should be. We simply cannot muster up the spiritual energy, the vitality as it were, to plot a straightforward walk with Christ. When these kinds of thoughts enter our mind, it's good to return to basic New Covenant truths. Let's begin with:

DYNAMIC # 1 – CHRIST, MY LIFE

A. I am Determined to Know Christ

I would like to key off Philippians 3:10 in just a moment as we reflect on our own selves. We would all like to imagine that we are Christ centered. This could be because we have reduced our definition of what it means to be Christ centered to little more than a worshipful aspiration. We may, for example, picture Jesus feeding the masses while we hum “Oh to Be Like Him,” in the back of our minds. That is good. That is behaving like Christ in a given scenario, but that is not adequate. We ask, what does it mean to be Christ centered, and are we ready to write our book, “Christ Centeredness and How I Achieved It.”? We do want to face the facts, first, rather than being Christocentric, we are all, to some extent, *eccentric*. Paul clearly acknowledged that his own goal to become Christ centered was an ongoing pursuit. In his own words, Paul declared back here in Philippians 3:12 through 14:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12–14, KJV 1900)

I find this verse even more comforting than my doctor's announcement. Like Paul, I confess I am on a journey toward apprehending God's high calling. Paul did not beat himself up because he had not arrived. There are no sackcloth and ashes here. There is no cutting off an offending appendage. This is transparency. This is honesty. This is spiritual clarity. The dynamic Christian walk is just that. It is dynamic.

And exactly what is that high calling? That high calling is to be Christ centered, Christocentric. Before we back up and discover that, let's talk about what it means to be eccentric. To be eccentric is to be off centered, be it ever so slightly or to an extreme. When we are concentric the circle of our life conforms to the life of Christ. Stay where you are in Philippians 3 and allow me to refresh your pure minds with Romans 12:1-2.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this

world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:1–2, KJV 1900)

This conformation of which Paul speaks comes by the renewing of our *minds* in a way which proves or tests our thoughts, actions, and spiritual ministry against the standard of God’s will. We are going to learn how this walk with Christ affects our minds, our emotions, and our ministry. By the time we are finished he would have us understand that nothing is untouched. There is no aspect of our lives that Christ leaves untouched - no nook, no cranny, no overlooked area. This matter of Christ and our minds *is a very personal matter*.

Again, notice that the Bible assumes we experience entropy, else Romans 12:1 and 2 would not exist. Every time we pick up a devotional, every time we read our Bibles, and every time we listen to a sermon we are *renewing* or *renovating* our minds. Renovation is important because spiritual entropy is the order of the day in a fallen world.

Now, I turn back to Philippians 3 and begin by stressing verse 10. After all, any discussion of how we relate Christ to our lives must begin with our minds. Philippians is a book about the mind of Christ.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” (Philippians 3:10, KJV 1900)

Our English translation does not do as well in conveying the emotion which lies behind this verse. There is some intensity here. There is direction. There is a fixed focus. The Amplified version begins

“For my determined purpose is that I may know Him...”

That’s intensity. I have preached more than one message on this passage over the years and when I do, I usually entitle it “Paul’s Philosophy of Life.” Jesus Christ was Paul’s starting point. He was Paul’s FIRST PRINCIPLE, his element, his “stoicheon”.

This is no shiny piece of metal in the stream bed here – for the believer, this is Marshall’s bonanza. This is the baby step for the believer, this is his dying aspiration. This is the reset button for every interruption between life and death! Knowing Christ is the substance of life and the essence of life! Knowing Christ is life!

Now, you will notice that in the next few paragraphs I will use the word “I” a lot. This is because my desire is to show how personal these truths are. This is not an effort to showcase myself. With Paul, I am confessing entropy. With Paul, I am seeking to showcase Christ. Consider then, the things of Christ I am determined to know:

B. I am Determined to Know Christ in Salvation.

Another way to say this is that I am determined to experience Christ in my salvation. Now, it goes without saying that one must come to know Christ at a single point in time. Jesus said: *"...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."*

I think we are reaping some of the results of our poor habits in presenting the gospel. We may not be as passionate and as driven as we used to be. This idea that we can simply come to Christ and drink is essentially a New Covenant truth, though it was promised in the Old Testament (Isa 55:1). When Jesus first proclaimed it, it was passionate, it was provocative, it was prophetic, and it was unthinkable. We don't just drink freely, especially at a feast! John reported:

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:37–39, KJV 1900)

This feast which celebrated the water which flowed from the rock would portend an even deeper truth. There is a Rock, Christ, from whom we must all drink (1 Corinthians 10:4). But listen now, or we can miss the whole point of this dynamic. It is not credal. This dynamic is about knowing a PERSON, not a creed. Salvation begins with a living relationship, and an intimate one at that.

There is some irony in this. Many folks who consider Christianity, consider just that. They do not understand, this is not about a religious system. This is not about a church. This is not about organized religion. This is about Christ, a Christ who wants you to know and experience Him personally. It may be that, after all these years, you have embraced nothing more than a credal faith, and you have wondered why there is no life in you. You have witnessed some form of spirituality in all of the religions of the world, but you have never experienced Christ. You really do not *know* Him.

C. I am Determined to Know Christ in Fellowship.

When Jesus said He was the source and fountain of life eternal, He was not merely speaking of a future day. In plain English He was telling us that He is our source of spiritual life in perpetuity, both now and forever. In His own words as recorded in John's gospel,

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14

Now folks, that is a dynamic. Further, drinking is not difficult. However, it can be neglected. My wife and I are fast approaching middle age. One of the things we have both noticed is very clearly observable, repeatable, and verifiable. When either of us experience an energy lapse during the day, we can most often trace it back to a drinking problem. We both have drinking problems. We simply forget to consume that water. Our grandson mocks us because we carry our sippy cups around, but we pay him no mind. And, by the way, we often feel revived and refreshed within minutes after imbibing that cool water. I think you see, you understand that we are back to that renewing discussion – that matter of renovating our minds and our souls. But, if you will pardon the pun, I want to dive a little deeper.

This whole gospel of John is about intimacy. When I put on some foo foo in the morning, I sometimes wash my face, put on some lotion, and then spray the fragrance on top of the lotion. That is called layering. As a result, I notice that fragrance on and off throughout the day. It stays with me. When I spend time with Christ I fellowship with Him and enjoy His fragrance. Yoga and self-focused meditation produce no such result. My personal time spent with Christ follows a layered pattern of cleansing, prayer and Bible meditation. I do this with the expectation that the fragrance of Christ will emanate throughout the day. We understand that. As the millennials say, “We get that.” However, this matter of radiating Christ is not about the morning ritual, it is about a flowing *dynamic* of intimacy which carries us throughout the day. Our Lord Jesus also speaks of it as abiding – another intimate term which is highly specific to John.

This is why I directed us toward the gospel of John. Of the four gospels, one stands out uniquely. It sees life differently. I like to call John the transitional gospel. It is the gospel which especially paves the way for the coming church era and the personal ministry of Christ in our lives. And how is such a way paved? John showcases our Lord from the perspective of intimacy and fellowship. While the other gospels are not lacking, John is rich in this regard. While every gospel is precious, John is uniquely *intimate*. As such, it is the perfect book for refreshing our determined purpose to walk *intimately* with Christ.

Let me provide some support. While Matthew includes many of Christ’s teachings about the Father, it is John who will open a whole new discussion about this father-child relationship we have in Christ. While Matthew speaks of love, John *immerses* us in the discussion. While Matthew commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, our Lord is seen focusing more heavily on teaching us to love our neighbors. There is good reason for this beyond the scope of our discussion. John, however, opens whole new vistas on this love relationship between Christ and His Father and between us and Christ, and between us and the Father. Why, John 14 and 15 are an essay on the loving intimacy we share in Christ. Walk through the following verses with me.

John 14:15

*“If ye **love** me, keep my commandments.”* (John 14:15, KJV 1900)

John 14:21

*“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that **loveth** me: and he that loveth me shall be **loved** of my **Father**, and I will **love** him, and will manifest myself to him.”* (John 14:21, KJV 1900)

John 14:23,24

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man **love** me, he will keep my words: and my **Father** will **love** him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with **him**. He that **loveth** me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the **Father’s** which sent me.”* (John 14:23–24, KJV 1900)

John 14:31

*“But that the world may know that I **love** the **Father**; and as the **Father** gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”* (John 14:31, KJV 1900)

John 15:9,10

*“As the **Father** hath **loved** me, so have I **loved** you: continue ye in my **love**. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my **love**; even as I have kept my **Father’s** commandments, and abide in **his love**.”* (John 15:9–10, KJV 1900)

John 15:12,13

*“This is my commandment, That ye **love** one another, as I have **loved** you. Greater **love** hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* (John 15:12–13, KJV 1900)

1. This intimacy requires submission. When we read these verses in a clump such as this, a truth is sure to dawn on our souls. Love and obedience are corresponding and reciprocal. Because I love my wife I obey her wishes. It’s just natural. When I keep her wishes, our love is strengthened. This is a natural process. In fact, this mutual submission, one to the other requires no command. When I obey God out of duty there certainly are fruits and benefits. However, a relationship which thrives in intimacy requires few dictums.

2. This intimacy flows like a fountain from the Father. Then, while these verses are fresh in your mind, turn right around and scan these two chapters one more time, noticing how often this discussion of intimacy and love are associated with the Father. This fountain of love flows from an abiding relationship which gushes forth from the relation between Christ and His Father, and between us and Christ, and between us and the Father. The solution to our spiritual malaise begins with *intimacy*.

When you need David’s still waters to restore your soul, may I suggest that there is simply no other New Testament book where the springs of living waters, the waters of spiritual cleansing and refreshment can be readily found than John. John not only predicts these springs, he leads us directly to them.

3. This intimacy is sacred and private. Let’s wrap this intimacy dynamic up. There is an intimate side of worship, just as there is an intimate side of marriage. There are those ties between ourselves and our Lord which should remain just that way. I am not a fan of parading that kind of intimacy. At the same time, our relationship with Christ *is* emotional. It is a love relationship. The external evidence of our intimate walk should be just as observable as the observable bond of a long-standing marriage is to the community.

Further, just as every marriage contract seems to thrive on its own terms under the broad guidelines our Lord provides, may I admonish you – don’t try to invade someone else’s marriage. Their intimacy levels, and their fellowship levels are in their own purvey. They need no regimen from you, no preconceived mold in which to fit their marriage model. And I add the same admonition regarding our spiritual walks. Your intimate walk with Christ, how you thrive, how you communicate, is sacred ground. It is not the purvey of any pastor or teacher. Your relationship with Christ is yours, it is unique, it is precious. Keep it that way. Take tips from others, but let the Holy Spirit govern your spiritual intimacy. Does your spiritual marriage need renovating? There is a dynamic in place to grow you in Christ.

D. I am Determined to Know Christ in My Imprinting.

I sound like a baby duck, that is absolutely what I intend. As a Dispensationalist, I specialize in understanding and clarifying the teachings of Christ as they relate to Israel and as they relate to the church, just as do the scriptures. When it comes to ministry, however, there are no holds barred.

1. The Person of Christ is not only our Great Teacher, He is also our Great Teaching Model. If teaching were merely about conveying information, any old computer could do it. The fact is, that in any discipline, we cannot separate the teacher from the content. Facts cannot be taught in a vacuum.

2. Jesus Christ is the template upon which all of God's Word is structured. This is no incidental statement. I have sought to follow the same path as the apostles who sat at His feet for those marvelous post resurrection days...

a. Jesus Christ reshaped the disciples. Let me reduce this. When I read the ministry of the apostles as recorded in Acts, I discover a unique truth. They had imprinted. They had imprinted on Christ. This imprinting went far beyond the emotional ties they developed as they walked and suffered with Him. This imprinting changed and shaped their whole approach to life and ministry. It re-formed or renovated their minds. We could sketch a before and after for each apostle if we so chose. We could catalog a list of dynamic observable changes. In the words of their observers,

*"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."
(Acts 4:13, KJV 1900)*

Now, I want folks to notice when I have been with Jesus. I want them to know by my godly living and by my devotion. That is one thing I want them to see. I want them to know by my biblical knowledge. Just as the listeners to Peter and John knew that their message matched the message of Jesus Christ, I want the message of Christ to be core to my ministry. But I need to tell you, I think these apostles imprinted on an even deeper level.

b. Jesus Christ replicated Himself in them. These apostles had absorbed the teaching and preaching style of Christ. Christ had actually replicated His teaching persona in them. They were not clones by any means, but each had absorbed those elements in Christ's teaching which would forever change their own style and conform them to Him. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:

*"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
(Matthew 11:28–30, KJV 1900)*

Jesus did not say, "Learn from me." While passage is foundational to a whole homiletic, just focus on those words *learn of me*. This was no mere admonition to get our facts straight about Christ. This is a new door opening to a whole new vista! When we come under this yoke, we learn of Christ in His Person. By coming under this yoke we share His heart. We absorb His personality. By coming under this yoke we share His rest. We enjoy His provision. By coming under this yoke we share His labor. We execute His program and become laborers together with Him (1 Corinthians 3:9). Everything changes. These changes are subtle, but certain. Going under this Christ yoke makes me a truth seeker (Hebrews 5:14), a truth steward (2 Corinthians 4:1,2), and a truth defender (1 Timothy 6:20). It's all there. It has been there all along! It's all in Christ!

Again, this imprinting is dynamic. The process continues on through the years as we absorb ourselves in Christ. Why, it seems as though each time we meditate on His Word we learn something new for ministry. We watch His interactions with men and see that He was provocative and pre-emptive -in stark contrast to the world's current imaging of Christ. He was proactive in the assertion of His authority and in correcting error. He was observant and sensitive to the state of mind of His listeners. He was occupied with their needs. These apostles imprinted on Christ and they were never the same.

You understand that we have opened a discussion that goes far beyond today's scope and purpose, but we have done so for good reason. Our theme is, Christ Only! Christ Alone! Our contention is, that we often miss the boat. We miss the point regarding how fully and completely our Lord Jesus, by His own life, has equipped us for life and ministry! He did not tell us what to do and then leave town. He showed us how to do it in a hands-on manner, and then moved in so that He could carry out His work through us daily.

This imprint is vanishing. I am saddened by so much of what I see in the arena of public ministry today. It is not because folks are not well intended, personable, and even caring. Rather, it is because I do not see the imprint. I see no stigmata in their hands. I see no imprimatur emanating from the pages in their books. Neither friends nor enemies can locate the tell-tale signs that they have been with Christ beyond the peppering of a few aspirational truisms typical of those found at every high school graduation. I sense little of His fragrance wafting in the air.

I want to echo Paul's words – My determined purpose is that I may know Him! These truths really work, folks. Do you want power in your ministry? Imprint on the ministry of Christ. It's all there, but it is only there for those who seek it.

Let' wind down by changing our direction. I want to add one more layer of truth, which to many, is a layer of controversy. We must say just a bit more if we would truly know and learn Christ. If we were to end our lesson at this juncture, we would be closing our Bibles somewhere in the gospel of John or in the gospel of Matthew, and we would most definitely be leaving the wrong impression of our Lord. Let's put it this way:

Perhaps you would say, "Jim, you have made your point. I am going to take this yoke upon me and I am going to learn Christ. I am really going to learn Christ! I am going to go home and start absorbing myself in these gospels. I shall learn the dynamics of intimacy from John and the dynamics of full-on ministry from the other gospels. I want to learn Christ!"

I would, of course, commend you, but I would not be finished motivating you. We have not yet arrived to maturity. Havin done those things, we would not yet know Christ in all His fulness! We have a whole world of discoveries ahead of us. Jesus Christ reshaped the disciples themselves. Jesus Christ replicated Himself in the disciples, and finally,

3. Jesus Christ replaced their kerygma. Our kerygma consists of the whole body of truth we proclaim and how we weight it. The word simply means *proclamation*. We cannot offer the solution we need so desperately to hear today without this last aspiration. You may have heard me allude to a concern of mine in the early onset of our study. As we look at the morass of our society, the most common cry is that we

must go back. We must return to those Old Testament scriptures, and above all, we must exposit those very passages which put our decadent world in the boldest relief while crying out for national and personal repentance. This is what I like to call a *revivalist kerygma*. How is that working for us? Those Old Testament scriptures which take us to the edge of Israel's judgment and despair are there for a purpose. They are meaningful. They need exposition. However, they are *not freestanding*. By themselves, they *do not* shine light on the way out. They *do not* focus on the solution. They *do not* comprise the teaching of Christ or His apostles. Now, fasten your seatbelts.

Another way to put it is like this. When we study, really study, the ministry of Christ and the apostles we find that an entirely different and radical kerygma (or, proclamation) has arisen before our very eyes. From this point on, the truth will be proclaimed from a very different platform. The Old Testament scriptures will be used, but in an entirely different way. The New Testament prophets will never return to the style and kerygma of the Old Testament authors. Yes, those very same Old Testament scriptures were used, but they were fused and melded with the new truths revealed first, by Christ, then by the other disciples, and finally, by Paul. Now listen, so that you do not misunderstand me.

Years ago I had a friend who was associated with Coca-Cola and NASCAR racing. As a result, I was granted an audience. That is, I was granted personal access to his race car. As we discussed that car and all those racing requirements, not the least of which had to do with body structure, he reached over near the side of the car and produced a body template. They would place this template over the entire car. For purposes of safety and fair competition that car had to meet the exact specifications of that template. Now, I'm sorry to say that if a few of those old Ford coupes that were used in the old bootlegging days of early NASCAR were entered in the race, they would be summarily disqualified, even though they were the legendary buggies that gave birth to NASCAR.

Now listen, if we are to follow the examples of Christ and the Apostles, the rules have changed. There is a new template in force. The Lord Jesus Christ personally introduced these new rules. He began with a single sentence; He then took the apostles aside and taught them the new rules for Bible exposition. He made this change immediately, upon the very day of His resurrection. He took one verse from Psalm 40, verse 7 and changed our whole world of preaching and teaching. In so doing, He made Himself central, not just to the gospels, not just to the New Testament, *but He made Himself the centerpiece of all Bible interpretation*, not just the centerpiece of the gospel itself. And friend, this is not a matter of offering mere lip service. The kerygma of Christ changes everything. We will, of course, expand on this, but we will simply conclude today's study with the affirmation:

E. I am Determined to Know Christ in My Bible Understanding, Doctrine, and Teaching.

When we open our Bibles, we find that its doctrines fall into major categories. We have cosmology, soteriology, bibliology and epistemology, we have ecclesiology, eschatology, angelology, hamartiology, and along with Christology, even pneumatology and theology proper. Did you know that each of these doctrinal categories cannot be understood (on this side of heaven) unless we make Jesus Christ our interpretive key? Then, we have those important covenants, not the least of which are the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the New Covenant. Did you know that we cannot make sense of those covenants unless we make Jesus Christ our interpretive key? Finding Christ and centering ourselves on

Christ is the key to breaking this book wide open, no matter where we are camping. Everything we see, understand, and know begins with our pre-eminent Lord. Do you think these words about Christ from Colossians 1 are mere truisms?

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” (Colossians 1:15–19, KJV 1900)

What breaks the hearts of godly pastors is to notice how few modern expositors have either the unction or patience to draw us back to Christ in a meaningful way. I do not speak of some gospel tack-on at the end of a message now and then. Sometimes that is inevitable. I do address however, a growing inability among Bible teachers to trace the great themes of scripture forward to our Lord in a systematic, meaningful and impactful way. This is a growing evangelical travesty. Jesus Christ *is* our kerygma.

Now, we all have varying degrees of success in ministry, because the Spirit of God has ordained it that way. The Lord of the harvest calls His workers, places them where He wills and when He wills and prospers them in keeping with His great plan. The servant cannot claim credit for a role that the Master places upon him. Even so, if you were to ask, “Jim, to what do you attribute any visible success that you have seen in ministry?” My answer would be clear. Early on, someone taught me how to find Christ in the scriptures. I can plot this journey in the incremental steps which followed one upon another, pointing to the books and leaders along the way, but in the end, I found the key. In the broadest sense I am a literal thematic interpreter. In everyday words, I truly found the Christ I sought to know. And He is there, folks. He is still to be found.

The school of Christ is superior to any seminary you could hope to attend. And, sadly, most schools are anything but Christocentric. He may be a minor, but He is no longer the Major in most of our schools. Determine to matriculate in the school of Christ. Attend other schools as you need but get your degree from the University of Christ.

As we come off a global pandemic and assess the economic and human damages left behind, one ugly fact stands in greater relief. We are dealing with a globe full of folks who are encountering severe mental health issues. We would expect no less. These issues are not, however, the result of this pandemic. They rose to the top as a consequence. *We have the solution.*

The world does not have the solution. Mankind is in the process of reimagining its corporate self-image – and it is far from the image of God. We are creating a new man, very much in the image of antichrist. We have replaced every institution of God with a counterfeit institution. Everyone of those aforementioned doctrines where we pointed to the centrality of Christ have now been restated in terms of the centrality of man.

But understand this. This new global man is counterfeit. While some of the doctrines of antichrist certainly stimulate the mind and others stimulate the body and the emotions, none satisfy the soul. The emotional gap and spiritual void in our culture may be papered over, but its depravity remains. As sexual, chemical, and gambling addictions rise, as homes and families break apart at a faster rate than ever, and as mankind plummets toward the abyss, one fact remains. Jesus is still the answer for the longing deep within our souls. Jesus, and Jesus alone. He stands at the door. He knocks. He offers to come in, and He does not come empty handed.

Jesus Christ will fill your soul, He will give you purpose, direction, identity, joy and satisfaction, power in your life and fruit at the end of your days. Determine to know Him!

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:28–29, KJV 1900)