

Men in Christ
September, 2017
The Death of Jesus of Nazareth

Christ did not send me to baptize, but to proclaim the Gospel; and to do it without relying on the language of worldly wisdom, so that the fact of Christ on his cross might have its full weight.

This doctrine of the cross is sheer folly to those on their way to ruin, but to us who are on the way to salvation, it is the power of God. Scripture says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the scholar, and bring to nothing the cleverness of the thinker. Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater-limited, all of them, to this passing age?"

God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. As God in his wisdom ordained, the world failed to find him by its wisdom, and he chose to save those who have faith by the folly of the Gospel. Jews call for miracles, Greeks look for wisdom; but we proclaim Christ—yes, Christ nailed to the cross; and though this is a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Greeks, yet to those who have heard his call, Jews and Greeks alike, he is the power of God and the wisdom of God. (I Cor. 1:17-24 NEB)

He is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Eph. 2:14 NRS)

*But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the -
grace of God he should taste of death for every man. (Heb 2:9 ASV)
χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσεται θανάτου.*

The death of Christ was all-inclusive, for he tasted death on behalf of everything (Hebrews 2:9). On the cross, he terminated all negative things including sin (John 1:29), the fallen human flesh (Galatians 5:24), the usurping world system (John 12:31), and his enemy Satan (Hebrews 2:14). However, just as certainly as his death ended all things in the old creation, so it served as a turning point in the universe to inaugurate the new creation. He abolished in his flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances (Ephesians 2:15), that he might create the Jews and the Gentiles in himself into one new human. "While Christ was being put to death, he was working to create the one new man" (Lee *Conclusion* 2305-2306).

Christ's act on the cross to produce the new man fulfills God's original intention in making man. In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make mankind in our image". For God to refer to the singular "man" with the plural pronoun "them" indicates God's purpose to have a collective, all humans are possessing his image to express him and exercising his dominion to represent him. Because the old race of Adam failed God, Christ had to create the new man out of the redeemed Jews and Gentiles to fulfill God's initial design.

In Paul's thought, "the new man - new creation - new Adam in Christ" is the most significant aspect of the church. On the most basic level, the church is simply the ecclesia, the assembly of the called. On a more intrinsic level, the church is also the household of God, the family of God, composed of all God's children who possess the life of their God (Ephesians 2:19). Even more, the church is the Body of Christ whose constituents, as member of

Christ, are joined to Christ and are parts of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12). The new man, as the most profound designation of the church, goes a step further than the Body of Christ, for it implies that Christ is not only the life of the church but also its person. Because Christ is the life and the person of the new man, the new man fully expresses Christ.

How did Christ create the new man? Ephesians 2:15 reveals that the new man was created "in himself," that is, in Christ. The use of parallelism in this verse is critical: He abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances "in his flesh," and he created the new man "in himself." He dealt with the segregating ordinances in his flesh that he might create the once divided Jews and the Gentiles into one new man in himself. Witness Lee elucidates the significance of the phrase "in himself":

Christ is not only the Creator of the one new man, his church of the new life, but also the sphere in which and the means by which the one new man was created. He is the very element of the new man, making God's divine nature one entity with humanity. The Greek word rendered in here can also have an elemental significance, meaning also with, implying that the new man was created with Christ as its divine essence. (Lee *Footnotes* 862)

Hence, Christ is the Creator of the new creation person; he is the sphere within which that new human exists, the means by which the new person is to think and act and be, and the essence with which the new man was created.

Of course, the believing Jews and the Gentiles are the many who have come into this new reality - yet in this new man, there is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:10-11). Christ is everything! What the believers are in their nature is to leave behind their corrupted former nature. - it has no part in the new man. Their nationalities, their cultures, their social statuses, their

religious ordinances, and all other things which distinguish and divide them have all been annulled in the death of Christ. All of God's redeemed, with their entire fallen being, have been co-crucified with Christ, and they have received Christ into their humanity as their divine life and essence (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3-4) they are the reconciled. This new man is God's nature worked into redeemed humanity to constitute one entity. The redeemed believers compose the outward physical frame of the new man, but Christ is its inward life, content, and person.

The new man of the new creation is filled with the newness of God's nature, who makes all things new (Revelation 21:5); the new man eventually consummates in the New Jerusalem. Praise Christ for his new-man-creating death! The believers' appreciation for Christ's death greatly increases when they realize that his death not only meets their need for redemption, but also accomplishes God's eternal intention to have a corporate new man to eternally express him and represent him.

(I Gary Allen Henecke have cut and taken this from others - some is my writing and much belongs to those I read - I am in one with all of this!)