

Christ and Race

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[0 : 00] I'm glad I get to do this this morning. Chris introduced both my name, Gerald and Jerry, and Jerry, and Jerry. Gravely offended.

I want to present to you this morning four facts, a process with three steps.

And we're talking overall, at least, of course, I've been sitting where you all are sitting, Christ and culture, and culture's not as simple as we make it out to be.

There's a lot too culture. And there's a lot of interaction with things. Sometimes I see ecology as kind of, or geology as world ecology.

And you know that ecology was birthed in Georgia. You know that whole concept and study of ecology was birthed right here in Georgia.

[1 : 34] And it's that interaction between elements. And sometimes I feel like maybe some of you or all of you, I grew up with National Geographic, and so I've read about the ecology of plants and animals and all that exists on the face of the earth and cultures of people.

I learned a lot when I was a kid. That's all I had to really look forward to. We didn't have a television until I was quite a bit older.

And Mom and Dad didn't have a colored television until I moved out of the house. And I had to talk my dad into a telephone when I was in high school.

Most of you take that for granted. But he hated that telephone. And so when it was drilled through the wall, we had a concrete block house in southern Arizona. When he drilled the hole through it, it came out behind the couch.

And that's the only place you could use the phone if he wasn't in the house, because you had to crawl behind the couch and lay down and call your friend. So it was a chore.

[2 : 53] And like no time in history, we started the postmodern era, calling it the information age, and it wasn't long that people realized, well, what is that?

And maybe that doesn't describe the whole thing that we're into. And a lot of people have been trying to tag the world that we're living in today.

And the best anybody's come up with so far is just postmodern. Whatever postmodern is, we're in it. And we're still trying to decide what it is.

And like with most human history, we're better at describing it after it's gone by than looking forward to where it's taking us.

And so cultures, for me, is not a simple thing. And then when we talk about race, we hear about races of people.

[4 : 01] And we scratch our heads. It's like there's lots of different boats. And there are people in different boats.

Some going in the same direction. Others going in the opposite direction. But it's as if races of people are in different boats.

And they're captains of their own destiny. Going across some great, vast whatever. Fact number one.

I'm not trying to stuff this on you. Let me not be so arrogant to call these absolutes. For me, they're absolutes. But you have to decide for yourself.

Did you see the Stephen Hawking programs last night? I recorded them. And Stephen Hawking has finally decided no God.

[5 : 04] Because everything was birthed out of a black hole. And in a black hole, there is no time. So if before the Big Bang, there was no time, then how could God be?

Therefore, no God. Well, that's what I don't choose to believe. And it's purely by faith on my part.

Because I have no proof. I have a book. And I know that my life on my own was going downhill fast.

And I know that when I placed my faith in what this book said, my life turned around. And it has felt like it's going upward.

So that's all I can tell you. I have no proofs this morning. I'm just telling you that fact number one is by faith on my part.

[6 : 10] And it comes out of the very first verse in the Bible. In the beginning, God created. He created the heavens and the earth.

God did it all. He spoke words, we understand. He didn't go down and really get dirty. He just spoke words and everything came into existence. I believe that.

And I believe that everything that I believe from that point is predicated upon that moment in time. If I don't believe that, then the rest of this doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

Right? It just doesn't make... I mean, good luck. Stephen Hawking said, I just am so joyous that I have a mind that I can just explore the universe.

I have absolute freedom even though my body won't let me go anywhere. I have absolute freedom with my mind to explore the universe. And it sounds like when it's done, it's done.

[7 : 20] And the joy of living was about being free to explore the universe. Well, okay. Some folks, that would be huge.

But from where I stand with the God who created the heavens and the earth, that's just a puny little place.

And the fact, and I believe this, that He's redeemed me and I'm going to get to share in all of that forever. Praise God.

Huh? I mean, if you haven't got an amen in you there, you have no amens in you at all. Praise God. I get to... No, okay.

Let me put my hands in my pocket and then I'll be less preaching. Fact number two. He created not only the heavens and the earth, but He created man and then another man called woman.

[8 : 38] And the human race was born. And there's something common common in our likeness among all peoples of the earth.

In fact, I've had the privilege, not as much as others and more than some, to travel to...

I've preached crusades in South America, Central America, Mexico. I've preached in Canada. I've been to Korea preaching. I've had the opportunity to work with peoples from every continent on the face of this earth.

And I believe we're all on the same boat. I don't believe there's a whole bunch of boats. Now, maybe some folks are on the Aledo deck.

I've never been on a cruise ship. What other decks, kind of decks are there? What are some of the names? All I can remember is Aledo. But what are some of the names of the other decks?

[9 : 51] Luau. But there's something common about all of us that we hold in common. There's some things that we hold in common.

And one of the big things, I think, is that we have a need to be loved and to love. I've not met a human being that doesn't share that.

All human beings everywhere seem to share that. So fact number two for me is that there's only one race. There's not races.

There's only one race and it's human. So if you are a racist, you're working against yourself. They're against you.

Now, there were a lot of folks coming to exist on the earth. And God looked out over them and said, these are violent folks.

[10 : 56] In fact, he felt so bad about it, you know, it says in the very first part of Genesis, he wished he hadn't even created it. He wished he was languishing over the fact that he even created a man in the world.

And he has it in his mind to just take his big eraser out and erase it all. Now, he could erase it just as quickly as he created it in my mind.

Y'all with me on that? You believe that? You think he could undo it with a word just like he did it with a word? And yet, he sees this one man, Noah, who says, here's still righteousness on the earth.

So I'm going to take this one man and his family and I'm going to gather up what I want to carry on in this big boat that he's going to build for me and then I'm going to take my eraser and erase everything else.

I believe that's what happened. Then man starts populating again and it says in the Bible that there was one language.

[12:20] They all spoke the same words. And the people on the earth, they traveled on. Let me read it here and we'll get it precise.

They traveled east, it says. Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. And it came about as they journeyed east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. Well, you remember the story. They create a city called Babel which later on became Babylon. And they built a tower there, the Tower of Babel or Babel's Tower.

And they were going to reach up to heaven. And God looked on that. He came down to see what man was doing and he said, Oh man, they're doing it again.

I clean the slate. I find one righteous man. I set it all in motion again. And they're still doing it. Is that not the history of the world?

[13:28] God said, Okay, but I'm dedicated to this process. I'm going to redeem man.

This wasn't his original plan. His original plan is that we would multiply and come out of the garden or even just live in one great big garden and it would go on forever like that.

But man is constantly disobedient. And so what God does then, He said, Okay, we're going to confound their languages. The Greeks would say, Well, they must have all spoke Greek and He left that with us.

The language of the intellect. Those who spoke Latin would probably have said, Yeah, He confounded the language, but He left Latin that original language with us.

Some Americans might even say, Well, no, it was English. I had a Hebrew professor that was dead sure it was Hebrew. I don't think that language exists because then God would have left in the hands of one group of people an arrogance that could have said, Ah, it all began here with us.

[14:48] I think He undid that one language and everybody jumped off and went off to other languages. I was in Seoul, Korea with a Navajo brother of mine and he was poking around and found it had to be a God thing.

He found as he was conversing with Koreans a word in Korean that has exactly the same pronunciation, spelling, and meaning in Navajo.

and he said, Whoops, here's the land bridge here. He saw a connection to something very ancient that he felt that his people had come.

And finally, man was starting to do what God had told him to do, go out to the four corners of the earth and multiply and fill this earth up.

And they did. But God didn't create more races. The Greek word is ethnos. It's the word we get ethnic from.

[16:02] God created by confounding languages, any missionary will tell you that when you're going to reach a people of a different culture, you must speak their language, for their language is the language of the heart, what they grew up with.

Now, the most diverse people on the face of the earth, or at least in America, are white folks. Folks tend to put white folks all in one great big pile.

So, okay, here's white folks. They're all the same. Well, I assure you, we're not all the same. I come from southern Arizona down on the Mexican border.

I ain't like southern at all. I knew coming to the south, I was going to have to deal with sweet tea.

I figured that one out before I ever got here. I grew up without sweet tea, and so, you know, I don't like sweet tea. So, when we went to the restaurants, I knew, I had to specify, unsweet tea.

[17:18] That's all I drink. But what I didn't know was that in the south, lying is permissible.

Where I come from, you don't tell any kind of lie. lie. There's no such thing as a white lie, or a big lie, or a little lie. You know what I'm talking about, don't you?

Somebody says to you, hey, come on over to my house. Come on over and visit me. And then you show up, and they look at you like, where'd you come from?

Well, you told me to come over. I'm just being polite. I didn't really mean that. So one southerner told me, he said, it's okay to lie as long as it's not going to hurt anybody.

Somehow that's got mixed up in southern Christianity. It mixes a whole bunch of folks up. It certainly wasn't the way I grew up and I didn't grow up in a Christian home.

[18:37] Where I grew up, a lie was a lie was a lie. This issue of ethnicity is really, really diverse.

And any trained missionary knows that when they go to a new place, you can't automatically assume that everybody there is like you are or thinks like you do.

So the old missionary thing was you go to India or you go to some jungle place and people are running around in loin cloths that really say they'll wear pants.

And we took superficial things from our culture and imposed it upon the Christianity of others. Instead of letting the Holy Spirit build out of that culture we imposed on that culture our preconceived notions of what Christianity looks like or doesn't look like.

And so we haven't been highly successful. William Carey is the father of the what's called the modern missionary movement and he took his clues from the Catholics and when he went to what is now modern Bangladesh then it was India and he started a work the first thing he did is he built what in the west we would have called a fort.

[20 : 13] And then you set up a medical clinic or school and everybody comes to you. Imagine how they looked at Hudson Taylor when he went to China and he said this is dumb this is wrong the gospel is supposed to go to the people not go and build a fort and say y'all come and hear the gospel and yet we do it over and over and over again with buildings and property and look at and want to be a lighthouse y'all come it's safe here Hudson Taylor said not we got to become a part of the people that we want to reach he began to dress like the Chinese did he grew his hair like the Chinese men would grow his hair when he would go back to England to speak on his work a lot of people quit sending money to him about the only guy that really supported him big time was

George Mueller looked past the surface stuff to the stuff that God was looking at number three God created ethnos ethnos number four it ought to be obvious to us but it isn't obvious to every believer today that God is still at work he really is for many believers in the missionary parts of the work of God they see Jesus standing on the mountain and there's a whole bunch of folks around him some say you know twelve some say a hundred and twenty but there was more than twelve I believe and there was a whole bunch of them and Jesus is there and he's about to ascend and Jesus says all y'all some believe he said and commanded go

I don't believe that's what the bible says I believe that when you dig into the original language what he did is he assumed we were all going to go somewhere how many of you have been to walmart! in the last month come on raise your hand come on this is a participatory you're going to go somewhere aren't you tomorrow tomorrow afternoon I'm going to go drive a school bus take kids to me we're all as we're going then he commands disciples teach them all that I've commanded you not just some things not the convenient thing but everything I've commanded baptizing them oh I'm with you always to the end of the age God's still at work some believe he just said ok y'all go and create good things to bring glory to my name go out there and build beautiful crystal cathedrals and y'all have heard what happened to the crystal cathedral the man that built it died and they couldn't afford to keep the glass clean so they had to sell it to another church this is what God would have said go to go do

I don't think so so I have to believe forcefully more fact is that God is still at work so the issue is not oh God come help me the issue is God what will you include me in in what you're doing we don't have to go out and make it up for God we don't have to go out and bang on doors we don't have to go out and raise the roof or bring it low I don't have to when set free sets out we don't go out looking for black folks we don't go out looking for white folks we don't go out looking for people of color Martin Luther King I think said it the best in his I've got a dream he said he said let's not judge he said I dream of a day when we're not judging one another by the color of our skin our socioeconomic status or our educational levels or any of that stuff but by the content of our care my wife keeps telling me I am she says you are a character that's not what I'm talking about for when the power of God comes within us from the inside out he is generating and creating a character quality that is like

[25 : 45] Christ in us through us to us by us and for us the great truths of the New Testament is not what I can do for God but what God is willing to do in me through me to me by me and for me see it is not my work it's his work that's important so the process how do you tap into that and here I am 63 years old finishing up my 63rd year on the face of the earth I was saved when I was 25 out of a bunch of drunkenness and partying and all that kind of stuff in the 60s God gloriously saved me out of all this stuff I'm going to give you the irreducible minimum of what all that has made over this 40 year

I've been involved in church planting I've somehow or another been involved in probably over 3,000 different churches whether mentoring or providing resources or some way or another I've had and have tucked over 3,000 new churches being birthed here in the United States alone and in other parts of the world and I say to you that God's invitation to you is real first to get saved it all begins with salvation some point you've got to believe that God created the heavens and the earth and he has a purpose for your life God is one of the great works that he's doing today if you read about it it's the works he's doing with

Chinese people underground church they're sending out mission they're sending out mission to Mongolia and to India they don't have no money people that are going out are walking not jumping on jet planes and being jetted off and and creating a mission center and establishing if they're sneaking off to these lands them because in some places like North Korea they'd be killed I have an acquaintance of mine who got in spent time in North Korea was helping feed people in North Korea and got out just in time the the Mexico the policia were chasing him he didn't really know it but they were following him and got across into China before they caught up to him God didn't want to include you in what he did he really does that isn't for a select few that's for all of us but isn't that where we get fearful oh no oh no

I can't see myself in in Africa now if you send me to Ireland maybe on a beautiful island somewhere beautiful beach process how do you engage with God so that he can invite you into the things that he is doing and include you not because he has to because he wants to include you in the things he does so I'm saying to you our challenge is not to go out and reach all the ethnics in

North Georgia some have said you know because of our unwillingness to go to other lands to help the gospel get to those other lands God's bringing them here I believe that sometimes I stood on a corner in in Flushing New York usually when the new waves of immigrants come to the New York City area they start in Flushing where they settle down to you can tell what last ethnic group lived in Flushing by the funeral homes you can tell who the new ethnic group is by the grocery stores and I stood on a corner in Flushing and there were four Hispanic grocery stores on this one corner why my Hispanic friend that was with me said well he said that one's from Spanish speaking but they're from the Dominican Republic and that one over there it's from Venezuela and this one over here represents

[31 : 17] Mexico and this one over here yo I gotta know all that stuff I'm just telling you you don't have to know anything I'm telling you God already knows that stuff and what we need to engage in as a church and you as individuals is only what God invites you into he's doing a whole lot more than this church could ever get involved in he's doing a whole lot more than any of you as individuals could ever say yes to how do you decide how do you know the will of God at the point of engaging with God in his work the cost of discipleship Matthew how'd you like that for an introduction Matthew 16 24 you all know these verses

I'm sure my Bible here has a little heading for this section calling it the discipleship is costly Matthew 16 24 then Jesus said to his disciples if anyone wishes to come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me earlier in Matthew he said those that will not take up their cross and follow me are not worthy of me sound like that's an option for us does it sound like if you say I believe in Jesus I believe God created I believe the Holy Spirit lives within me that it's an option for your life no way Jose not an option it does cost something it always starts with death

Jesus says in the gospel of John several times about six times I take no initiative of my own I take no initiative of my own I only say what I hear the father say I only go where the father sends me I didn't even come on my own initiative he sent me but then in one spot he says but this one initiative I can take because the father already told me prior that I could take this one initiative he said I can die that's where we all start the fear starts welling up within us because Jesus says as the father sent me so so send I you oh we know what happened to Jesus at the end of his run right could that happen to you and the process you know

I've discovered one thing through the word God makes no hesitation to take that which belongs to him and use it for his own purposes first missionary story I ever read was about the missionary going to the Aka Indians cannibals headhunters in South America and how they died landing on a beach with a piper cub after having made attempts by air to touch the Aka people and the Aka men came and killed the pilot and this missionary and thought no way Jose I ain't going back there some months later here comes a woman out of the jungle from Aka India have you read that the gates of splendor

God says you know when God invites you and what he doing it is always as big as he is as small as he is or it could be old me because that requires on my part some kind of faith because if it's as big as he is not as small as I am there's a good chance I'm going to be uncomfortable with what he's calling me to be it's going to challenge me down to the!

[36 : 28] Are you ready to be challenged? Do you know yourself? Then you must take up your cross scripture says daily you got to redo that every day you got to say with Isaiah here I am you got to say with Jesus at Gethsemane not my will but thine a friend a friend of mine says that taking up your cross daily that the cross is the instrument of discipline spiritual discipline in your life to engage freshly in a fresh experience with the Lord Jesus Christ that's why you don't wait until the evening to do that you do that first thing you engage with him here I am and then it's that discipline taking up your cross is that discipline of life while you're working through your day as you are going wherever it is

Walmart school you're always your eyes are open sharp ready to see and join the father at his invitation into what we do that's where I'm going that's where I'm going we all want to sit here in church and say here I am Lord y'all come come on in but I don't know about you but my Jesus you know the only time he did a miracle that had roof over it they cut a hole in the ceiling he was moving around some people say well if you just sit around waiting for God to lead you you ain't going to be doing anything I'm busier than I am once for when you're open and giving it to him for his leadership God will invite you into more stuff than you can even imagine you the trouble with us men is we're always wanting it to be something big for me or I can receive a badge!

God said probably the last thing we're ever going to do is give you a badge! Men are always wanting to carry their authority around with them God said I am here for them!

God may just come follow me I'm moving constantly I'm moving in people's lives I'm dealing with people all over the place maybe the cashier at Walmart maybe somebody at one of the restaurants you all meet and God may just keep you say it another way there is somebody in this world that the only Jesus they'll ever believe in is the Jesus they see in you for every one of us there's only there's somebody or some people or some people it may be a whole culture of people but there's somebody somewhere that the only Jesus they'll ever believe is the one that they see it up with them you