

Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S. LAMPEL

EVERY
KNEE
WILL
BOW

How small we have become.

How small our outlook has become.

How small we have made the Son of God in our aspect.

Consider...

Back up for a moment and take in a wider view. Leave your social media, put down your smart phone. Step away from all those within-reach things you think are so critically important to your life and, just for a few moments dwell within your intellect and imagination. In your mind send yourself off to a point outside not just your personal worldview, but outside the bullet-train course of time itself.

Don't think about today, or tomorrow. Don't think about who you are meeting for lunch, or what to feed the kids for supper. Don't think about how you feel about your boss, or how much you would like a new car. Detach yourself from all of it, as if you are floating free in space looking down on the entirety of this planet. Now, consider:

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of
Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to
be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity."

Micah 5:2

The Son of God was born in flesh in Bethlehem and named Jesus. This was His earthly

birth, but it was not His beginning. The Son of God is "from the days of eternity." Before that blue ball floating at your feet even existed—before anything existed—there was the Son of God, second member of the triune Godhead.

We call Him Jesus the Christ.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:15-16

The Son of God created everything there is—that blue ball floating beneath you, all the stars and planets, the soil, the oceans, babies, squirrels, mountains, even smart phones. It is all of His genius, and all He did was speak it into existence.

Then God said, "Let there be light";
and there was light.

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear";



and it was so.
Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."

Genesis 1:3, 9, 20

Since you are now floating in space, and detached from time itself, let your mind fast-forward many thousands of years from the first week of creation to an epic day in a village in Judah.

The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

Luke 1:35

There He is again, and the apostle John gives us another name for the Son of God, for Jesus the Christ, born in Bethlehem: "the Word."

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

The Son of God spoke the universe into existence, and when He became flesh—when He became Jesus the Christ—He is called "the Word" (*logos*), because He is, in His being, the speaking expression of God in flesh.

As God in flesh, the One who created all that is, the One who created human beings of all nations, all colors, all creeds—this One offered Himself as a sacrifice for all their sins. His death and resurrection became the center-point of all history. Prior to that, Father God and man had one kind of relationship; after, God and man had another.

All because of Jesus the Christ.

Once more let your mind roam further into the ether of time/space and consider one more moment in time, this one not in the past, but a moment yet future.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

Revelation 19:11-16

And on the day when The Word plants His feet once again on earthly soil He will slay the foul beast who has enjoyed dominion over all the earth for three-and-a-half years, who has erected his own image in the Jerusalem temple and forced all of mankind to worship him as god. This servant of Satan will be slain by Christ Jesus using the only weapon He requires—the same with which He long before created everything in the universe: His mouth. ☘

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

Pretenders

This world is filled with pretenders. This world is filled with insidious claimants to the throne of one's heart. One may call it a throne, or one may call it the "God-space" with which every human is born. We are all born with a space into which God will fit perfectly. He yearns to come into us, to dwell with us, feeding and nurturing us, guiding and counseling.

But He waits to be invited.

If God does not inhabit our throne or God-space, that does not mean it remains vacant. Every individual has *something* that has taken up residence in that space. For many it is their job; that priority has established itself upon the throne, and it calls the shots in a life. For many it is family; with a fierce glowing countenance the parent or grandparent pronounces righteously, "My *family* always comes first. Nothing is more important than family." Perhaps wealth or fame has filled that spot; the drive to be known, or to have unlimited riches has overwhelmed every other drive in a life.

Oddly enough, the church itself can have sovereignty over a life, ruling from the throne or space reserved for God and His Christ alone. In the Catholic faith, for example, church doctrine and its Pope hold sway first, superseding everything else—even God and His word. And in far too many individual churches of any protestant denomination, the personality standing behind the pulpit possesses more influence, more dominion over the congregation than Jesus Himself. If the individual parishioner must choose between the two, he has been trained, if even implicitly, to choose his pastor. But this is backwards: Christ is over the church, not the church over Christ.

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Colossians 1:17-18

Sadly all too often, by the time God takes His rightful place in a life, if He ever does at all, the throne room of the heart has already had so many previous tenants that much cleaning and renovation is required. Many closets and cubbyholes must be steam-cleaned before His sovereign rule can really take hold and rise to the surface.

Every one of us is born not wanting God in our life. We are born empty of Him, ignorant of His ways, and rooting for the other side.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Ephesians 2:1-3

In this condition we are susceptible to the wiles of pretenders, in fact it is to their voice that our hearts are tuned. Their siren song vibrates to the same pitch of our fallen, depraved heart. Their song is familiar, comfortable. And devious.

There is yet one more pretender to the throne, however, one whose pretension and hubris outstrip all the rest.

The larger we think we are, the smaller we are in fact. That is, the more important we believe ourselves to be, the less significant we have in fact become. This is assuredly not the philosophy of contemporary culture, but it is an eternal truth, for the more important we imagine ourselves, the less important, in our minds, is God.

God anointed Saul, the son of Kish, the first king of Israel. The Lord changed Saul's heart, and "the Spirit of God came upon him mightily." The new king was tall, good looking, strong and, for a while, wise. He began well.

But Saul started to think too much of himself, and he ceased to obey God's laws—even to obey the Lord's explicit commands to him. He began humble, as the prophet Samuel said of him.

Samuel said, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel..."

1 Samuel 15:17

Though he began humble, considering himself insignificant in his own eyes, Saul be-

came proud, and considered himself above the rule of God. The Lord God had commanded him to utterly destroy every living thing of the Amalekites, including the animals. But he disobeyed; instead of killing the king of the Amalekites, as he had been ordered, he took him captive and saved the best livestock. Then he made this tragic statement to Samuel:

"But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal."

1 Samuel 15:21

Not *my* God, or *our* God, was Saul's response to Samuel, but *your* God.

How sad.

When we cease to consult with God in things large or small, when we consider our own counsel superior to His, when we regularly ignore the stirrings of His Spirit—when we live this way in spite of declaring our faith in Him, we have set ourselves upon the throne reserved only for Him.

And thus in our own life we have become the most insidious pretender of all. ☞

The natural life in each of us is something self-centred, something that wants to be petted and admired, to take advantage of other lives, to exploit the whole universe. And especially it wants to be left to itself: to keep well away from anything better or stronger or higher than it, anything that might make it feel small. It is afraid of the light and air of the spiritual world, just as people who have been brought up to be dirty are afraid of a bath. And in a sense it is quite right. It knows that if the spiritual life gets hold of it, all its self-centredness and self-will are going to be killed and it is ready to fight tooth and nail to avoid that.

C. S. Lewis
Mere Christianity



Consuming Wrath

Even after the grace of God has changed our nature from flesh- to spirit-kind, we remain susceptible to the blandishments of pretenders. Not every believer, not every Christian has placed Christ Jesus on the throne of his or her life, and the daily blitzkrieg of pretenders for that throne can soon overwhelm or undermine our devotion to the sovereignty of Christ.

We can believe, we can trust in Christ for our salvation without making Him Lord of our life. We can have *a* relationship with Him without having *the* relationship with Him: setting Him on the throne of our heart. This is done by acknowledging and apprehending—embracing—the fullness of who and what He truly is. When we do this, we discover that it is literally, conclusively inconceivable that everyone on this earth does not do the same.

Son of God. Son of Man. Christ. Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ. Jesus. Call Him by any one of His appellations of your preference. Choose the one most comfortable to you. Any one or all will do—so long as in your mind and heart you know you are talking about the eternal second Member of the triune Godhead, the One who willingly gave Himself as the sacrifice for your sins, then was bodily raised on the third day to His due glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

There is no one like Him. There has never been anyone like Him. It is estimated that by 2011, a total of approximately 108 billion people will have lived on this globe. We like to say that every individual is unique, and perhaps if we burrow down to the level of the smallest molecule or atom, that may be true. Maybe. But out of all those billions—that would be

108,000,000,000 individuals—what are the odds that there have not been at least two people alike in appearance and quality. Pretty much nil.

But Jesus stands alone.
For you see, He is God.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

John 8:56-58

“I and the Father are one.”

John 10:30

Some may shrug this off with, “OK, so Jesus is God. So what? God has nothing to do with my life.” Oh poor misguided soul. You don’t understand: God—especially in His Son—has *everything* to do with your life!

This earth you tread in the flesh—He made it. It was made by Him and for Him. Right now this earth is in the clutches of Satan, but its true Lord rightly is, and will be for eternity, Christ Jesus.

This body of flesh you inhabit—He made it. He designed it; the very first human body was personally molded and shaped from the mud by divine hands.

The nature you love, the beautiful scenery you enjoy on your vacations—He made it all.

The beasts of the field—He made them, along with the earth itself, for your use and benefit.

When I consider Your heavens, the
work of Your fingers,

The moon and the stars, which You
 have ordained;
 What is man that You take thought of
 him,
 And the son of man that You care for
 him?
 Yet You have made him a little lower
 than God,
 And You crown him with glory and
 majesty!
 You make him to rule over the works
 of Your hands;
 You have put all things under his feet,
 All sheep and oxen,
 And also the beasts of the field,
 The birds of the heavens and the fish
 of the sea,
 Whatever passes through the paths
 of the seas.

Psalm 8:3-8

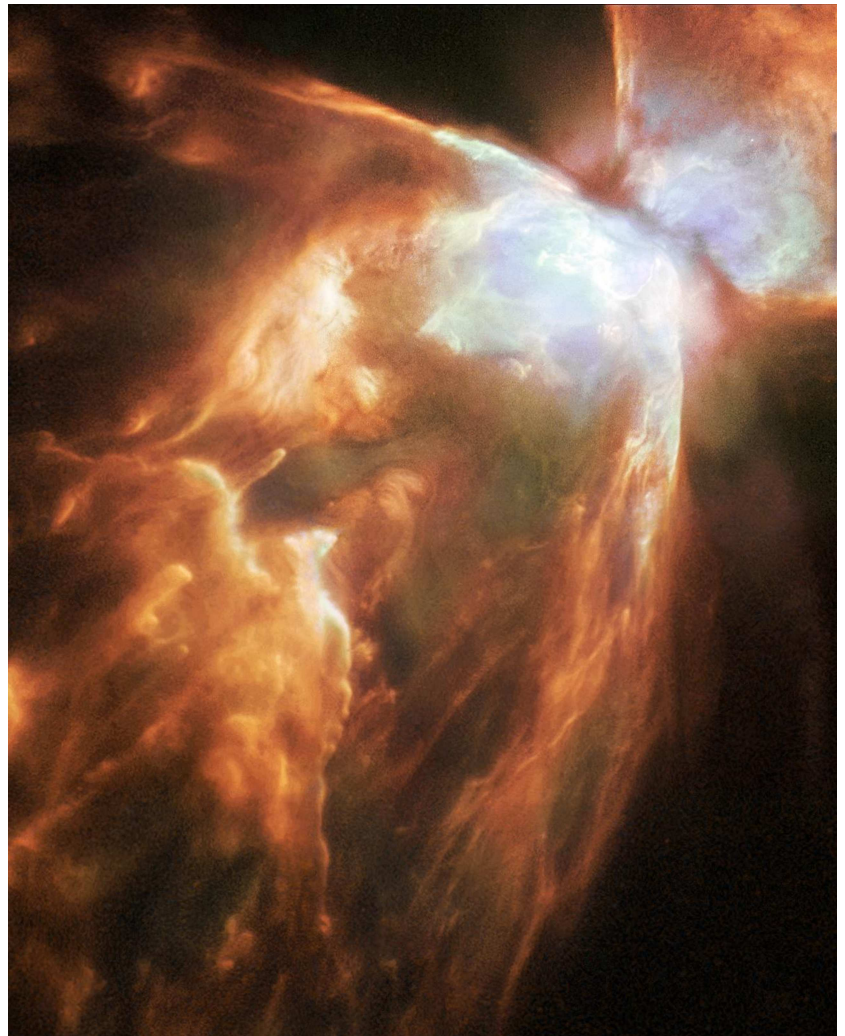
This life you enjoy in the here and now—Christ Jesus died for it. He died to redeem it. You may deny the need for redemption, but that does not change the truth. (Truth is not malleable, as is preached today. It is a constant. It is irrevocable.) You were born lost, and without this Jesus you so offhandedly dismiss, you will die lost.

This Jesus you so casually ignore—He is going to return to earth, and when He does, if you are still living at the time you are going to be shocked down to your very core. Have you ever experienced an earthquake? Have you ever experienced a tornado or hurricane? Have you ever experienced a consuming holocaust? If you are there when Christ Jesus returns, the experience will be like all of those wrapped together into one event.

This Jesus you think you know, the one of sweetness and light, this goody-two-shoes everyone

pulls out of the drawer whenever they need a safe haven of gentleness and saccharine pardon—this Jesus is going to come again in raging fire and consuming wrath. His followers look forward to this day; if you do not know Him, and if you do not *want* to know Him, fear this day.

This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing



out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-10

This will be a Jesus no one on earth has ever seen before. Even His repeated condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees will pale in comparison to who and what He will be when He returns in righteous judgment—but He will still be the same Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man who has always been.

In that day—The Day—you who have rejected Him will suddenly, in the blink of an eye, realize how wrong you have been. If

you had thought about Him at all, you envisioned Him as He came the first time, as the suffering Servant, the sacrificial Lamb of God. But when He comes again, if you are still around and there to witness it, in a flash you will see that Jesus now comes as the Bringer of God's wrath against those who have rejected Him. He comes as absolute Judge, from and to whom there is no appeal. He has all the power and will call all the shots—in or out, sheep or goats, saved or condemned. ☞

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

Matthew 25:31-33

Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.

Zechariah 14:3-9

All in All

You are free to believe in a small God. You are free to believe whatever you like about Jesus the Christ. You are free to continue thinking of Him as a benign, shrinking milquetoast, a flower-child invention of sappy love and sweetness. You are free to consider Him real, but dated: a Savior who knows little of today. You are free to think He is utterly disconnected from material life, someone reserved for Sunday School flannel graphs and nursery-rhyme songs. You are free to dismiss Him as little more than a fairy tale.

And you are free to live or die with the results of your belief.

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:17

The human mind, that rubbery convolution of tissue and thoughts, is incapable of digesting the fullness of Christ Jesus. No matter where we begin, any effort to understand everything He is eventually withers in impotent futility. It is all too much.

Albert Einstein spent the last thirty years of his life trying to prove a unified field theory—a complete explanation of the universe tying together electricity, magnetism, gravity, and quantum mechanics. His attempts were grounded in the belief that all physical phenomena should be explainable by some underlying unity. The unification theory is, essentially, an attempt to explain the entirety of the universe—and everything that occurs within it—by one easily understandable law.

Ultimately Einstein failed in this.

But like an overeager student in a classroom we raise our hand as high as we can, straining to catch the professor's attention.

“Oh, oh! *I know! I know!*” We shout. Then we stand and modestly deliver the clear and simple answer to this quandary that has mystified physicists for generations: “Christ.”

God's word makes it clear that Christ Jesus exists outside of time. To the Jews that questioned Him Jesus said with jarring syntax, “Before Abraham was born, I am.” Not, “I was,” but “I am.” He stands outside of time. In his letter to the Colossians the apostle Paul states that, “He is before all things,” which means, at least, that Jesus predates all things. We would expect then, “He was,” but instead it is “He is.” No matter what the epoch or date, Jesus is always present tense. Jesus always *is*.

Christ's dwelling outside of time, however, does not mean that He is not active in ours. Jesus did not create everything then walk away; in real-time He “holds together” everything He made. As Lightfoot put it in the 1600s, Christ is “the principle of cohesion” who makes the universe “a cosmos instead of a chaos.”

Professor Einstein, with all due respect, the answer was staring you in the face all along.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Hebrews 1:1-3a

Christ Jesus, Son of God, is not just a teacher, not just a prophet, not just a nice guy. Remarkably, He also is not just a Savior. Jesus is indeed all of these, but He is far, far more.

He is cosmic.

With the same supernatural power with which He spoke the universe into existence—His words alone—Jesus holds up, sustains, bears everything He made. Is there an order to the universe? There is, because Jesus keeps it in order. Are there physical laws that govern the seasons, the tides, the rising and setting of the moon? There are, because Jesus spoke them into existence and maintains them.

merciful brother to the people of His creation. But never forget that the little one born to the maiden *created* the world to which He came. Never forget that He created time itself, and the thread of history into which He was born. And never, ever forget that the tiny helpless baby of the manger is the Lord and ruling King of all that is. He is the one who holds it all together.

The Nativity is a tender moment expressing the love of God for man, but it pales against the moment that took hold of the entire universe and snapped it like the ragged tails of a cheap rug.



Don't get lost in the Nativity. It was important for the Son of God to come in flesh, for only then could He be sacrificed for our sin. It was important for Him to walk this earth as one of us, for only then could He reveal to man the true nature of the Father. It was important for Him to experience flesh and dwell on earth, so He could be a

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His

resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Matthew 27:50-54

The Son of God just died for mortal man!

The story was flashed throughout the universe, and all creation quaked at the staggering truth. *He did it! He actually did it!* All of history came to a grinding halt in that cataclysmic moment. Then, a few days later, it restarted. Now it would have a different trajectory, man would have something it had never had before: both a Savior and the promise of resurrection.

All because of Jesus.

Because of who He is, because of what He did, is doing, will do.

Even now the Lamb of God sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father. We see God Almighty (if we dare at all to look upon Him with eyes of flesh) sitting straight, majestic, regal. But we see the Son (and we cannot help *but* look upon our glorious Savior) sitting not straight, but leaning, always leaning toward the Father as He intercedes for those in His body, the church. The Son leans toward the Father, whisper-

ing, "He is Mine. She is Mine." And the Father nods, acknowledging.

If you do not know Jesus as your Savior, if you refuse to bow before Him as Lord, you are free to hold to that choice. You have been afforded the right to reject the very One who gave you that right. But that right is temporary. There will come a day when you *will* bow before Him and acknowledge Him for who and what He truly is. For you that day may come when He returns to earth in fierce, holy judgment. Or it may come when you stand before Him in heaven. Either way, the day will come.

And you *will* bow before Him.

If you do know Jesus as your Savior, are you fixated on Jesus the Good Shepherd at the expense of Christ the Lord of the Universe? Do you see Him as only your Brother and Friend, forgetting that one day He will be your Judge? Is He, to you, a pal, a sympathetic confidant, but never your Master and Lord?

Jesus is all in all. Nothing exists but for Him. Nothing is sustained without Him. He stands astride all creation and all time, Lord of it all. He was not invented for Bethlehem and Calvary—He invented them.

Bow down before Him *now* as Lord and King, for one day you certainly will. ☘

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:8-11