

The Preeminent Christ #1

Introduction. When Paul first met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he did not know at that time the true nature of Jesus. He asked in Acts 9:3-5, "Who art thou, Lord?" But when we come to Paul's epistle to the Colossians, we see that Paul had come to a much fuller understanding of the Lord.

In these two lessons, we will look at Colossians 1:13-20, and examine Paul's description of the preeminent Christ. In so doing, I hope we will be impressed with the fact that Christ is certainly our preeminent Savior, who is worthy of our love, adoration and obedience. The Christ whom we serve is one who has all power and superiority.

I. ***Christ Is King Over His Kingdom***

A. Jesus proclaimed Himself to be a king.

1. He claimed to have a kingdom, and even came into this world to proclaim the truth that He is a king (John 18:36-37).
2. After His resurrection, He claimed that the extent of His rule was over all heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23).
3. Those who are Christians have been transferred from the kingdom of sin, ignorance, guilt and misery to the kingdom of holiness, knowledge and happiness. No change is as important as this and no words can adequately express the gratitude which we should possess.
4. There is an awesome responsibility that accompanies being a member of Christ's kingdom. As subjects of that kingdom, we must capably represent our King (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

B. His kingship and kingdom is proclaimed in the book of Revelation.

1. He is "the ruler over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5).
2. He has made His disciples "kings and priests" (or a kingdom of priests) to His God and Father (Revelation 1:6).
3. Those in Christ Jesus are in His kingdom (Revelation 1:9).
4. Those who persevere to the end will rule with Him even as He now reigns (Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21).
5. He is truly "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

II. ***Christ Is The Savior Of Our Sins***

A. By virtue of His blood we have redemption.

1. The word "redemption" (*apolutrosis*) means "a releasing effected by payment of a ransom."
 - a) This word was used to speak of freeing slaves from bondage. The meaning is expressed in our English word "emancipation."

- b) The Septuagint uses a related word to speak of Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt.
 - 2. We have been "released" from the bondage of sin through the payment of Jesus' blood shed on the cross (Matthew 20:28).
- B. By virtue of His blood we have forgiveness.
 - 1. "Forgiveness" (*aphesis*) means a "release or dismissal from bondage or imprisonment."
 - 2. Because Christ redeemed us, God has sent away our sins; they will never be found again (Acts 5:31; Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19).

III. **Christ Is The Image Of The Invisible God**

- A. An examination of the word "image."
 - 1. This word comes from the Greek word *eikon* which means "an image, figure or likeness." From it we get our English word "icon," referring to a statue (Matthew 22:20; Revelation 13:14).
 - 2. It is not an accidental similarity, but a derived likeness such as that of the head on a coin or the parental likeness in a child. It is here applied to Christ because of His divine nature and absolute moral excellence.
- B. Jesus is the "image" of God who is invisible!
 - 1. No man has ever seen God, but Jesus has "explained" or made Him manifest (John 1:18; 14:7-9).
 - 2. The writer of Hebrews stated that Jesus is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person (Hebrews 1:3).
 - 3. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul said Jesus was in the "image of God." He also said in the "face of Jesus Christ" is "the knowledge of the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:6).
 - 4. From these passages, we learn that Jesus accurately and fully expresses the being and perfection of God! The word *eikon* does not imply a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of its inner core and essence.
 - 5. By looking at Jesus as He is revealed in the Bible, we can see and know the Father who is invisible. Christ reflects God's attributes as the sun's light reflects the sun.

IV. **Christ Is The Firstborn Of All Creation**

- A. An examination of the word "firstborn."
 - 1. This word has confused many and caused some to draw erroneous conclusions. The word can mean the first one born or created. Some (especially Jehovah's Witnesses) have therefore concluded from this passage that Jesus is a created being, the first of all God's creations.
 - 2. However, the word is also used in the scriptures as a metaphor to

describe one who occupies the rank and privilege of being firstborn. There is no reference here to temporal aspects, but to one who has priority over all creation and sovereignty over all creation. Christ has absolute preexistence and preeminence over all creation; He has the most exalted rank in the universe.

3. The same word is used by God in a similar way to refer to the nation of Israel (Exodus 4:22) and is used by God to refer to David, who was the youngest of eight brothers (Psalm 89:20, 27).
 4. Therefore, any interpretation of this term must be in harmony with what is taught about Christ elsewhere and Jesus is clearly proclaimed to be the creator of all things (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16). It could not be stated that He is the creator of all things if He Himself is a created being!
 5. This is why the Jehovah's Witnesses try to get around these passages by inserting the modifier "other" four times in their New World Translation of Colossians 1:16-17. To let it read as written by Paul, it destroys their doctrine that Christ is a created being. Therefore, they must add to the word of God.
- B. The purpose in using the phrase "firstborn of all creation."
1. The phrase is used to stress that Jesus is preeminent over all creation; He has all the rights of one as if He were a "firstborn." All creatures are the offspring of God, but He is the exalted Son of God.
 2. Just as God declared Israel to be His "firstborn" over the nations of the earth (though certainly not the first nation to exist) and just as He declared David to be His "firstborn" over the kings of the earth (though certainly not the first king either), so God has declared Jesus to be the "firstborn" over all creation (though He Himself is not a created being).

V. ***Christ Is The Creator Of All Things***

- A. This amazing truth concerning Jesus is also confirmed elsewhere in the scriptures.
1. The false teachers at Colossae viewed Jesus as the first and most important of the emanations from God, but they were convinced it had to be a lesser being much further down the chain who eventually created the material Universe.
 2. The apostle John affirmed that all things came into being by Him (John 1:1-3). The writer of Hebrews stated that God through Christ made the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).
- B. From these verses we learn an important doctrine concerning Jesus.
1. Jesus was the creative agent by which everything came into being and also everything was created for Him. There could not possibly

be a more explicit declaration of Christ's creative power than Colossians 1:16.

2. It only follows that He existed before anything that was created which seems to be the idea in vs. 17 when it reads, "He is before all things." This great truth is further stated in several other passages (John 8:58; 1 John 1:1; Micah 5:2; Revelation 22:13).
3. All things were created by Him. He created all things in heaven and earth which includes all the things in the Universe and everything the earth contains. He created both visible and invisible things, and we have only scratched the surface in our exploration of the deep mysteries of the Universe.
 - a) He also created thrones, dominions, principalities and powers which refer to spirit beings or angels who exercise power in the heavenly realm.
 - b) Far from being an angel, as the Colossian errorists taught, Christ created the angels. They worship Him and are under His authority. His relation to the unseen world, like His relation to the visible Universe, proves He is God.

Conclusion. In the next lesson we will continue our study of the aspects of the preeminent Christ. The study of our Lord is a rich one and will hopefully produce within us the aspiration to take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). Will you do it?