

The Preeminent Christ #2

Introduction. In the first lesson, we studied how Christ is the King over His kingdom, the Savior of our sins, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation and the creator of all things. We will now continue our study of the aspects of the preeminent Christ in Colossians 1:13-20.

I. ***Christ Is The Sustainer Of All Things***

A. In Him all things hold together.

1. That is, in Him all things are kept in their present state. The meaning of the word "hold together" is "to cohere." He maintains the delicate balance necessary to life's existence.
2. The Universe's existence, order and arrangement is continued in the present form by His power (Hebrews 1:3). Christ is the principle of cohesion in the Universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos (an ordered system) instead of a chaos (an unformed mass).

B. What if Jesus chose to remove His power?

1. Every created thing would fall into disorder or sink back into nothingness. When science observes the orderliness of the Universe, it is actually observing and recognizing the divine laws which control and regulate the Universe.
2. This demonstrates Christ's infinite power for nothing less could be sufficient to uphold the Universe; and of infinite wisdom for this is needed to preserve the harmonious actions of the Universe.
3. One day in the future God will dissolve the force that holds all things together and the heavens and earth will pass away (2 Peter 3:10).

II. ***Christ Is The Head Of The Body***

A. The church is the body of Christ.

1. There are many metaphors used in scripture to describe the church. It is called a family, a kingdom, a vineyard, a flock, a building and a bride. But the most profound metaphor, one having no Old Testament equivalent, is that of a body.
2. The word "church" comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means a congregation or assembly made up of people who have been "called out."
 - a) Those called out by the gospel of Christ into His kingdom form a great assembly or congregation.
 - b) The church is a living organism through which He exercises rulership, authority, guidance and direction.
3. The term "church" is used in two senses in the Bible. The first

- sense is a universal body of saved believers throughout the world (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4). The second sense is a local congregation or assembly of saved believers (1 Corinthians 1:2; Philip-
pians 1:1).
4. In the context of Colossians 1:18, Paul is speaking of the church "universal" (though what we are about to say in the next point would be true in a "local" church as well).
- B. As the head, Jesus is over the church.
1. As we have already seen, He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). He is its builder because He has purchased it with His own blood (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28).
 2. The church is a living organism, inseparably tied together by the living Christ. He controls every part of it and gives it life and direction.
 3. He is the One, therefore, who controls the destiny of those in His church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Revelation 2:1-3:22).

III. ***Christ Is The Beginning, The Firstborn From The Dead***

- A. An examination of the word "beginning."
1. It comes from the Greek word *arche*. The word has various shades of meaning which include: (1) a beginning or origin; (2) the person or thing that commences, the first person or thing in a series, the leader; (3) that by which anything begins to be, the origin, the active cause; and, (4) the first place, principality, or rule.
 2. It is He who gives life to His church. His sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf provided our new life. As head of the body, Jesus holds the chief position, or highest rank in the church. As the beginning, He is its originator.
- B. Remember the use of the word "firstborn."
1. It does not necessarily mean the first one, but can refer to the pre-eminent one. Christ is the highest in rank.
 2. Jesus was not the first person to rise from the dead. The gospels record a few who were raised from the dead including Jairus' daughter, the only son of the widow of Nain and Lazarus.
 3. But He is the first to rise, never to die again, and is declared elsewhere to be the "firstfruits" of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). The term "firstfruits" suggests "the cream of the crop," i.e., that which is preeminent.
- C. Christ in regards to the resurrection of the dead.
1. Jesus is both the "origin or active cause" (the beginning) and the "firstborn from the dead." By His resurrection, He is the beginning of the new spiritual life in the church.
 2. He is the "active cause" of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Christ is not just someone from the past of whom we read and learn. Because of His resurrection, He is alive forevermore. He is not a dead hero, not a past founder, but a living presence.

IV. ***Christ Is The Fulness Of All Things***

A. Jesus is clearly the fulness of deity.

1. We have seen that He is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). In Him there is the totality of the divine power and attributes of God.
2. Paul later declares that in Jesus "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).
3. This term would have been used by Paul to oppose the incipient doctrine of the Gnostics which taught that there were successive levels of divine beings between God and man. Paul's answer to this was the fulness found in Christ. The totality of everything divine resided in Christ.

B. Jesus is also our fulness.

1. In Him we have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" and "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 1:14; 2:3).
2. We are "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). "Complete" is translated elsewhere as "finished." When we obey the gospel of Christ, we are everything God ever designed us to be.

V. ***Christ Is The Reconciler Of All Things To God***

A. The Father's desire is to reconcile to Himself things on earth and things in heaven.

1. The things on earth include sinful man (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). All the change that is to take place in order to produce reconciliation is to be on the part of men and the things of this world.
2. The things in heaven would include all the inhabitants of heaven. The idea is not that they need restoration to God, but that sin has caused a disunity among things in heaven and things on earth which is corrected by the atonement of Christ.
3. Therefore the whole Universe of things, material as well as spiritual, shall be restored to harmony with God.

B. God is able to reconcile all things by Jesus to Himself.

1. Christ has made peace through the blood of His cross. This word peace means to "bind together." Our Lord by His death on the cross bound together again a holy God and sinful man who places his faith in the Savior (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21-22).
 - a) Blood speaks metaphorically of atonement and it connects Christ's death with the Old Testament sacrificial system (1 Peter

1:18-19).

- b) It is also a term that graphically denotes violent death, such as that suffered by the sacrificial animals. Those animal deaths pointed forward to Christ (Hebrews 13:11-12).
- 2. God was reconciled in that justice was satisfied at the cross and man is reconciled in that in the case of the obedient sinner, his attitude of enmity towards God is changed to one of friendship.

Conclusion. Paul had certainly come a long way in his understanding of Jesus since that day he met Him on the road to Damascus! He went from asking, "Who art thou, lord?" to exalting Jesus with all these wonderful attributes in Colossians 1:13-20.

Perhaps now we can better appreciate why Jesus received so much praise and adoration in heaven (Revelation 5:11-12). What are we doing to show our appreciation to Jesus, our preeminent Savior? The best way we can praise Him is by obeying Him (Luke 6:46). Have you responded to His gospel (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)? Are you obeying Jesus by living a faithful life as His disciple (Revelation 2:10)?