

The Preeminent Christ

Colossians 1:13-20

INTRODUCTION

1. When Paul first met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he did not know at that time who Jesus really was (“Who are you, lord?” - Ac 9:3-5)

But when we come to Paul’s epistle to the Colossians, we learn that Paul had come to a much fuller understanding of exactly who Jesus was!

We shall look at **Co 1:13-20**, and notice Paul’s description of “**The Preeminent Christ**”

2. In so doing, I hope we will be impressed with the fact that Christ is certainly our **all-sufficient** and **preeminent Savior**, who is worthy of our love, adoration, and obedience

[Who is this Jesus called “Christ”? Our first point can be gleaned from a comment made in **verse 13**, where Paul was giving reasons why we ought to be giving thanks to the Father. That is, Jesus is...]

I. THE KING OVER HIS KINGDOM (13)

A. JESUS HIMSELF PROCLAIMED 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 - **Jn 18:36-37** “**My kingdom is not of this world...**”
2. After his resurrection, He claimed the extent of His rule: authority over all heaven and earth! - **Mt 28:18; cf. Ep 1:20-23**
Matthew “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**”
- Eph.” ²⁰ **he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be**

head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

B. HIS KINGSHIP AND KINGDOM PROCLAIMED IN REVELATION

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

[“King of kings” ...certainly an indication of “**The Preeminent Christ**”! But notice also that He is...]

II. THE SAVIOR FROM OUR SINS (14)

A. BY VIRTUE OF HIS BLOOD WE HAVE “REDEMPTION”...

1. The word “redemption” (Greek, **apolutrosis**) means “a releasing effected by payment of ransom”
2. I.e., we have been “released” from the bondage of sin through the payment of Jesus’ blood shed on the cross - cf. **Mt 20:28**

B. BY VIRTUE OF HIS BLOOD WE HAVE “FORGIVENESS”...

1. “Forgiveness” (Greek, **aphesis**) means “release from bondage or imprisonment”
2. In Christ, we have “forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty”

[As pronounced by the Angel to Joseph, “**you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.**” (Mt 1:21) A “king” capable of providing “redemption” and “forgiveness” from sins; truly indications of preeminence! But there is more, for He is also...]

III. THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (15)

A. THE WORD "IMAGE"...

1. Comes from the Greek **eikon** {i-kone'}
2. Meaning "an image, figure, likeness"

B. JESUS IS THE "IMAGE" OF GOD WHO IS INVISIBLE!

1. No man has ever seen God, but Jesus has "declared" (made manifest) Him - **Jn 1:18**
2. As Jesus Himself said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" - **Jn 14:7-9**
3. As expressed by the writer to the Hebrews, Jesus is:
 - a. The brightness of God's Glory
 - b. The express image of His Person - **He 1:3**
4. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians...
 - a. Jesus is the "image of God" - **2 Co 4:4**
 - b. In the "face of Jesus Christ" is "the knowledge of the glory of God" - **2 Co 4:6**
5. From these passages, we learn that Jesus accurately and fully expresses the being and perfection of God!
6. I.e., by looking at Jesus (as He is revealed in the Word of God), we can see and know the Father, who is invisible!

[The next description of "**The Preeminent Christ**" is one that confused many and caused some to draw erroneous conclusions. We observe that Jesus is also...]

IV. THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION (15)

A. CONCERNING THE TERM "FIRSTBORN"...

1. It can mean "the first one born" (or created)
 - a. Some have therefore concluded from this passage that Jesus is a created being, the first of all God's creations

- b. For example, those led by the Watchtower Society (who call themselves “Jehovah’s Witnesses”)
- 2. But it is also used in the Scriptures as **a metaphor** to describe one occupies the rank and privilege of being firstborn (without actually being “firstborn”)
 - a. Used by God in this way to refer to the nation of Israel - **Exo 4:22**
 - b. Used by God in this way to refer to David, who was the youngest of eight brothers **Psa 89:20,27**
- 3. Therefore, any interpretation of this term must be in harmony with what is taught about Christ elsewhere...
 - a. And Jesus is clearly proclaimed to be the creator of **all** things - **Jn 1:1-3; Co 1:16**
 - b. It could not be said He is the creator of **all** things if He Himself was a created being!
 - c. Which is why the JW’s try to get around these passages by inserting the modifier “**other**” four times in their NWT translation of **Co 1:16-17!**

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE PHRASE “FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION”...

1. To stress that Jesus is preeminent overall creation, He has all the rights of one **as if** He were a “firstborn” 2. Just as God...
 - a. Declared **Israel** to be His “**firstborn**” **over the nations of the earth** (though not the first nation to exist)
 - b. Declared **David** to be His “**firstborn**” **over the kings of the earth** (though not the first king either) so God has declared **Jesus** to be the “**firstborn**” **over all creation** (though He Himself was not a created being!)

[As already touched upon above, we learn from Paul that Jesus is also...]

V. THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS (16-17a)

A. THIS AMAZING TRUTH CONCERNING JESUS IS ALSO CONFIRMED BY...

1. John in his gospel - **Jn 1:3**
2. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews - **He 1:3**

B. FROM THESE VERSES WE LEARN WHEN THE WORLD WAS CREATED...

1. Jesus was the **creative agent** by which everything came into being!
2. Everything was created **for** Him also!

C. AS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS...

1. It only follows that He existed before anything that was created
2. Which seems to be the idea of **17a** ("He is before all things")

[In addition to being the Creator of all things, in **verse 17** we learn that Jesus is also...]

VI. THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS (17b)

A. "IN HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST..."

1. That is, in Him all things are kept in their present state
2. Their existence, order, and arrangement are continued in the present form by **His** power!

B. WHAT IF JESUS CHOSE TO REMOVE HIS POWER...?

1. Every created thing would fall into disorder!
2. Or sink back into nothingness!

[Truly in regards to **creation**, Jesus is "**The Preeminent Christ!**" But His preeminence also extends to the realm of **redemption**, suggested earlier in **vs. 13-14**, and now developed further in **vs. 18-20...**]

VII. THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH (18a)

A. THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST...

1. The word “church” comes from **ekklesia** {ek-klay-see’-ah}, meaning a congregation

or assembly made up of people who have been “called out”
2. Those called out by the gospel of Christ into His kingdom form a great assembly or congregation
3. The term “church” is used in two senses:
 - a. **Universal** - the body of saved believers throughout the world
 - b. **Local** - a congregation of saved believers in one locality
4. In the context of **Co 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 -
Mt 28:18
2. How much more so, should He hold the rank of preeminence in His Church!
3. He is the One, therefore, who controls the destiny of those in His church! - cf. **Re 2, 3**

[Jesus is also...]

VIII. THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD (18b)

A. THE WORD “BEGINNING”...

1. Comes from the Greek, **arche** {ar-khay’}
2. Various shades of meaning include...

- a. Beginning, origin
- b. The person or thing that commences, the first person or thing in a series, the leader
- c. That by which anything begins to be, the origin, the active cause
- d. The first place, principality, rule, magistracy

B. REMEMBER THE USE OF THE WORD “FIRSTBORN”...

1. It does not necessarily mean the **first** one, but can refer to the **preeminent** one
2. Jesus was not the first person to rise from the dead (cf. Jairus’ daughter, the 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 “first fruits” of the resurrection - cf. **1 Co 15:20,23**
4. The term “first fruits” suggests “the cream of the crop”, i.e., that which is preeminent

C. THUS, IN REGARDS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD...

1. Jesus is both the “origin, active cause” (the beginning) and the “firstborn from the dead”
2. He is the “active cause” of the resurrection: “in Christ all shall be made alive” - **1 Co 15:22**
3. 3. By His own resurrection, never to die again, He is the “firstborn from the dead”, the “first fruits”, i.e., the preeminent one!

[Two more points are made by Paul in regards to “**The Preeminent Christ**” in this passage. The first is that in Jesus dwells...]

IX. THE FULLNESS OF ALL THINGS (19)

A. JESUS IS CLEARLY THE “FULLNESS” OF DEITY...

1. We have seen that He is “the image of the invisible God” - **Co 1:15**
2. Paul later declares that in Jesus “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” - **Co 2:9**

B. JESUS IS ALSO OUR “FULLNESS”...

1. In Him we have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” - **Co 1:14**
2. In Him we have “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” - **Co 2:3**
3. Yes, we are “complete in Him” - **Co 2:10**

[Finally, we learn that Jesus is...]

X. THE RECONCILER OF ALL THINGS TO GOD (20)

A. THE FATHER’S DESIRE IS TO RECONCILE TO HIMSELF...

1. “things on earth”
 - a. Which includes sinful man - cf. **2 Co 5:18-20**
 - b. Both Jews and Gentiles - cf. **Ep 2:14-18**
2. “things in heaven”
 - a. Admittedly, a difficult phrase
 - b. It would be easy to fall into vain speculation as to what this means (e.g., what things in heaven need reconciliation to God?)
 - c. Whatever Paul may be alluding to, the point is clear: Jesus is to be the reconciler of **all** things to God!

B. GOD IS ABLE TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS BY JESUS TO HIMSELF...

1. “having made peace through the blood of His cross”

2. Through the death of His Son, it is now possible for sinful man to be reconciled to God! **Ro 5:10; Co 1:21-22**

CONCLUSION

1. Paul had certainly come a long way in his understanding of Jesus since that day he met Him on the road to Damascus!
 - a. From saying “Who are you, lord?”
 - b. To proclaiming Jesus to be:
 - 1) The king over His kingdom
 - 2) The savior from our sins
 - 3) The image of the invisible God
 - 4) The firstborn over all creation
 - 5) The creator of all things
 - 6) The sustainer of all things
 - 7) The head of the body, the church
 - 8) The beginning, the firstborn from the dead
 - 9) The fullness of all things
 - 10) The reconciler of all things to God
2. I trust that our own understanding and appreciation of Jesus has increased as a result of studying this passage!
3. Perhaps we can also appreciate why Jesus so much praise and adoration in heaven - cf. **Re 5: 11-12**
4. What are **we** doing to show our appreciation to Jesus, our **“preeminent and all-sufficient Savior?”**
5. Consider the words of Jesus in **Luke 6:46**...implying that the best way we can praise Him is by obeying Him Have you? Are you?