



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 6



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

WHO JESUS IS

“ 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature: ¹⁶ For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the Head of the body, the church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. ¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” ^{KJV} (Colossians 1:15-19)

INTRODUCTION

The Spirit has affirmed **the cause** of our salvation – God the Father. It is He who has qualified us to participate in the inheritance – the *“things He has prepared for them that love Him”* (1 Cor 2:9). He delivered us from the power of darkness, in which we were hopelessly held. Having taken us from the power of darkness, He transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!

THE HIGHER VIEW

This is the high view of our salvation. **At this point the Spirit is dealing with Divine causes.** It is imperative that the people of God consider their salvation from the proper

perspectives. For some, the primary approach is what men must do to be saved. To be sure, there are things that men must do to be saved. Our experiential entrance into the Kingdom will be expounded in the second chapter of this book. That entrance is not minimized. **The cause** for it is to be expounded.

However, unless salvation can be viewed from this higher perspective, confidence and assurance will not be realized. Confidence and assurance are the daughters of faith – **and faith must rest upon what God has done, NOT what we have done.** The source of your confidence cannot be your obedience, even though that obedience is absolutely

essential. Confidence, which is *“the full assurance of faith”* (Heb 10:22), must be in God Himself. For this reason, the Apostle does not begin by referring to how they received the Word, or to their obedience. Rather, he begins by affirming their salvation is of God. This is a consistent manner in Apostolic writings.

✚ **ROMANS.** First they are referred as *“the called of Jesus Christ,” “beloved of God,”* and *“called to be saints”* (1:6-7).

✚ **CORINTHIANS.** He begins by saying they are *“sanctified in Christ Jesus”* and *“called to be saints”* (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:2).

OUTLINE

- ▶ THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (1:15a)
- ▶ THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE (1:15b)
- ▶ BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED (1:16a)
- ▶ HE CREATED THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE (1:16b)
- ▶ HE CREATED THRONES, DOMINIONS, PRINCIPALITIES, AND POWERS (1:16c)
- ▶ EVERYTHING WAS CREATED FOR HIM (1:16d)
- ▶ HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS (1:17a)
- ▶ BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST (1:17b)
- ▶ HE IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (1:18a)
- ▶ HE IS THE BEGINNING (1:18b)
- ▶ HE IS THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD (1:18c)
- ▶ IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREMINENCE (1:18d).
- ▶ ALL FULLNESS DWELLS IN HIM (1:19)

- ✚ **GALATIANS.** Christ *“gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father”* (Gal 1:4).
- ✚ **EPHESIANS.** God the Father blessed us with *“all spiritual blessings,”* in heavenly places Christ, and chose us in Him (Eph 1:3-4).
- ✚ **PHILIPPIANS.** God, who had begun the work in them, would *“perform it until the day of Christ”* (Phil 1:6).
- ✚ **COLOSSIANS.** They had a *“hope in heaven”* that was laid up for them in heaven, as the Gospel announced (Col 1:5).
- ✚ **THESSALONIANS.** Paul knew *“their election of God”* (1 Thess 1:4).
- ✚ **TIMOTHY.** Paul opens by referring to *“God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope”* (1 Tim 1:1).

- ✚ **TITUS.** Paul first refers to the *“hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* (Tit 1:2).
- ✚ **HEBREWS.** Paul begins with a stirring declaration of God speaking to us through His Son (Heb 1:2-3).
- ✚ **PETER.** Writing to scattered believers, Peter speaks of them as being elected *“according to the foreknowledge of God, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience”* (1 Pet 1:2). His second letter affirms they had obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God (2 Pet 1:1).
- ✚ **JOHN.** John begins by affirming the reality of, and fellowship with, the Father and the Son (1 John 1:1-3).
- ✚ **REVELATION.** This book begins with John’s proclamation of Christ, and the record of his exposure to the glorified Savior (Rev 1:1-19).

It is not comely for the emphasis of any preacher or teacher to be placed upon what men do. The accentuation must be placed where it belongs – on the Father and the Son, and what they have done. Within that context honest and good hearts will not hesitate to do what is required of them.

The responsibilities of men can only be properly understood within the greater light of the persons of the Father and the Son. I am personally appalled at the meager level of the knowledge of God and of the Son of God that is found in the average church, or heard from the average preacher. It is indicative of the serious spiritual malady that is afflicting Western Christianity.

THE FOCUS OF CHRIST’S MINISTRY

Jesus Himself set the precedent for emphasis by declaring He alone could reveal the Father (Matt 11:27; Lk 10:22). In fact, Jesus is primarily the expositor of God. It is affirmed, *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”* (the Father)” (John 1:18). Christ affirmed He only did what He saw His Father doing (John 5:19). He said the Father loved Him and showed Him everything He was doing (John 5:20). He also declared the ultimate honor went to the Father: *“That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him”* (John 5:23).

He traced everything He did back to the Father, declaring the Father sent and commissioned Him (John 12:49), and taught Him (John 8:28). In fact, the purpose for coming to Jesus is to ultimately come to the Father (John 14:6). Jesus always kept these things before the people. He told men what they were to do, but that was not His emphasis. He showed compassion on the sick and afflicted, but that was not His emphasis. The truth of the matter was that men did not understand God. Those who heard Jesus with any degree of understanding sensed the heart of His message. That is precisely why Philip said *“Show us the Father”* (John 14:8). Christ’s answer to him confirms He was truly the expositor of God, both in His Person, and in His teaching: *“he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”* (John 14: 9).

THE SON MUST BE EXPOUNDED

There is a need to expound the person of Christ Jesus, just as Jesus expounded the Father. God could not be understood academically, and neither can

THERE IS A NEED TO EXPOUND THE PERSON OF CHRIST JESUS, JUST AS JESUS EXPOUNDED THE FATHER. GOD COULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD ACADEMICALLY, AND NEITHER CAN HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST THE LORD.

His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Paul once said he counted *“all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ”* (Phil 3:8). **The fellowship of Christ into which we**

know who Jesus really is, and thus will not come to Him.

False Christs

There is such a thing as *“false Christs”* (Matt 24:24). These are not always self proclaimed *“Christs.”* Paul spoke of those who delivered the message of *“another Jesus,” “another spirit,”* and

God’s Son.

Speaking through the Apostles, God has identified the real Jesus – His only begotten Son. He has spoken specifically about His Person, accomplishments, present activity, and future coming. Furthermore, the Father works through this message to draw people to the real Christ. Jesus said, *“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:44). And again, *“Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father”* (John 6:65).

AS THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED AND EXPOUNDED, A PROPER VIEW OF JESUS IS BEING PROMOTED. IT IS BEING BROUGHT WITHIN THE REACH OF MEN. WORKING THROUGH THAT WORD, THE FATHER DRAWS PEOPLE TO THE SON.

As the message of the Gospel is preached and expounded, a proper view of Jesus is being promoted. It is being brought within the reach of men. Working through that word, the Father draws people to the Son. This is why Jesus will not cast away those who truly come to Him. Such precious souls are being given to Him by the Father. That is why Jesus said, *“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37).

have been called (1 Cor 1:9) **can be no deeper than our knowledge of Him.** No person can have a close and productive walk with a Christ who is not known. Thus, the need to declare Him, preach Him, and expound Him.

“another gospel.” “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Cor 11:4). Consider what the Apostle said. He warned of those who preached *“another gospel”* – a message that spoke *“another Jesus,”* and promised *“another spirit”* could be received.

Within the Context of Truth
God always works within the context of truth. Satan always works within the framework of the lie. A false Christ provides an opportunity for the devil to work – not God. There is a gospel through which Satan works. **The apprehension of the true Christ, however, is evidence of the working of God, and a guarantee that He will continue to work.** It is the Father who draws us to the Son. That is the rationale behind the following proclamation of Jesus Christ, which expands the horizon of truth.

There is another reason that mandates the need for the proclamation of the Son of God. Jesus Himself set before us the stark realities concerning knowing Him. *“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him”* (Mat 11:27). That is a most arresting statement. It takes the matter of knowing Christ out of the realm of academics, and puts it into the realm of the Spirit. If God is not personally involved in the matter, no person will

The Apostle preceded this statement by saying, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Cor 11:3). That is, one of Satan’s chief delusive tactics is the fabrication of *“another Jesus”* – one who bears the same name as the real Jesus, and claims to be

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

^{1:15a} **Who is the image of the invisible God . . .** “We now enter a most lofty proclamation of the Person of Christ. This is what Jesus **IS** in His redemptive capacity. This is God’s *“dear Son.”* It is the same Person who *“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with*

God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This is the One who was *“in the form of God,”* and *“did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,”*^{NASB} or clung on to (Phil 2:6). His *“goings forth have been of old, from everlasting”* (Mic 5:2). Existing with the Father before the

foundation of the world, He **“had”** a *“glory”* that has never been seen in this world. In fact, it will only be seen in the world to come (John 17:5). While He was in that inexplicable glory, He volunteered for enter the world in a specially prepared body, in which Divine requirements would

be carried out. Those requirements would require His death for the sins of the world (Heb 10:5-10).

The exposition of Jesus that is given in Scripture always relates to His humanity. There is no extended teaching concerning His Person prior to Him coming into the world. Enough is said of Him to ensure us He is, in fact, “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16), and that He is the creative Source of all things (John 1:3). The thrust of the teaching, however, refers to what was involved in Him coming into the world, what He did while in this world, how He died, was raised, and exalted to the right hand of God, It concerns what He is doing now, and how He will come again and judge the world. These all pertain to His humanity.

It is not that this is all there is to Him. Rather, it is because there is no other way in which He can be properly understood. Also, He is presently bringing “*many sons to glory*” (Heb 2:10) as the risen, glorified, and enthroned “*Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:5). Therefore, the Spirit will declare who and what Jesus is NOW, for that bears directly upon the matter of us getting to glory.

IMAGE

“*Who is the image . . .*” All of the major versions of Scripture read the same: “*who is the image.*” The New Living Translation reads, “*Christ is the visible image.*”

Etymologically

Etymologically, the word “*image*” means “an image, figure, or likeness.” ^{THAYER} It comes from the Greek word εἰκών (ei-kon), which is used in at least form six times in Scripture.

Coins

Two of them are found when Jesus asked whose “*image*” was found on the local coins (Matt 22:20; Mk 12:16).

Man

One is found in First Corinthians 11:7, where man is said to be “*the image and glory of God.*” This confirms the statement made in Genesis 1:26: “*And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after our likeness*” (Gen 1:26). This particular image, found uniquely in

mankind, was marred by sin, causing it to lose its exactness. However, even though it was marred, yet it placed man at a higher level than the brute creation. Therefore, after the flood God commanded Noah, “*Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man*” (Gen 9:6). In redemption, this image is renewed, as it is written, “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Col 3:10).

incomplete and now distorted reflection that is seen in fallen man. The idea is that God is made conspicuous to us in the Person of His Son.

An Express Image

The book of Hebrews contains a phrase concerning Jesus that is relevant to this text. “. . . *His Son . . . Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person . . .*” (Heb 1:1-3).

The Father is never seen more

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HERE IS THAT GOD THE FATHER CAN
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OF JESUS CHRIST.**

The Second Beast

Still another use of “*image*” is found in Revelation 13:14-15, where a second beast is said to make an “*image*” of the first beast, giving life to it that is should speak.

The Lord Jesus

The same usage of the word “*image*” as in our text is found in Second Corinthians 4:4, where Christ Himself is again said to be “*the image of God.*” It should be obvious that this is a special use of the word “*image,*” and not strictly as used in the other passages.

The point that is being made here is that God the Father can only be manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ. While some of His qualities, even God’s “*eternal power and Godhead,*” are “*clearly seen*” from the creation (Rom 1:19), that does not constitute a saving manifestation of God.

By saying Christ is “the image,” the Spirit affirms He is the means by which God is perceived. A person knows no more of God that He knows of Jesus. He accurately and fully reveals God, as compared with the testimony of nature, which is partial or fragmentary. A **precise** reflection of God is seen in Christ, as compared with the

clearly than He is in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is the “*brightness of His glory,*” precisely reflecting the resplendence of God. That reflection is in no way diminished, and clarifies the Father’s Person and purpose. Jesus is in every way precise – “*the express image*” of God’s Person. **Jesus never conducted Himself in any way that tended to misrepresent or hide the Person of God.** He was, in every sense, “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16). He faithfully revealed how God thought, how He speaks, and what He has purposed. What He said of men is exactly what God thought of them. How He responded to men and circumstances is precisely how God responds to them. What He said He came to do was what the Father was doing. What He said is what the Father was saying. His assessments were the judgments of the Father. He was “*the image of God*” – the “*express image of His person.*”

These things being true, we must depend upon Christ to provide is with an understanding of God. That is His exclusive ministry – and to know God IS eternal life (John 17:2). Thus John writes, “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that*

is true, **even in His Son Jesus Christ.** *This is the true God, and eternal life*” (1 John 5:20).

INVISIBLE GOD

“ . . . of the invisible God . . . ”

Elsewhere God is referred to as *“Him who is invisible”* (Heb 11:27). That is, He is in no way visible to the natural senses. John said of Him, *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath*

God” (Judges 13:22). Isaiah wrote, *“And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left”* (1 Ki 22:19). Ezekiel wrote, *“I saw visions of God”* (Ezek 1:1).

The unlearned assume there is a contradiction in these texts. On the one hand, we are told no man has ever seen God. On the other, there are several texts

God” also referred to a revelation of the glory of God, described as *“the likeness of the glory of the Lord”* (Ezek 1:28).

Thus, God Himself is never said to have been *“seen”* by men. Rather, He was manifested in glory, through an angel, or some other visible and sensible means.

Moses is said to have *“endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”* It is very carefully stated, however, that this was the seeing of *“faith,”* not of the eye (Heb 11:27).

No saving knowledge of, or acquaintance with, God can be gained through the natural senses. Because the entire universe has been contaminated by sin, the immediate presence of God tends to be destructive. Thus, when only His glory appeared on Sinai, there was a great disruption of the natural order. Although His glory only appeared on the top of the mount, the *“the whole mount quaked greatly”* (Ex 19:18). There was *“darkness, clouds, and thick darkness”* (Deut 4:11). Even *“the mountains melted from before the Lord”* (Judges 5:5), the *“earth shook,”* and the *“heavens also dropped”* (Psa 68:7). **The whole universe is subject to extinction at the presence of the Lord.** In fact, it is written that the final revelation of the Lord will mean the demise of the natural order. *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”* (Rev 20:11).

In all of nature, therefore, there can be no immediate knowledge of God. **Were it not for a Divine initiative, man would be forever ignorant of God, and unable to know Him** – which ignorance will bring damnation. As it is written, *“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thess 1:8).

HALLELUJAH

It is with great joy, therefore, that we read of the Lord Jesus being the *“image of the invisible God.”* Through Him, and Him alone, we gain the knowledge of God, through which we are justified. That is why it is said of Jesus, *“by His knowledge shall My righteous*

IN ALL OF NATURE, THEREFORE, THERE CAN BE NO IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. WERE IT NOT FOR A DIVINE INITIATIVE, MAN WOULD BE FOREVER IGNORANT OF GOD, AND UNABLE TO KNOW HIM – WHICH IGNORANCE WILL BRING DAMNATION.

declared Him” (John 1:18). God Himself is *“invisible.”*

Jesus Himself affirmed He was the only Man who had seen the Father. *“Not*

that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father” (John 6:46). He also declared to the people, *“And the Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape”* (John 5:37). Again, John wrote, *“No man hath seen God at any time”* (1 John 4:12).

Seeming Contradictions

It may appear on the surface as though these statements contradict certain texts. For example, it is said of Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, *“And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness”* (Ex 24:10). It is also said of the *“nobles of Israel,”* *“And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink”* (Ex 24:11).

It is written of Jacob, *“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved”* (Gen 32:30). After receiving a message from God, Manoah, father of Samson, said, *“we have seen*

that speak of people seeing Him. We read of God being *“invisible,”* yet being seen.

✦ In Exodus 24:10-11, **the people saw the glory of God**, not the Person of God. It is specifically stated, *“And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel”* (Ex 24:16-17). And again, *“And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly”* (Ex 19:18).

✦ In Genesis 32:30, Jacob referred to the time he wrestled with *“a man”* (Gen 32:24). Referring to this incident, Hosea declares it was *“the angel”* (Hos 12:4).

✦ In Judges 13:22, the occasion referred to is when Manoah saw *“the angel of the Lord”* (13:21).

✦ In referring to Isaiah’s experience of seeing God, John said, *“These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him”* (John 12:41).

✦ Ezekiel’s reference to *“visions of*

“*Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities*” (Isa 53:11). That is, by the knowledge of God that He imparts.

Now, let us hear the words of Jesus again. “*All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth*

the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Mat 11:27).

Within the context of that revelation, we learn that Jesus is not

only the “express imaged of God,” but that as such He desires to reveal Him to all those who come to Him – to learn from Him (Matt 11:28). He is “*meek and lowly*” in teaching us – gentle, yet effective.

THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE

“^{1:15b} . . . **the Firstborn of every creature.**” Other versions read, “*the Firstborn of ALL creation,*” ^{ASV} “*coming into existence before all living things,*” ^{BBE} “*Firstbegotten of every creature,*” ^{GENEVA} “*the Firstborn OVER all creation,*” ^{NIB} and “*He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation.*” ^{NLT}

This is a text that has been subjected to all manner of corrupt human analysis and explanation.

THE FIRSTBORN

In this text, the word “*firstborn*” comes from the Greek word πρωτότοκος (pro-tot-ok'-os) and means “*firstborn,*” or “*firstbegotten.*” It is used in this precise form (adjective) three times in Scripture – all of them applying to the Lord Jesus.

- ✚ “*Who is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** of every creature*” (Col 1:15).
- ✚ “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the **firstborn** from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*” (Col 1:18).
- ✚ “*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the **first begotten** of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*” (Rev 1:5). Other versions translate this verse “*firstborn.*” ^{NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV}

The same word is used in another form (πρωτοτόκων, pro-tot-kon) one time, and also refers to Christ.

- ✚ “*To the general assembly and church of the **firstborn,** which are written*

in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23).

The same word is used four times in Scripture, in an alternative form (πρωτότοκον, pro-tot-ok-os), also applying exclusively to the Lord Jesus. This use is slightly different.

This refers to the slaying of the firstborn of all Egypt, including “*both man and beast*” – the tenth and last plague sent upon Egypt (Heb 11:28; Ex 12:12).

- ✚ “*Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the **firstborn** should touch them*” (Heb 11:28).

IF THE LORD JESUS IS, IN HIS ESSENTIAL PERSON, A CREATED BEING, THE FACT OF HIS DEEP HUMILITY IS OF NO SIGNIFICANCE. IN SUCH A CASE, HE WOULD, BY NATURE, BE SUBJECT TO GOD, AND A SERVANT AS WELL.

- ✚ “*And knew her not till she had brought forth her **firstborn** son: and he called His name JESUS*” (Mat 1:25).
- ✚ “*And she brought forth her **firstborn** son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn*” (Luke 2:7).
- ✚ “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the **firstborn** among many brethren*” (Rom 8:29).
- ✚ “*And again, when He bringeth in the **Firstbegotten** into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him*” (Heb 1:6).

One time the same word is used in the neuter gender (πρωτότοκα – pro-tot-oka), applying to both man and beast.

The Issue

The issue with this text arises from the arguments of those who are not willing to acknowledge the Divinity of Jesus. Chief among these are the Jehovah’s Witnesses, although they are not alone in their view. The corrupted view is that Jesus Christ is **essentially** less than God – that He is, in every way, a created being. He is, in this view, more related to angels than to God.

Based on the texts in which “*firstborn*” is applied to Jesus, this erroneous view states that He was the first created personality – even before the foundation of the world. He is considered older than any angel or other lofty spirit, yet not eternal in His essential Person.

I am affirming that this is a gross corruption of the text, is blasphemy against the Son of God, and a denial of Christ’s Person and position prior to Him entering into

the world. In His entrance into the world, our Lord *“humbled Himself and became obedient unto death”* (Phil 2:8). This was a condescension of the greatest magnitude – one in which He laid aside the prerogatives, or rights and authority, of Deity, in order to become subservient to the Father. In this unparalleled humility He Himself did not become less or smaller, but voluntarily took a lower seat. As it is written, *“But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”* (Phil 2:7).

If the Lord Jesus is, in His essential Person, a created being, the fact of His deep humility is of no significance.

related to eternal life (John 17:2; 1 John 5:20), includes an understanding of who He really is.

Meaning of the Passages

MATTHEW 1:25 and LUKE 2:7.

Here Jesus is referred to as Mary’s *“firstborn son.”* This does not refer to Him in His redemptive capacity, but in relation to Mary herself. She **did** bear other children after him, as all the people knew. *“Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?”* (Mat 13:56).

ROMANS 8:29, COLOSSIANS

HEBREWS 1:6. In this text *“Firstborn”* is used of Jesus in relation to the Father – *“HIS Firstborn.”*^{NASB} This is in reference to the Word becoming *“flesh,”* and dwelling among men (John 1:14). It is the sense in which He is also called *“the ONLY begotten Son”* (John 1:18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9) and *“ONLY begotten of the Father”* (John 1:14). He is the only man that was born without a fleshly father. In this way He differs from Adam, who himself was not born, but created by God. He also differs from Adam in that He is a different kind of creation – one in which Someone from eternity (Mic 5:2) entered into a human form.

HEBREWS 12:23. The *“church of the Firstborn”* is the body of the redeemed. These are being *“conformed”* to the image of the *“Firstborn among many brethren,”* and are His body – the ones through whom He works.

References to His Manhood

All of these references have to do with Christ’s manhood – with *“the Word becoming flesh,”* *“humbling Himself,”* taking upon Himself *“the form of a servant,”* becoming *“obedient unto death,”* and rising from the dead. **None of them refer to the Savior as He was prior to His incarnation,** when He was *“in the form of God,”* or *“was with God, and was God.”*

Uniquely Begotten

Whether we are speaking of Christ’s entrance into the world as a *“babe,”* or His resurrection from the dead, *“First”* makes Him unique. He was the first Son **begotten** by God. Adam was the first man **created** by God. If Jesus was created, He is a brother to Adam, not *“the second man.”*

Jesus was also the first man to be raised from the dead **to die no more.** It is said of Him, He did *“not see corruption”* (Acts 2:27), *“neither His flesh see corruption”* (Acts 2:31), *“no more to return to corruption”* (Acts 13:34), *“He ever liveth”* (Heb 7:25), and *“I am alive for evermore”* (Rev 1:8).

Thus He was uniquely begotten from the womb, and from the grave as well.

Federal Head of the New Creation

HE IS THE ONLY MAN THAT WAS BORN WITHOUT A FLESHLY FATHER. IN THIS WAY HE DIFFERS FROM ADAM, WHO HIMSELF WAS NOT BORN, BUT CREATED BY GOD. HE ALSO DIFFERS FROM ADAM IN THAT HE IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF CREATION – ONE IN WHICH SOMEONE FROM ETERNITY (MIC 5:2) ENTERED INTO A HUMAN FORM.

In such a case, He would, by nature, be subject to God, and a servant as well. But this is not the case. He took upon Himself the *“form of a bondservant,”*^{NKJV} which means He was not a servant of God before. The corrupt view, namely that Jesus is totalloy a created being, means He was not, in fact, *“in the form of God,”* as is affirmed in Phil 2:6), nor could it be said of Him that He *“was God”* (John 1:1).

If this is thought to be an inconsequential position, the following must be considered.

- ✦ Scripture never regards a view of Jesus – any view – to be inconsequential.
- ✦ A correct view of Jesus is directly related to our salvation .
- ✦ The Spirit makes no provision for *“another Jesus,”* or one that is not precisely proclaimed in the Gospel.
- ✦ Knowing Christ, which is directly

1:18, and REVELATION 1:5. Here Jesus is referred to as *“the Firstborn among many brethren,”* *“the Firstborn from the dead,”* and *“the First begotten of the dead.”* That is, He is the first of the *“new creation”* in which manhood and godhood are joined together. He is the prototype of all the children of God – the One to whom all of them are being *“conformed.”* This does not have to do with His origin, but rather is related to Him being raised from the dead.

COLOSSIANS 1:15 (our text). As the *“Firstborn of every creature,”* He is both the Source and the Head of everything created. Here the word *“Firstborn”* does not refer to Christ’s relationship to God, but rather to all of creation. That includes the natural creation and the spiritual re-creation. The fact that this phrase is preceded by *“Who is the Image of the invisible God,”* confirms **this not a description of the Lord in His character, or essential Person, but in the position He assumed as Savior.**

Later the Spirit will affirm that Jesus is the *"Firstborn from the dead,"* in order that *"in all things He might have the preeminence"* (1:18). I will comment further on this matter when we cover that verse.

Declared In the Types

The significance of the term *"firstborn"* was most fully developed under the First Covenant, although the concept did exist before that. There are several references to *"firstborn"* that simply refer to chronology (Gen 10:15; 19:31,33,34,37; 22:21; 25:13; 29:26; 36:15; 38:6; 38:7; 41:51). In the account of Jacob and Esau, *"firstborn"* is first associated with a *"birthright,"* or a special inheritance and privileges (Gen 27:19-35).

When Joseph's brothers confronted him as a ruler in Egypt, they sat before him *"the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his"* (Gen 43:33).

Jacob referred to his firstborn son, Reuben, as *"my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power"* (Gen 49:3). Here, the concept of the *"firstborn"* first began to be developed extensively.

The Lord referred to the nation of Israel as *"My firstborn"* (Ex 4:22). By this He meant Israel was the first nation, or group of people, begotten by Him. As such, certain privileges were vouchsafed to them.

All of the *"firstborn"* of the children of Israel were *"sanctified"* to the

Lord, especially belonging to Him (Ex 13:2; 22:29; Num 3:13).

The Law spoke of *"the right of the firstborn,"* showing that he had the preeminence in the household after the father (Deut 21:17). This will be developed further in verse 18.

EVERY CREATURE

The expression *"every creature"* means everything that was created, or *"made"* (Rom 1:20; Heb 12:27). The *"Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim 2:5) is to all creation

- ✚ His resurrection (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5).
- ✚ Being *"the image of the invisible God"* (Col 1:15).
- ✚ Receiving the worship of holy angels (Heb 1:6).
- ✚ Being over the church (Heb 12:23). Having preeminence in all things (Col 1:18).

As with all matters pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ, **God has made no**

WE DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF FORMULATING OUR OWN IDEAS ABOUT THE SAVIOR, NOR ARE WE TO ASSIGN ANY VALUE TO HUMAN NOTIONS CONCERNING HIM.

what the *"firstborn"* was to the family. All creation is subject to Him. There is nothing created that is not subject to Him. Whether good or evil, the risen Christ is Lord of all.

A BRIEF SUMMARY

The matters with which Christ being *"the Firstborn"* is related confirm the importance of this aspect of His redemptive role.

- ✚ Associated with the name *"Jesus"* (Matt 1:25).
- ✚ The One to whom we are being conformed (Rom 8:29).

allowance for improper thoughts concerning the Son. We do not have the luxury of formulating our own ideas about the Savior, nor are we to assign any value to human notions concerning Him. The Gospel is properly called *"THE record God has given of His Son"* (1 John 5:10-11). That includes His Person as well as His works. Only the Father *"knows the Son"* (Matt 1:27).

Hence, we are wholly reliant upon His record concerning the Son, who He is, what He had done, what He is doing, and what He will do in the future. Our text is part of that record, and is thus essential for proper understanding.

BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED

"^{16a} For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth . . . "

The Holy Spirit is establishing the absolute priority of the Lord Jesus. As we will see later, the Colossians were being subjected to doctrines that tended to minimize the Lord Jesus by placing an emphasis on philosophy (2:8), meat,

drink, and days (2:16), and ordinances that were *"after the commandments and doctrines of men"* (2:20-22). These doctrines did not clarify Christ, but competed with Him, shifting the emphasis to things pertaining to this world.

The relevance of this passage is seen in the continued practice of placing stress on matters other than Jesus. These

range from the church itself and various ordinances, to the interpretations of men and matters pertaining to this world. This shift of emphasis is the mother of all denominations, and the cause of all division. As we will see from this text, the Spirit will not allow the emphasis established by God Himself to be changed. He has poured everything into the Son, and woe to that person or system that

treats Him as secondary.

BY HIM

“For by Him were all things created . . .” Some versions read *“in Him”* ASV/NRSV/RSV/YLT and *“through whom.”* NLT

In the exposition of the Son of God, the Spirit begins where the Scripture begins – with creation. The *“Him”* of this text is the essential Person of the Lord Jesus. This refers to Him **before** He was *“the Man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim 2:5). Everything – *“all things”* – were created by the Word, when He was *“with God and was God.”*

Here, the created is distinguished from the Creator. This again confirms that the Person of the Lord Jesus was not created. This is the Person who *“took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”* (Phil

✦ *“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, **who created all things by Jesus Christ**”* (Eph 3:9).

✦ *“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, **by whom also He made the worlds**”* (Heb 1:2).

A Modern Heresy

The Scripture nowhere suggests that one who is created can himself create, or call something into being. Within the Christian community, there are some who affirm men can “create.” Certain men say that faith is a “creative force” or power. This erroneous supposition is based upon a corruption of Hebrews 11:3: *“Through faith we*

Annalee Skarin writes, *“YE ARE GODS shows that man himself creates every condition on earth, that the eternal source of power is released within man! It proves the truth of the great scriptures that ‘All that the Father has is yours.’”*

Other similar statements that have been made are as follows. *“Faith is a force just like electricity or gravity”* (Copeland), *“and it is the substance out of which God creates whatever is”* (Capps). God uses faith, and so may we in exactly the same way in order to produce the same results through obedience to the same *“laws of faith”* (Capps) that God applied in creation. *“You have the same ability [as God has] dwelling or residing on the inside of you”* (Capps). *“We have all the capabilities of God. We have His faith”* (Copeland). *“Words are the most powerful thing in the universe”* because they *“are containers”* that *“carry faith or fear and they produce after their kind”* (Capps). God operates by these very same laws. *“God had faith in His own words ... God had faith in His faith, because He spoke words of faith and they came to pass. That faith force was transported by words ... the God-kind-of-faith ... is released by the words of your mouth”* (Hagin). *“Creative power was in God’s mouth. It is in your mouth also”* (Capps). Because man is a little god *“in God’s class: very capable of operating on the same level of faith as God”* (Capps), and *“because all men are spirit beings”* (Hagin), therefore anyone, whether Christian or pagan, can release this *“faith force”* by speaking words if he only believes in his words as God believes in His (Hagin). *“God is a faith God. God releases His faith in Words, [and we must do the same:] ... Everything you say [positive or negative] will come to pass”* (Capps). *“Spiritual things are created by WORDS. Even natural, physical things are created by WORDS”* (Hagin). Beyond Seduction (pp. 51-53) and The Seduction of Christianity (pp. 28, 217)

FAITH HAS TO DO WITH APPREHENDING AND UNDERSTANDING, NOT CREATING. THERE IS NO CLEAR RECORD OF A PERSONALITY THAT HAS BEEN CREATED ACCOMPLISHING A CREATION, WHETHER BY WORD OF ANY OTHER MEANS.

2:7). The is the Word that *“was made flesh, and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14). This is the One who possessed Divine glory with the Father *“before the world was”* (John 17:5). A body was made for Him (Heb 10:5), but He Himself was not *“made,”* or create.

Scripture makes much of the Jesus, when He was *“in the form of God,”* creating all things.

✦ *“All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:3).

✦ *“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom are all things, and we by Him**”* (1 Cor 8:6).

understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3). **Rather than faith being the means by which we understand how the worlds came into existence, these men say that faith is the means God Himself used to create the world.** It was, they say, the creative force of faith that brought them into existence.

This is a teaching that is embraced, and energetically taught, by Charles Capps, Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland, and others. It states: *“Faith is the mightiest force in the universe. No other force can produce this kind of reaction. Faith is the creative ability of God. It is also the creative ability of man.”* <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn0201/faith.htm>

In the book titled *“Ye Are Gods,”*

This is a total misrepresentation of the Hebrews eleven text. **Faith has to do with apprehending and understanding, not creating.** There is no clear record of a personality that has been created accomplishing a creation, whether by word of any other means.

But there is no need to labor to establish this point. The Holy Spirit is clear on this matter. *“All things,”* with no restrictive word, were created *“by Him and for Him”* (Col 1:16), and *“without Him was not anything made that was made”* (John 1:3).

IN HEAVEN

“ . . . that are in heaven . . . ” Jesus Christ created the things *“that are in the heavens.”* This appears to refer to

the vast multitude of heavenly hosts (2 Chron 18:18), including angels (Heb 12:22), seraphim (Isa 6:2,6), cherubim (Gen 3:24; Ezek 10:1), principalities Eph 3:10), powers (Lk 21:26), the four living creatures (Rev 4:6), etc. It also includes all of the heavenly bodies, which are also called *“the host of heaven”* (Deut 4:19). The vastness of their number is beyond all human comprehension. There may be much more involved in *“the heavens.”*

IN EARTH

“ . . . and that are in earth . . . ”

Not only is the earth itself involved in this, together with the waters that are upon it, but a vast array of living things have been created as well. These include grass, trees, herbs, and all that has seed in itself (Gen 1:11-12). There are all manner of moving creatures in the sea, including *“great whales, and every living creature that moveth”* (Gen 1:19-21). There is also

“VISIBLE” THINGS ARE WITHIN RANGE OF OUR NATURAL FACULTIES, WHETHER OBSERVED BY THE NAKED EYE, THROUGH A MICROSCOPE, OR THROUGH A TELESCOPE. THEY ARE ADAPTED TO NATURAL VISION, AND ONLY NEED TO BE CLOSE ENOUGH OR LARGE ENOUGH FOR US TO SEE THEM.

“every winged fowl” (Gen 1:21), livestock, creatures that move along the ground, four footed beasts, and all manner of creatures the creep upon and within the earth (Gen 1:24-25). There is also humanity itself, that is the creation of the Lord.

Briefly summarized, the Scripture

speaks of creation in this manner: *“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”* (Ex 20:11). **The Christ who has redeemed us made them all, and He is presently ruling over them all.** Believe it: *“without Him was not anything made that was made.”*

HE CREATED THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

^{16b} *“ . . . visible and invisible . . . ”*

These are a further breakdown of things created by the Lord, and over which He presides. While it is possible to be diverted to scientific considerations, that is not the focus of this passage. **These are matters within the circumference of salvation.** They are things that can either contribute to, or take away from, spiritual life. This is not a lifeless academic observation in which things created are merely classified.

VISIBLE

This is a category of *“things that are made”* (Rom 1:20). The word *“visible”* does not merely mean things that are seen with the naked eye. It refers to the whole realm of matter – things that are accessible to the natural senses. *“Visible”* things have primarily to do with the earth. They are things for which the eye can lust, and things the child of God can also employ for *“necessary uses.”* (Tit 3:14).

“Visible” things are within range of our natural faculties, whether observed

by the naked eye, through a microscope, or through a telescope. They are adapted to natural vision, and only need to be close enough or large enough for us to see them.

There are visible things in heaven also, such as *“the fowls of heaven”* (Job 35:11) and the heavenly bodies, called *“the host of heaven”* – *“the sun, and the moon, and the stars”* (Deut 4:12). There are also *“the clouds,”* which are but a *“chariot”* for the Lord (Psa 104:3).

The whole realm of the *“visible,”* unspeakably vast and complex, was created by the Lord Jesus. Celestial and terrestrial bodies (1 Cor 15:40-41), bodies of birds, beasts, fish, and creeping things (1 Cor 15:38-39), plant life, the great waters of the earth, and above all mankind – Jesus made them all!

INVISIBLE

This is another category of the *“things that are made.”* However, we know of them only by testimony, for they are not visible, or accessible to the senses. Although there is a vast kingdom of

unseen temporal things, such as atoms, molecules, bacteria, etc., that is not the focus of the word *“invisible.”* There are vast interplanetary systems, measureless galaxies and solar systems that are behind human vision. However, I do not understand these to be the *“invisible”* things to which our text refers.

“Invisible” things do not accommodate themselves to human vision. They are of another order, and are not a part of the material universe. The angelic order is in this category, together with *“things under the earth”* (Phil 2:10). The lake of fire, *“prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10), together with the unseen abode of the dead in which Abraham, Lazarus, and the rich man were found (Luke 16:22-26).

The Lord Jesus Christ made them all, and they are all subservient to Him. That is why all things are ours (1 Cor 3:21-23). It is also why nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:37-39).

HE CREATED THRONES, DOMINIONS, PRINCIPALITIES, AND POWERS

“ 16c . . . whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers . . . ” This is a breakdown of the “invisible” things which have been created by our Lord. We know of them only because God has revealed them. These are personalities, not mere sources of natural energy. **They confirm that we live in a vast and fathomless moral universe that is teeming with personalities.** Among them are workers, rulers, and interested spectators. We cannot see them, but they can see us. They move in and out among us undetected, yet under the strict and

“dominations,”^{DOUAY} “ruling forces,”^{NJB} and “kingdoms,”^{NLT}

“Dominions” refer to those who possess a dominion, of territory, over which they exercise authority.

PRINCIPALITIES

Other versions read, “rulers,”^{NASB} “principalities,”^{RSV} “powers,”^{NIB} and “sovereignties.”^{NJB}

“Principalities” refers to the first thing of a series – like a leading angel. The picture is of powerful personalities

to do (Psa 103:20a).

Nothing in God’s vast kingdom is left to chance or happenstance. Not only is the Lord “over all,” He has also given authority to those who serve Him, whether for good or for evil.

Take Satan as an example. Like Pilate, he only has power where it has been given to him by God. He was right when he said the kingdoms of this evil world, together with their glory, had been given to him. The Scriptures declare, “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it” (Luke 4:5-6). Jesus did not contest what he said, for He had Himself been given the greater kingdom that presided over the one given to Satan.

Holy Hierarchy

Michael the archangel, “one of the chief princes” among the heavenly host (Dan 10:13), is the commissioned caretaker of the nation of Israel, and is called their “prince” (Dan 10:21). He is also referred to as the “archangel,” or chief among the angels, which is the meaning of “archangel.”^{STRONG’S}

The book of the Revelation speaks of an angel who had “power over fire” (Rev 14:18). Another is described as “the angel of the waters” (Rev 16:5). Still another angel was “given power to scorch men with fire” (Rev 16:8). Yet another “come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory” (Rev 18:1). Another angel clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow on his head firmly planted his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the land. With great power he roared as a lion, and seven mighty thunders answered in response (Rev 10:1-3). Four angels were seen “standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, or the sea, nor on any tree” (Rev

ALL OF THESE POWERS WERE CREATED BY THE LORD JESUS. THEIR DOMINION WAS ESTABLISHED BY HIM. THE TIMES DURING WHICH THEY ARE EFFECTIVE HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BY HIM. HE HAS ESTABLISHED BOUNDARIES BEYOND WHICH THEY CANNOT GO, AND WITHIN WHICH THEY ARE INVINCIBLE.

beneficent control of our Lord and Savior.

As we ponder this measureless array of lofty personalities, it will assist us in ceasing to live for ourselves. The knowledge of them will contribute to great sobriety, and foster hope and comfort to those who are aware of the great number of both amiable spirits and fierce adversaries that exist in the unseen world.

THRONES

Some translations read “kings,”^{NLT} and “authorities.”^{BBE} “Thrones” are stately seats that are associated with dominion, kingly power and sovereignty.
ROBERTSON

DOMINIONS

Other versions read “powers,”^{NIV} “lords,”^{BBE} “lordships,”^{DARBY}

that lead great and powerful hosts.

POWERS

Another version reads, “authorities.”^{NASB}

“Powers” are those with great competency, and freedom to do their will. They are noted for their mastery, jurisdiction, and control. They have decision-making power or authority.

A HIERARCHY OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

It is apparent from this description that God’s kingdom involves the allocation of power and authority. The angels, for example, are said to “do His commandments” and “hearken unto the voice of His words” (Psa 103:20). But they do not do so as mere vassals. They also “excel in strength,” or the ability and the power to do what they are commissioned

7:1). Another angel ascended from the East, having the seal of the living God. With authority he cried to the four angels holding the wind, telling them not to hurt the earth, sea, or trees, until he had sealed the servants of God (Rev 7:2-3). Yet another angel was given authority to give liberty to four angels to slay a third part of humanity (Rev 9:14-15).

These mighty powers cannot possibly be resisted or fought against by men. They have been given dominion that cannot be contested. Whenever they were aligned against men, men fell, whether it was the vast army of Sennacherib (2 Kgs 19:35), or wicked king Herod (Acts 12:23).

All of these powers were created by the Lord Jesus. Their dominion was established by Him. The times during which they are effective have been established by Him. He has established boundaries beyond which they cannot go, and within which they are invincible.

Solomon seemed to sense something of the magnitude of the authority and power of these personalities. This is seen in a statement he made in Ecclesiastes 5:6. *“Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”* (Eccl 5:6).

These principalities and powers behold our manners, hear our words, and see our deeds. That is precisely why Paul wrote, *“For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels”* (1 Cor 11:10).

God has revealed that even now, this holy hierarchy has been selected to learn of the manifold wisdom of God through the church. *“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”* (Eph 3:9-10). **That is, by means of God’s working within the body of Christ, “principalities and powers in heavenly places” are being exposed to facets of God’s**

wisdom that can be seen nowhere else. All of these lofty rulers have been created by Jesus and for Jesus.

What About Wicked Powers?

What about wicked spiritual powers – like the devil, the fallen angels, demons, and the principalities, powers, spiritual wickedness in high places, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, against whom we wrestle (Jude 1:6; 1 Tim 4:1; Eph 6:12)? Did Jesus create them also?

We are to understand these were also created by Jesus Christ, but in an unfallen state. They all fell from the condition in which they were originally made (2 Pet 2:4; Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-18). This should not be difficult for us to see, for man pursued the same course – he

angels had power. They would not merely make an effort to win, but would have utterly devastated the enemy in the twinkling of an eye. They had power, Peter did not. They were principalities and powers, Peter was not.

The Manner of the Kingdom

This is the manner of the heavenly kingdom. We are introduced to it in the body of Christ, where each is given a *“measure of faith,”* and a gift by grace (Rom 12:3; 1 Pet 4:10-11). **Their gift is a domain over which they have been granted a measure of power, or authority.** Paul, for example, was given power to edify, or build up, the body of Christ. Thus he wrote, *“Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath*

NOTE, THERE WAS A CIRCUMFERENCE TO THE POWER – A BOUNDARY BEYOND WHICH IT WAS NOT EFFECTIVE. THE POWER WAS TO EDIFY, OR BUILD UP, NOT TO DESTROY OR TEAR DOWN.

was created without fault, yet fell from that unsullied state.

The Sense of This Can Be Lost

This is an aspect of the Kingdom that is utterly obscured by a worldly emphasis. When the church becomes “this-worldly” instead of “other-worldly,” the thought of this vast army of principalities and powers vanishes from their minds. Men are then left to grapple with circumstances in their own human strength and energy. This produces all manner of frustration, weakness, and fear.

Knowing the nature of the Kingdom, Jesus referred to this Divine arsenal of personalities when He was arrested in the Garden. When Peter drew his sword and was set to do battle for the Lord, Jesus quickly reminded him of the real circumstance. *“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?”* (Mat 26:53). These

given me to edification, and not to destruction” (2 Cor 13:10). And again he wrote, *“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed”* (2 Cor 10:8).

Note, there was a circumference to the power – a boundary beyond which it was not effective. The power was to edify, or build up, not to destroy or tear down.

When Jesus sent out His disciples, He gave them power to accomplish their mission. He said, *“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you”* (Luke 10:19). Again it is said of the sending of the twelve, *“And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits”* (Mark 6:7).

Following His resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to go into all the world, preaching the Gospel to every creature. However, they were not to go in their own strength. It is written that He said, *“And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”* (Luke 24:49).

There is no work in God’s kingdom, whether in heaven or on earth that can be done independently of the authority that comes from Him. Men have argued over

purpose of each endowment is to *“profit”* the entire body – to assist it in *“growing up into Christ in all things”* (Eph 4:15). In confirmation of this, it is written, *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”* (1 Cor 12:4-7).

Thus we are being introduced to the manner of the kingdom. We are made custodians of a segment of the kingdom,

1:5-6). Again it is written, *“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”* (Rev 5:10).

The truth of the matter is that the Kingdom in all of its greatness will be *“given to the saints of the Most High God”* (Dan 7:22). That appointed allocation of the kingdom will be remarkably great – far beyond the thinking of the average churchman. Of it Daniel wrote, *“The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them”* ^{NRSV} (Dan 7:27).

Perhaps some of these domains have not yet been fully occupied? It is possible that some of them were vacated by *“the angels which kept not their first estate”* (Jude 1:6). These are areas in which very little revelation has been given. However, enough has been revealed to know the time is coming when the saints will *“be the head, and not the tail,”* and *“above only,”* and *“not beneath”* (Deut 28:13). They will *“inherit all things”* (Rev 21:7), and reign with Christ.

Jesus did not overstate the case when He said overcomers would reign with Him in His throne (Rev 3:21). *“He who conquers, I will grant Him to sit with Me on My throne, as I Myself conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne”* ^{RSV} (Rev 3:21). A marvelous promise, indeed, and worthy of all acceptance!

THUS WE ARE BEING INTRODUCED TO THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM. WE ARE MADE CUSTODIANS OF A SEGMENT OF THE KINGDOM, AND GIVEN POWER TO BE A GOOD STEWARD.

this point, ascribing the allocation of authority only to the Apostles. But they have greatly erred. The Apostles received power to do the work of an Apostle, which is distinguished from the work of the other members of the body. They were authoritative in that domain.

Peter affirms that other members of the body also had abilities from God (1 Pet 4:10-11). When Paul wrote *“spiritual gifts,”* He was speaking of areas of authority and power, where various members of the body of Christ could do things transcendent to natural abilities. He spoke of God setting *“the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him”* (1 Cor 12:18). These various abilities are distributed, administered, and made effective by the Holy Spirit. The

and given power to be a good steward.

Being Cultured for Reigning

We are being cultured for a future reign, and have been told so. *“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ”* (Rom 5:17). Again it is written, *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny him, he also will deny us”* (2 Tim 2:12).

The Lord Jesus has *“washed us from our sins in His own blood.”* But this is in order to a rule and a reign. *“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”* (Rev

EVERYTHING WAS CREATED FOR HIM

^{16d} . . . *all things were created by Him, and for Him.*” The American Standard Version reads *“and unto Him.”*

Not only is Jesus Christ the origin of all things, He is the intent and purpose for them as well. Those who are in Christ will *“inherit all things,”* but they were not created for them – they

were created for Christ! The saints inherit them as *“joint heirs,”* not as primary heirs (Rom 8:17). Not only are the heavens and the earth, together with their fulness, *“for Him,”* but all of the powers and

authorities are for Him as well. By virtue of this condition, they are all answerable to Him, and He uses them as He wills.

The words “for Him,” or “unto Him,” indicate that “all things were created” to ultimately bring glory to Him. This glory will either be the result of them being brought under His feet in utter defeat and subjugation, or in being perfected through His power and grace. In the end, every personality, whether wicked or holy, defiled or pure, will bow the knee to Him, and confess with persuasion that He is “Lord of all.” Thus it is written, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, **of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth**” (Phil 2:10). “Things in heaven” refer to holy angels, principalities, and powers. “Things in earth” refer to all mankind, from Adam until the end of the world. “Things under the earth” refer to Satan, his vast hierarchy, the fallen angels, and demons as well. They will all render obeisance to Jesus, and acknowledge before the assembly of all created personalities that Jesus is Lord. They were all made “for Him.”

Those who, prior to the day of judgment – a day in which both men and angels will be judged (1 Cor 6:2-3) – have not willingly served Christ will be consigned to perdition, or the “lake of fire.” That includes the devil, his chief leaders, his angels, demons, and wicked men. **Christ will be glorified by their consignment to perdition, for if their rebellion did not conclude with their banishment, His dominion would have been negated.** Christ cannot be ultimately glorified by the casting away of those who lived for Him, or the salvation of those who did not.

THIS IS THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

It is to be understood that the whole creation was accomplished by Jesus Christ when He was “in the form of God,” and “was with God and was God.” He did not create all things as “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). However, all things were created “FOR HIM” as “the Man.” This is the Man of whom it is written, “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by

one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” (Rom 5:15).

The federal head of the first creation was Adam. He was given dominion, but **not** over things in “the things in heaven,” or “things under the earth.” The scope of his intended dominion is described as “over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth . . . and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:27-28). That dominion was lost when sin entered into the world, for **the dying cannot have dominion.** Even in Divine intention, however, what is that to compare with the dominion given to “the

new creation. Then, as eternity rolls its ceaseless cycles onward, He will reign with His saints, fulfilling lofty objectives that have not yet been revealed. He will be voluntarily subject to the Father (12 Cor 15:28) – not because of His nature, but because of Divine purpose. **Then the redeemed, under the administration of Jesus, will begin to realize the intent for which they were re-created in Christ.** Then the fulness of this text will burst upon them as the noonday sun: “all things were created by Him and for Him.”

OUR RELIGION MUST REACH INTO ETERNITY

This ultimate objective is the reason for Christ’s entrance into the world. It is the reason for His death, resurrection, and present intercession. It

NOT ONLY DOES HE PRESENTLY RULE OVER THE NATURAL CREATION, WHICH IS IN THE “BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION” (ROM 8:21), HE IS THE HEAD OF THE “NEW CREATION.”

Man Christ Jesus!”

We know from our text, that everything was ultimately created for the Lord Jesus. **Not only does He presently rule over the natural creation, which is in the “bondage of corruption” (Rom 8:21), He is the Head of the “new creation.”** It is particularly in this regard that our text makes the affirmation, “all things were created . . . for Him.”

Here the grand conclusion is seen – the time when the present heavens and earth have passed away (2 Pet 3:10-12), and death and hell (Hades) have been cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). **After** the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:52), **after** the saints have been glorified (Rom 8:17,29), **after** the day of judgment (2 Pet 2:9), **after** the devil, his angels, the false prophet, and all wicked have been cast into the lake of fire (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10,15), **after** all things have been made new (Rev 21:5) – **then “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne” will preside over the entirety of the**

is why He is coming again, bringing His reward with Him. This is why the new birth takes place. It is ultimately why grace is given to us, teaches us, and sustains us. It is why the Holy Spirit has been given to us, makes intercession for us, and strengthens us.

Take this ultimate purpose away, and there is no reason to be a Christian – no reason to separate from this world. That is precisely why the Spirit witnesses, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor 15:19). This is why “we are saved by hope” (Rom 8:24-25), for hope reaches upward, into the very citadel of heaven (Heb 6:19).

A religion that is centered in this world is an evil paradox. It is like an unholy God, or a righteous devil. It simply cannot be! The purpose of the church cannot be at variance with the purpose of its Creator! The objective of the Christian cannot contradict the purpose of his Lord! **If men are not preparing for eternity, they really are not**

preparing at all – they are moving swiftly toward condemnation. Death is overtaking them, and the wrath of God is abiding upon them.

The church must be wholly intolerant of any emphasis that tends to lull men into sleep, causing them to forget “the world to come.” It must rid itself of

the preachers and teachers that make men feel at home in this world. Those who bring the world close to them, and put heaven far from them, are their enemies.

Whatever there is about the contemporary church that solicits the respect and tolerance of those

who are enemies of God must be purged from it.

All of that, and much more, is involved in the statement, “all things were created by Him and for Him.” The magnitude of the statement must not escape us. Even if we cannot fully perceive it, we must meditate upon it.

HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS

“^{17a} **And He is before all things . . .**” Other versions read, “*He Himself is before all things,*”^{NRSV} “*He existed before everything else,*”^{NLT} and “*Himself is before all things.*”^{YLT}

This is a reference to the **Person**

the Father (Heb 1:6).

However, Christ Himself, apart from the body that was prepared for Him (Heb 10:5-10), was “before all things.” That is, He Himself was not created, for “all things” refer to all that were created.

referring to God (Mk 10:6; 13:19; Rom 1:20; 8:22; 2 Pet 3:4; Rev 3:14). “Creates,” or “createth,” is mentioned once, referring to the Lord (Amos 4:13).

The affirmation “*He is before all things,*” is the declaration of Christ’s Deity, and of His consequent eternity. Those who teach that Jesus is created have demeaned His Person. While there have been some who were tolerant of such teaching, such toleration cannot be justified. We cannot be wrong in our views about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our salvation hinges upon Him, and our perception of Him. That is why our faith is based upon the “record” God has given “of His Son” (1 John 5:10-12). As this passage affirms, our faith rests in Christ – we “believe on the Son,” thus obtaining “life” – “eternal life.” It must never be affirmed that faith can be in one who has been created! **Faith has to do with Deity, and can never be placed in anyone who is not of Himself eternal.**

The passage with which we are dealing is providing the proper view of the Savior. **He must be seen correctly if our understanding of Him is to be fruitful.** Jesus is the Creator, and nowhere is the Creator said to have Himself been created! If He was “created,” Jesus cannot have existed before the creation of all things.

**FAITH HAS TO DO WITH DEITY,
AND CAN NEVER BE PLACED IN
ANYONE WHO IS NOT OF HIMSELF
ETERNAL.**

of Christ, in distinction from His Manhood. This is Jesus in the capacity of “the Word,” who was “with God and was God” (John 1:1). This is the Savior when He was “in the form of God” (Phil 2:6), before He “humbled Himself,” taking upon Himself “the form of a servant,” and becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:7-8). While He was, by Divine intention, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8), in eternity past, He was not in the form of a servant, nor did He humble Himself to become obedient unto death. **His humiliation began when He entered the world,** brought into it by

As I have already affirmed, the Holy Spirit never represents a creation – any creation – being accomplished by someone who himself was created. **Wherever the word “create” is used, it refers to Deity** (Psa 51:10; Isa 4:5; 45:7; 57:19; 65:17-18). The word “created” is used forty-five times in Scripture – they all refer to the Lord (Gen 1:1,21,27; 2:3,4; 5:1,2; 6:7; Deut 4:32; Psa 89:12; 102:18; 104:30; 148:5; Isa 40:26; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1,7; 45:8,12,18; 48:7; 54:16; Jer 31:22; Ezek 21:30; 28:13,15; Mal 2:10; Mk 13:19; 1 Cor 11:9; Eph 2:10; 3:9; 4:24; Col 1:16; 3:10; 1 Tim 4:3; Rev 1:11; 10:6). The word “creation” is used six times, always

BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST

“^{17a} . . . **and by him all things consist.**” Other versions read, “all things

hold together,”^{NASB/NIV/NRSV} “all things have being,”^{BBE} “all things subsist

together,”^{DARBY} and “He holds all; creation together.”^{NLT}

The word “*consist*” comes from the Greek word *συνέστηκεν* (soon-is-tah-ken). The word means “to place together, to bring or band together, to put together by way of composition or combination, to unite parts into one whole.” ^{THAYER} It also means “to continue to have existence.” This is the word from which the term and concept of “system” is derived. The word implies organization or arrangement.

In the ultimate sense “*consist*,” or being “*held together*,” is the opposite of the pre-creation condition: “*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep*” (Gen 1:2). It is not necessary to philosophize about some form of creation prior to the details provided in the rest of the first chapter of Genesis – such as the pre-existence of matter, etc. The purpose of the account of creation is not to define the beginning of matter. Rather, it is to show that the worlds were created deliberately and in an orderly manner.

This text confirms that the creation was not wound up like a clock, and left to run on its own. **It is ever true that what the Lord begins He finishes, holding everything together in an orderly and productive manner until the completion of the work.** This is why we read of the Lord being “*Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last*” (Rev 1:11), “*The Beginning and the End*” (Rev 22:13), and “*the Author and Finisher*” (Heb 12:2). The affirmation of this text – “*by Him all things consist*” – describes what is taking place between the Alpha and Omega. It is the Divine activity of the interim between the first and the last, the beginning and the end. It describes some of the Lord’s activity between authoring and finishing.

This view is essential to the proper understanding of salvation as well as creation. If creation was accomplished by the Lord Jesus, and for Him, then, in some ways, it mirrors God’s eternal purpose. In the natural cosmos we are given a miniature picture of the spiritual cosmos of salvation – the “*kingdom*” to which we are “*come*,” and is “*received*” in Christ Jesus (Heb 12:22,28; Col 1:13).

A UNITED PURPOSE

Consistency is the offspring of purpose. **So far as God is concerned, there is nothing that exists without reason or intention.** Nothing that has been created is divorced from Divine

natural, as well as the spiritual orders. The natural order is not noted for chaos and derangement. All true science depends upon the harmonious workings within nature. All spiritual progress relies

THE POINT OF THIS VERSE IS THAT THE GLORIFIED CHRIST IS HOLDING EVERYTHING TOGETHER WITH THAT PURPOSE IN MIND. HE IS WORKING EVERYTHING TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF HIS PEOPLE

purpose. Nothing in nature or in grace occurs randomly, without reason, or without objective.

The point of this verse is that the glorified Christ is holding everything together with that purpose in mind. He is working everything together for the good of His people (Rom 8:28). Harmony is, in fact, the working *together* of everything – orchestrating all things with a Divine objective in mind.

Both good and evil will blend with God’s “*eternal purpose*.” That purpose includes the bruising of the serpent’s head as well as the enthronement of the Son of man – the Seed of the woman. It includes the subjugation of all inimical powers as well as the glorification of all who are justified. It includes the punishment of all who “*know not God, and that obey not the Gospel*” (2 Thess 1:8), as well as the reward of those who “*work good*” (Rom 2:10). Everything is working in harmony with God’s purpose. The wicked are moving toward perdition (Phil 1:28; 2 Pet 3:7), and the righteous are moving toward glory (Heb 2:10). The ungodly are heaping up wrath (Rom 2:5), and the godly are laying up treasures in heaven (Matt 6:20; Heb 10:34).

All of this is being orchestrated by the Lord Jesus. None of it is happening automatically, or without Divine management. In Him all things “*consist*,” or are held together.

HARMONY

There is a certain harmony in the

upon the harmony of the workings of grace and power. Even in its groaning under the burden of mortality, all nature “*groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*” (Rom 8:22). It lifts up a single harmonious chorus of travail in anticipation of “*the manifestation of the sons of God*” (Rom 8:22). The Lord Jesus is the Director of this powerful choir. In Him all things “*consist*,” or are held together.

Harmony in the spiritual order is found in “*all things*” being “*worked together*” for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). This harmony is seen in the statement that “*all things are yours*” (1 Cor 3:21). The Holy Spirit is changing the saints “*from one degree of glory to another*” ^{NRSV} (2 Cor 3:18). **All of this is accomplished in an intensely hostile realm.** Our adversary the devil is walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8). Principalities and powers are aligned against us, and we must engage them in battle (Eph 6:12). There are imaginations and intrusive thoughts that must be cast down (2 Cor 10:4-5). All that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (1 John 5:16) – compete for our attention, seeking to lure us out of the heavenly places. There is also our own “*flesh*” that “*lusts against the Spirit*” (Gal 5:17).

If it was not for the reigning Christ, who is sustaining all things, it would be utterly impossible for any of us to safely navigate through this present evil world. **Harmony in any sense**

cannot exist independently of the exalted Christ.

SUSTAINED

This is the primary meaning of the word “*consist*.” The same truth is declared in the book of Hebrews. “. . . *His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of his power*” (Heb 1:2-3). Other versions read, “*sustaining all things,*”^{NIV} “*supporting all things,*”^{BBE} and “*He sustains the universe.*”^{NLT}

To “*uphold*” means to carry the burden, guiding the creation along in strict conformity with Divine purpose. The Lord Jesus is carrying the creation forward to its appointed end.

Here, then, are two words that confirm the relationship of the glorified Christ to the present natural order – one in our text (Col 1:17), and one in Hebrews (1:3).

✦ “**Consist.**” This emphasizes keeping all creation in as state of harmony, keeping it from spinning out of control.

✦ “**Uphold.**” This has to do with moving creation toward the appointed consummation, causing it to serve its intended purpose.

Apart from the Lord, all things tend to dissipate. They are not held together by certain laws of nature. There is no such thing as “cosmic glue” that holds things together. Whatever may be said about the laws of nature, they are all

in the hand of Jesus. None of them operate on their own.

This explodes the evolutionary hypothesis, showing it to be nothing more than a deliberate denial of the creating, sustaining, and upholding Christ.

This also demolishes the notion that the world could exist with the saints withdrawn from it. The entire natural order was created by Jesus and for Jesus. The earth will ultimately be given to the saints (Matt 5:5).

The thought that the world could continue to exist without the people of God, and in the unfettered control of the wicked one, is totally false. Yet, such a postulate is at the very heart of much of the end-time preaching that is common in our day.

HE IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

^{18a} **And He is the Head of the body, the church . . .**

As marvelous and expansive as the natural creation is, Christ’s primary activity does not have to do with it. **Jesus rules both nature and humanity with His people in mind.** Nature was created and sustained by Him before He “*became flesh and dwelt among us.*” Let us ponder for a moment the greatness of the Lord Jesus, for it is within this consideration that the affirmation of our text is made.

There is presently nothing that is

He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He (the Father) is excepted, which did put all things under Him” (1 Cor 15:27). **The Father is the only One who is not subject to the glorified Christ!** At this present time, everything and everyone else are subservient to Him.

✦ **All of the heavenly host are subject to Christ.** “*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him*” (1 Pet 3:22).

and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). And again, “*And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it*” (Col 2:15).

✦ **All worldly rulers are subject to Christ.** “. . . *our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Tim 6:14-15). And again, “*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth*” (Rev 1:5).

✦ **All men are subject to Christ.** “*As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him*” (John 17:2).

✦ **All circumstances are subject to Christ.** “*For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to*

AS MARVELOUS AND EXPANSIVE AS THE NATURAL CREATION IS, CHRIST’S PRIMARY ACTIVITY DOES NOT HAVE TO DO WITH IT. JESUS RULES BOTH NATURE AND HUMANITY WITH HIS PEOPLE IN MIND.

not under the feet of Jesus – subject to Him and controlled by Him. As it is written, “*For He (the Father) hath put all things under His (Jesus) feet. But when*

✦ **Satan and all of his hosts are subject to Christ.** “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh*

come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3:21-23).

- ✦ **All power belongs to Him.** *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"* (Mat 28:18).
- ✦ **Christ has the keys of death and Hades.** *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death"*^{NKJV} (Rev 1:18).

All of this is involved in Jesus being "Lord." As it is written, *"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)"* (Acts 10:36). This is not something Jesus is going to be, but what He is at this present time. *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). He is "Lord" in authority and "Christ" in work. He is "Lord" in scope, and "Christ" in focus.

This cannot be overstated. The church needs to put to silence such talk as "the future reign of Christ," and "when He will rule." At this present time we are living in the midst of His dominion. **He will never be more a King than He is right now. He will never be Lord more fully than He is at this present time.** The church must declare this!

Now the Spirit will focus on the REASON for Christ's rule. He will emphasize its focus and intent. Only those who are in Him will be able to make any sense of this. However, it will be a great comfort and encouragement to them.

THE HEAD OF THE BODY

"And He is the Head of the body."

All versions read the same.

The transitional word here is "and." That is, Jesus is **ALSO** the Head of the body. Special consideration will be given to this because it is the reason for all authority being given to the glorified Christ. This is precisely WHY He is "Lord," over all things, and possessing all authority and power.

Ephesians

The book of Ephesians also places stress on this point. The phraseology employed in that Epistle differs slightly, providing an additional perspective of this affirmation. *" . . . the working of the strength of His might, which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as Head*

some clarity that obedience and responsibility can be joyfully and confidently rendered to Him. Those who love Jesus do keep His commandments. That is what He said: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"* (John 14:21). Again He said, *"He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings"* (John 14:24). It is also written, *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"* (1 John 5:3). Those who have to continually be reminded to keep the commandments of Jesus have a heart

HE IS SAYING THAT THE APPOINTED CUSTODIAN OF THE CHURCH IS THE ONE UNDER WHOSE FEET EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE HAVE BEEN PLACED.

over all things to the church"^{NASB} (Eph 1:19-22).

The point being made in both Ephesians and Colossians is that Christ has been made the Head over all things **"FOR the church."**^{NIV} **That is, He has been given to the church in the capacity of Head over everything.** Here, the Spirit is not saying He has authority over the church, although that is most assuredly true. Rather, **He is saying that the appointed custodian of the church is the One under whose feet everything and everyone have been placed.** The One who ministers life and direction to the body, and to whom the body is subjected, has effective authority over all of its friends and foes. All of the circumstances in which the members of the body are found are under Jesus. **All of the enemies it faces are under Jesus. All of the resources it requires are under Jesus.** That is the point of this text.

This in no way minimizes the obligation of the body to obey the Head. It does not diminish the fact that He is over the body, and is the solitary One to whom it is responsible. **However, it is only as the truth of this text is seen with**

problem. They really do not love Jesus, and what they profess is of no consequence whatsoever. Furthermore, they do not love Him because they do not know Him.

THE CHURCH

" . . . the church . . . " There is a "body" of people FOR whom the Lord Jesus is reigning. It is not a political or national body. It is not an ethnic or sectarian body. The body to which Jesus has been given, and over which He presides, is *"the church."*

The words *"the church"* occur sixty-eight times in Scripture – all of them are in the New Covenant writings. This is the body of which Jesus said, *"I will build My church"* (Matt 16:18). Only the Lord can add someone to this body of people (Acts 2:47). This is the group of people that are to be fed (Acts 20:28). It is where ALL of the members of Christ are placed (1 Cor 12:18,28). This is the group of people that are to be edified, or built up and encouraged (1 Cor 14:12). *"The church"* is the exclusive place where principalities and powers in heavenly places are learning of the *" manifold wisdom of God"* (Eph 3:10). Here is where God receives glory (Eph 3:21). These are the people Jesus loved, and for whom He

died (Eph 5:25). “The church” is what Jesus is presently nourishing and cherishing (Eph 5:29).

All of Epistles were written to “the church.” The Lord Jesus intercedes for those who are His body, the church (Heb 7:27). The Holy Spirit, residing in them, also intercedes for them (Rom 8:26). The holy angels have been dispatched to be

their ministers (Heb 1:13-14). All of the spiritual gifts have been given to “the church.” Those who constitute “the church” are the only people in the world who have been made “partakers of Christ” and “partakers of the Divine nature,” (Heb 3:14; 2 Pet 1:4). Only they have been given the Holy Spirit I (Gal 4:6), and all of the promises of God belong to them (2 Cor 1:20).

Jesus is ruling for them! He is working exclusively to bring them to glory and to God (Heb 2:10; 1 Pet 3:18). One of the great tragedies of our time is that many who come in the name of Christ, make very little mention of this. It is rarely seen as an emphasis. But this is God’s emphasis! This is why He has made Jesus “Head over all things,” and given Him in that capacity to “the church.”

HE IS THE BEGINNING

“18b . . . who is the beginning . . .” Other versions read, “the starting point of all things,”^{BBE} and “the first of all.”^{NLT}

The word “beginning” comes from a word meaning “origin, the person that commences, the first in a series, the leader, that by which anything begins to be.”^{STRONG’S} Most strictly, it means “primacy,”^{ROBERTSON} and “the beginning of all things.”^{THAYER} This can only be said of one – the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The Beginning” is the Source of

of a series of something totally new.

Jesus is frequently referred to as “the Beginning.” “Who is the Beginning . . . I am the Beginning and the End . . . the Beginning of the creation of God . . .” (Col 1:18; Rev 1:8; 3:14; 21:6,13).

THE SOURCE. Jesus is the Source of all things that come from God – the fountain from which the water of life proceeds. Nothing is received from God that does not come from Him.

work (Heb 12:2). He is also called “the Author of eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9). This being the case, it is a sin of the greatest magnitude to seek spiritual resources from anyone but Him.

THE FIRST ONE. Jesus is the “firstborn among many brethren” – the first of a new order of creation. Because of this, all of the saved are being conformed to His image (Rom 8:29), are made partakers of Him (Heb 3:14), and grow up into Him (Eph 4:15). In the end, when we see Him as He is, we “shall be LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

In matters pertaining to life and godliness, there is nothing that is acceptable that did not come from Jesus. No work is accepted that was not started by Him. Ultimately, no one who is unlike Jesus will be accepted. He is, in every sense, “the Beginning.” This is not what He should be, it is what He is! It is not the objective of men to make Him “the Beginning,” but to acknowledge Him as such.

If Jesus did not start it, it will eventually pass away, and thus cannot enter into glory.

IN MATTERS PERTAINING TO LIFE AND GODLINESS, THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS ACCEPTABLE THAT DID NOT COME FROM JESUS. NO WORK IS ACCEPTED THAT WAS NOT STARTED BY HIM. ULTIMATELY, NO ONE WHO IS UNLIKE JESUS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

all things. It is the only means by which something can begin to be, or come into existence. As the meaning of the word indicates, “the Beginning” is also the first

THE INITIATOR. In the kingdom of God, nothing valid and accepted is started without Jesus. He is the “Author” of every valid person and

HE IS THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD

“18c . . . the Firstborn from the dead . . .” Other versions read, “Firstborn from among the dead,”^{NIV} “the first to come again from the dead,”^{BBE} “First begotten from the dead,”^{GENEVA} “the first of all who will rise from the

dead,”^{NLT} and “the First-born out of the dead.”^{YLT}

This he a further elaboration of the expression, “the Beginning,” and refers to the resurrection of the Lord

Jesus – a pivotal point of “sound doctrine.” In an inspired summation of the doctrine of Christ, Paul said, “That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the

people, and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).

A special point is made of Christ’s resurrection in the Apostolic doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead”* (1 Cor 15:21). Just as the death of all men is traced to a single man and his sin, so the resurrection of all men is traced to a single Man and His resurrection. **The resurrection of Christ was necessary to the final resurrection of all the dead, and the final change of those who remain until the coming of the Lord** (1 Thess 4:15-17; 1 Cor 15:52). If He was not raised from the dead, none could have been raised from the dead.

WHAT ABOUT FORMER RESURRECTIONS?

The novice may object, saying there were several resurrections prior to that of the Lord Jesus. It is true, that several instances of the dead being raised are recorded in Scripture. However, they are not the same as Christ’s resurrection, but differ significantly from it.

- ✚ Elijah raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17-23).
- ✚ Elisha raised from the dead the Shunammite’s son (2 Kgs 4:32-37).
- ✚ The body of a young man who had recently died was cast into the sepulchre of Elisha. When his body *“touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet”* (2 Kgs 13:21).
- ✚ Jesus raised from the dead the son of a certain widow of Nain (Luke 7:12-15).
- ✚ Jesus raised Jairus’ twelve year old daughter from the dead (Luke 8:49-55).
- ✚ Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44).
- ✚ Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:37-40).
- ✚ Paul raised Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9-12).

✚ Probably referring to the sons of the widow of Zarephath and the Shunnamite woman, the book of Hebrews says, *“Women received their dead raised to life again”* (Heb 11:35).

✚ When Jesus died, it is written that *“the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many”* (Mat 27:53).

✚ When Jesus first sent out the twelve, He told them to *“raise the dead”* (Matt 10:8).

How is it, then, that Jesus is said to have been *“the first”* to raise from the dead, and the *“firstborn from the dead.”*

The resurrection of Jesus differed from all others because *“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him”* (Rom 6:9). He is *“alive for*

the saints of God. Thus it is written, *“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power”* (1 Cor 6:14). Again it is written, *“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you”* (2 Cor 4:14).

The Reasoning Behind This

The reasoning behind the resurrection of the dead should be apparent to us. Our bodies are part of our human constitution. We are comprised of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23). The body, therefore, is not totally inconsequential. In fact, we are solemnly told, *“Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body”* (1 Cor 6:13). And again, *“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?”* (1 Cor 6:15). The Spirit again affirms, *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in*

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST WAS NECESSARY TO THE FINAL RESURRECTION OF ALL THE DEAD, AND THE FINAL CHANGE OF THOSE WHO REMAIN UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD

evermore” (Rev 1:18). He is the first one to be raised in an immortal or incorruptible body. His is the only body that *“did not see corruption”* (Acts 2:27,31; 13:35). He entered into glory in the body that came forth from the grave. He is absolutely the first to do this.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The point of our text is that there is going to be another resurrection after the manner of Christ’s. That is why it is written, *“For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Cor 15:21-22).

This is of particular relevance to

your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Salvation is associated with our body. In fact, the resurrection is referred to as *“the redemption of our body”* (Rom 8:23). Again, it referred to as *“the redemption of the purchased possession”* (Eph 1:14). **For the people of God, the resurrection will be the culmination of their salvation.**

This is precisely why Paul forsook all and pressed toward the mark, that he might *“attain unto the resurrection of the dead”* (Phil 3:11). In fact, he affirmed *“if the dead rise not, let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die”* (1 Cor 15:32). There is no point to living for Jesus and crucifying the flesh if the dead are not raised. In

such a case, there is no advantage to godliness – none at all! Those who glibly say the Christian life is the best life even if there is no heaven have lied, willingly or not. They have contradicted both the

15:13-20).

If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ did not raise, and both preaching and faith are

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SUCH TEACHING AS THIS COULD BE SECONDARY, NOT ESSENTIAL, OR NOT IMMEDIATELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOSPEL AND SALVATION?

revelation of God and the experience of grace. Here is the truth of the matter, *“But if **there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept**”* (1 Cor

pointless. That would mean the Apostles were liars, and we are still in our sins. Those who died in the faith are no better off than the beasts of the earth. The whole of their lives was for nothing. If this world and time is really all there is, Christians are the most foolish, deceived, and wretched of all men. They are, in such a case, to be *“pitied above all men,”*^{NIV} and are the *“most miserable.”*^{KJV}

I hardly see how the Spirit could possible have made a stronger case for the necessity of the resurrection of the dead. Remove it, and nothing of any real substance remains. Futility and vanity rush in if there is no resurrection. And, **if Jesus was not raised from the dead,**

there could not have been a resurrection of the dead – that is the point of *“firstborn from the dead.”*

It is time for the church to purge from its vocabulary words and expressions that contradict the revelation of God. **It is further time for someone to ask the modern church why it speaks so little of both the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.** The absence of such things in contemporary preaching is a sign of apostasy and degeneracy. It simply is not possible to follow Jesus, walk in the light, or live by faith, and have no regard for the resurrection of the dead. Those who profess they have accomplished such a feat have not told us the truth. They have only confirmed they are walking in the darkness.

If it appears as though this kind of language is too harsh, one must consider the gravity of the text before us. **How is it possible that such teaching as this could be secondary, not essential, or not immediately associated with the Gospel and salvation?** Why is there such an exaltation of the Son of God if it is only an optional matter, or, at the best, only a secondary issue? The verses that follow will make the truth to which we have just been submitted even more firm. It will confirm the indispensability of the exalted Christ being perceived as He really is.

IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREMINENCE

^{18d} . . . **that in all things He might have the preeminence.**” Other versions read, *“so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything,”*^{NASB} *“so that in everything He might have the supremacy,”*^{NIV} *“so that in all things He might have the chief place,”*^{BBE} *“so that He should be supreme in every way,”*^{NJB} and *“so He is first in everything.”*^{NLT}

Jesus is the first to rise from the dead, **in order that** He might have the preeminence in everything. How is it that His resurrection was required for this to occur. Is not the Lord Jesus by nature *“over all?”*

The one who delivers us must Himself have unquestionably conquered the one or thing from which we are being delivered. The *“strong man”* of the house in which we are held captive must first be *“bound”* before the captives can be set free. Thus Jesus said, *“how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except He first bind the strong man? and then He will spoil his house”* (Mat 12:29).

THE REIGN OF DEATH

When sin *“entered into the world,”* death entered with it, being *“passed upon all men”* (Rom 5:12). From that very moment, death began a reign

over the whole of the human race. It reigned uncontested from Adam to Moses, without respect of persons. As it is written, *“Nevertheless **death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come**”* (Rom 5:14). God has revealed that it *“reigned”* because of the offense of one man, Adam (Rom 5:17).

From Adam to Moses

During the era between Adam and Moses, the Lord provided confirmation that death would not have the last word – that it would finally be conquered. Enoch, a man who *“pleased God,”* was translated

to the unseen world without having to die. It is said of him, *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God”* (Heb 11:5).

From Moses to Christ

From Moses to Christ, death continued its ruthless reign. It is written that *“sin reigned unto death”* (Rom 5:21), and that death was the consequence of sin, of which all men were guilty (Rom 6:16,23). Yet, during this age the Lord provided confirmation that death would not have the ultimate victory. IN this age also a man was translated to glory without having to experience death. It is written of Elijah the prophet, *“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”* (2 Kgs 2:11).

Although Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven without having to see death, they did not themselves conquer death, and therefore could deliver no one else from it. Deliverance would have to come from someone else.

The Lord Jesus

The Lord Jesus provides the third Person who went directly into heaven, while yet alive. His ascension, however, is different than that of Enoch and Elijah. He had died. However, His death was voluntary – His life was not *“taken”* from Him. Rather, He laid it down of Himself. Of this, the Savior said, *“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father”* (John 10:17-18).

In taking back His life, Jesus conquered death, rising from its domain. Having thoroughly conquered death, He arose to die no more, for *“death hath no more dominion over Him”* (Rom 6:9).

THE LAST ENEMY

Death is the last, or final enemy.

As it is written, *“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (1 Cor 15:26). After death, there are no more enemies the child of God will face – not a single one! If you are in Christ Jesus, death is the final foe, or enemy, you will face. Therefore, he who has power over death truly has *“preeminence in all things.”* For this reason it is affirmed that Jesus is *“the firstborn from the dead; that in all things e might have the preeminence”* (Col 1:18). **Our salvation requires**

have *“this treasure in earthen vessels”* (2 Cor 4:7), and this circumstance has introduced a fierce inner struggle. *“The flesh,”* which pertains exclusively to the body, *“lusteth against the Spirit”* (Gal 5:17), working through *“the law of sin”* that is resident in our mortal bodies (Rom 7:23,25; 8:2). Our bodies are not yet saved, even though they have been *“bought with a price”* (1 Cor 6:19-20).

This scenario is the occasion for

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT WE ARE NOT YET FULLY SAVED – NOT UNTIL OUR BODIES ARE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE. OUR BODIES ARE A FRAIL TABERNACLE, BUT THEY ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF US.

such a Savior.

But why is preeminence associated with raising from the dead? Judging from the thrust of much that comes to us in the name of the Lord, one might think the resurrection had very little to do with our salvation. However, such thoughts are indicative of a sort of spiritual insanity in which men are not free to think properly. Even Job, without a Bible, knew the resurrection of the dead was a pivotal matter. He said, *“If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come”* (Job 14:14). And again he said, *“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me”* (Job 19:25-27).

Salvation is not complete without the resurrection – the raising of the body out of the domain of the dead. The salvation we presently enjoy in Christ Jesus is described as *“the firstfruits of Spirit”* (Rom 8:23). This pledge of the fulness of redemption has produced a *“groaning”* within – a fundamental discontent with our present condition in this world. We

Apostolic teaching concerning the resurrection of the dead – the time when our bodies will be saved, or delivered from mortality. The *“firstfruits of the Spirit”* are the pledge of this deliverance. As it is written, *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”* (Rom 8:23). The book of Ephesians contains a similar statement, in which the body is called a *“purchased possession,”* and the Holy Spirit is declared to be an *“earnest,”* or pledge of the redemption of the body. *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory”* (Eph 1:14).

The truth of the matter is that we are not yet fully saved – not until our bodies are raised incorruptible. Our bodies are a frail tabernacle, but they are an integral part of us.

Sin has infected our entire being – spirit, soul, and body. **Salvation must**

deliver us in every realm into which sin thrust us. Grace must have as wide a perimeter as sin, else it will not be effectual. The remedy must reach as far as the curse, else it is no good.

What is more, this deliverance must come from one of our own race – a man. If sin came by man, salvation must come by man also. That is the reasoning of the Spirit: “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:21). This is also the reasoning of Romans 5:12-19. Sin and death came through Adam. Righteousness and life came through Christ – the MAN Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5).

Thus Jesus was raised from the

others see involvement in social and domestic correction to be the most fundamental issue – helping people. Some see God as basically tolerant of any and every condition because He loves people so much.

While an element of truth may be found in all of these things, there is one thing they all have in common. **They tend to minimize the greatness of salvation.** Our text has declared the truth of the matter. **In order to get you from earth to heaven, an all powerful Savior is required.** He must be the “*image of the invisible God*” (1:15). He must be the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (1:16). He must

Christ ceased to intercede for us, we would forthrightly drop into hell. That is precisely why it is written, “*Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them*” (Heb 7:25).

If inimical principalities and powers were not subject to Him, even now, in their weakened state, they would easily overcome us. He plundered them, but did not stamp them out of existence. The devil, his angels, and all of his principalities still exist. They have no access to heaven, but they do to the earth. If they were not subject to Christ, they would triumph over us in a moment.

If Jesus was not presently mediating the New Covenant, we would not receive a single heavenly benefit. We could have no faith, for it comes to us “*from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph 6:23). We would have no understanding of God, essential to salvation, for it is Jesus who “*is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true*” (1 John 5:20). **Neither grace nor peace could come to us if Jesus was not preeminent,** for they both come “*from God and Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor 1:3). The same is true of mercy (2 John 1:3).

I do not believe the American church has heard enough about the Lord Jesus. **There is too much talk about other things – things that do not have the preeminence.** There is too much novelty, too much entertainment, and too much involvement in things that have no association with things pertaining to life and godliness. As a result, the average Christian is not duly impressed with **the necessity of Jesus Christ right now.** That is why there is not much devotion to Him. It is why there is not much inquiry concerning Him. It why we have the plague of disinterest.

IF JESUS WAS NOT PRESENTLY MEDIATING THE NEW COVENANT, WE WOULD NOT RECEIVE A SINGLE HEAVENLY BENEFIT. WE COULD HAVE NO FAITH, FOR IT COMES TO US “FROM GOD THE FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST”

dead that, as a Man, He might have the preeminence in all things. That preeminence involved the subjugation of all enemies – but that was not its primary purpose. That could easily be done by angels, to say nothing of the Almighty God Himself. **The fuller purpose of this preeminence was to effect the full salvation of men, from their rescue from sin to their resurrection from the dead.**

Because of flawed preaching and teaching, men have been led to entertain stunted and restricted views of salvation. All manner of false teaching has arisen from these views. Some teach that once you are saved, you are always saved. Others teach that saving the lost is the fundamental thing. Still others make the church itself the heart of all things. Yet

not only be before all things, but He must be the Maintainer of all things (1:17). He must be the Head of the body, the Beginning of all things, and the first to raise from the dead, under His own power and incorruptible (1:18a). Further, He must “*have the preeminence*” in all things (1:18b). **If such a One is not bringing us to God, we simply will never get to Him. If this kind of Savior is not bringing the sons to glory, they will never arrive.**

A Savior of this sort is declared to be necessary to initially rescue us from sin. But He is also required to sanctify us, keep us from falling, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (Jude 1:24; 1 John 1:7).

If, for example, the exalted

ALL FULNESS DWELLS IN HIM

¹⁹ **For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.”**

Here we have a single statement that summarizes the whole of what has

been declared. This is the ultimate reason for the incarnation, life, death,

The declaration of the Person of Christ – who He is – is essential to our faith – by Given O. Blakely

resurrection, and present ministry of Jesus. It is why He has preeminence in all things.

PLEASED THE FATHER

Anything that pleases the Father must be of utmost importance to us. Something that pleases God meets with His approval, and He thinks well of it. He is willing for such a thing or person to continue, thereby guaranteeing effectiveness. Something that pleases God is what He chooses – it is what He has determined, and thus He is favorably inclined toward it.

It is not possible for something that pleases God to fail. A person who pleases God will surely succeed. No one who is well pleasing to God can come short of the goal. What is “pleasing” or “well pleasing” to the Lord is always good, and is always blessed (Col 1:10; 3:20; 1 John 3:22).

The Son of God is especially pleasing to Him. In the beginning, before He came into the world, He said, “I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb 10:9). Isaiah prophesied of the Savior, “Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles” (Mat 12:18). When Jesus was baptized, a voice from heaven was heard saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). When He was transfigured a voice came out of an overshadowing cloud saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matt 17:5). Jesus Himself confessed, “And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29).

The Father is especially pleased with His Son in every respect. Never has He displeased the Lord as Adam and all of his progeny have. It is good to know that the One who is bringing us to God is well pleasing in His sight! Here, however, a very special view of this good pleasure is seen.

ALL FULNESS

“For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” Other versions read, “For it was the Father’s

good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him,”^{NASB} “For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him” (Col 1:19).^{NIV} “For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,”^{NRSV} and “For God in all His fullness was pleased to live in Christ.”^{NLT}

Both the language and the reality of what is being declared go beyond the reach of human wisdom. Yet, it is proclaimed in order to stretch our minds and hearts in the matter of the knowledge of God, which is critical to our salvation.

The word “fulness” means “completion, copiousness, to fill up.”^{STRONG’S} It refers to what the Son is filled with, and not to the filling itself. The “fulness” is to Jesus what water is to a vessel.

It is said of believers, “And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). That is, we have not received the fulness itself, but a measure, or proportion of it. This measure is limited by our own persons. Therefore it is written, “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,

measure, but in “fulness.” His grace, wisdom, and goodness are in Christ – not in part, but in whole. All of God’s attributes, in their full measure, have found their home in the exalted Christ. Whatever God has to give is received from Christ. Whoever God will judge will be judged by Christ. Whoever God wants to blessed is blessed in Christ. **Having “all the fulness of God” dwelling in Him, the Lord Jesus has become the sole means of appropriating the things God has prepared for those who love Him.**

Therefore, it is said of those who are in the Son, “Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:21-23). It is no wonder that God moved the Psalmist to write, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psa 2:12).

This is why Jesus spoke with such

IT IS NOT SAID THAT JESUS WAS FILLED WITH THE “FULNESS OF GOD,” BUT THAT THE “FULNESS” DWELT, OR WAS HOUSED PERMANENTLY IN HIM. IT WAS NOT MEASURED AS IT IS WITH US.

that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:19). That is a staggering consideration, but vastly differs from what is said of the Lord Jesus.

It is not said that Jesus was filled with the “fulness of God,” but that the “fulness” dwelt, or was housed permanently in Him. It was not measured as it is with us. This will be again affirmed in the second chapter (2:9).

What is being said is that everything God IS, He is pleased to have dwell in “the Man Christ Jesus.” His truth, love, and power are there – not in

finality concerning our acceptance and honor of Him.

✚ “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him” (John 5:22-23).

✚ “He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me” (John 12:44-45).

ALL OF THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD ARE FOUND IN CHRIST JESUS – HIS ETERNALITY, OMNIPOTENCE, OMNISCIENCE, OMNIPRESENCE, IMMUTABILITY, IMMORTALITY, AND OTHER SUCH THINGS. THEY ARE ALL IN THE GLORIFIED SON.

✚ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and **he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me**” (John 13:20).

✚ “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” (John 14:9).

All of the perfections and glory of God are in the exalted Son. They have thereby become accessible to us through

Him – “the Man Christ Jesus.”

I understand this to be what Jesus prayed for in the Garden: “*Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son . . . And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was . . . Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*” (John 17:1, 5,24).

All of the essential attributes of

God are found in Christ Jesus – His eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, immortality, and other such things. They are all in the glorified Son. **Those, therefore, who would question the Divinity of Jesus has displayed a remarkable level of ignorance.**

This fulness, as I have already affirmed, has particular relevance to the salvation of men. It is therefore said of Jesus, “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14).

This is not something about which men are to speculate, or formulate creeds and theological positions. We are to understand that it took a Savior of this magnitude to pull us out of the quagmire of sin, and keep us out of it as well. **Had any other kind of Savior appeared, no would – not a single person – would ever have been saved!** Jesus is the kind of Savior we absolutely required. That is why He is totally effective.

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to a remarkable exposition of the Person of Jesus Christ – the Savior of the world. **This is the kind of Savior we had to have.** Any other kind of deliverer would have utterly failed. God could not save us in the capacity of His Godhood, for the Savior had to walk among men, in a defiled world, and among a fallen race. He had to be exposed to the adversary, be tempted in all points, and ultimately die. None of this could be done by a holy and invisible God. It is not that God lacked the power, but that His nature did not allow Him to be subjected to such things. His nature would simply not permit it. Holiness and unholiness cannot be joined. **Neither, indeed, can the righteous God be in close proximity to the unrighteous without destroying them.**

The invisible God cannot draw near to the earth without it convulsing and breaking up. Neither, indeed, can He come close to fallen men without them

being devoured, for He is “*a consuming fire.*”

From any human consideration, this would have made salvation impossible. However, God is infinitely wise as well as infinitely holy. The “*Word,*” who was “*with God and was God,*” and by whom all things were made, volunteered to enter a body prepared especially for Him. That body would allow Him to be tempted in all points like as those He would save. It also allowed Him to lay down His life and take it up again. He would conquer the devil in his own territory, and do so as a Man.

Our text expounds Christ in His essential character. Ponder again what remarkable things are said of Him.

- ✚ He IS the image of the invisible God.
- ✚ He IS the firstborn of every creature – both their Source and Head.

- ✚ Everything WAS created by Him that is in heaven.
- ✚ Everything WAS created by Him that is in earth.
- ✚ Everything visible WAS created by Him.
- ✚ Everything invisible WAS created by Him.
- ✚ All manner of power and dominions WERE created by Him, including thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.
- ✚ All things WERE created for Him.
- ✚ He IS before all things, eternally existing.
- ✚ He holds everything together, maintaining its order, and IS orchestrating it for Divine purpose.

- ✦ He IS the Head of the body, given to the church as Sovereign over all things and personalities.
- ✦ He IS the Beginning – the Source of all things – the means whereby all things have their genesis.
- ✦ He IS the first one to rise from the region of the dead under His own power.
- ✦ In everything, He HAS the preeminence.
- ✦ The Father IS pleased that all of His fulness dwells in Christ.

Such things can be said of no other Man. For this reason, **the church must make much of Jesus**, for God has exalted His name above every other name – not only in earth, but also in heaven (Phil 2:9; Eph 1:21). No other name must be allowed to obtain more prominence among men than His. No other person or persons must be better known or more highly revered than Him. No institution or group can justly claim more attention than Christ Jesus. No position must be revered above His Person. Nothing must be allowed to upstage Him in any way.

If you are familiar with the thrust of modern Christendom, you know Jesus Himself has generally been placed in

background. **Such things as church names, theological positions, organizational structures, education, scholarship, church history, psychological views, and the likes have actually received more attention than the Son of God.** In view of our text, as well as the entire thrust of Scripture and the nature of salvation, this is wholly unacceptable.

If God has given the preeminence to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it has pleased Him that all fulness dwell in Him, what can be said of those who place other things above Him? Let every soul take care to have a proper view and respect for the Lord Jesus. He will, after all, judge us.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/17/2003. In this session, we will be covering verses 20-22 of the first chapter. The title of our lesson is, **“WHAT JESUS HAS DONE.”** It is possible to be overly simplistic in speaking of the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is careful to lift our thinking when considering the Savior. Faith cannot be robust if we have minuscule views of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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The declaration of the Person of Christ – who He is – is essential to our faith – by Given O. Blakely
