

The Preeminence Of Christ

By Arthur L. Watkins

Colossians 1:12-19

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 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. For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell.

I don't believe most Christians really know the Christ they claim to believe in. They know him as savior, but that is the extent of their knowledge of Christ. They do not see the exalted position his Father gave him. To most Christians, Christ is just a sacrifice to save them from sin and hell. But he is much more than a sacrifice for sinners. God has highly exalted his Son in many ways in the scriptures.

Jesus said that when the Spirit comes he will glorify me. The main ministry of the Holy Spirit in our world today is to glorify Christ. One way the Spirit glorifies Christ is by inspiring men like Paul to show us how highly exalted and glorious Christ is in such chapters as: Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, Philippians 2 and Hebrews 1. The Christian Jews and gentiles Paul wrote to did not see Christ in all his glory. The Jews saw faint glimpses of him in the Law and the gentiles were blinded by idols most of their lives. So Paul wrote these chapters to show them and us how glorious, wonderful, marvelous, powerful, and exalted Christ really is. In these chapters we can see the preeminence God has given him in all things.

I do not believe that a Christian can really love Christ as he should until he sees the preeminence God gave him. This is the reason why the love of many Christians is luke warm today. Their knowledge of Christ is limited and so is their love for Christ. Your love for Christ is determined by your knowledge of Christ. In the early church the saints of God had a fervent

love for Christ because they had a full knowledge of Christ. The knowledge of Christ was their chief aim in life. The more they learned about Christ, the more they loved him. But today the love of many Christians is luke warm because they do not see Christ in all his glory and what is tragic is that many do not seem to even care.

Your love of Christ has a direct effect upon your service for Christ. Those who know Christ in all his glory love him more than those who don't. And those who have a fervent love for Christ serve him much more than those who don't. They are the ones who read their Bibles through and through, and witness, and pray, and come to church, and give, and live godly lives. They do it because of the fervent love they have for Christ. They love him with a fervent love because they see him in all his glory.

The purpose of the local church is to glorify Christ by our lives and lips. My job as a preacher is to reveal to the saints the exalted position God has given Christ with the hope they will in turn spend the rest of their life glorifying Christ with their life and lips in the world and in the church. If this is not the purpose of the church you are a member of, then you should shut the doors and go out of business.

In Colossians 1:18 Paul said; ***"That in all things he (Christ) might have the preeminence."*** In this chapter God gives Christ the preeminence over all things. The word preeminence means: **superiority, perfection, priority and surpassing**. In this chapter Christ is given first place, eminence, supremacy, majesty, superiority, and priority over all things in heaven and earth, whether they are visible or invisible, men or angels. In Colossians 1 God exalts Christ in many different ways.

(1) In The Kingdom Of God He Has Preeminence For God Made Him King of the Kingdom of God

Verse 13 says; ***Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.***

The highest rank in any kingdom is the king. God has a kingdom. It is called the kingdom of his dear Son and the kingdom of God. (Eph.5:5) Of the three members of the Godhead Jesus Christ was chosen to be the king who reigns over the kingdom of God. This is why the kingdom is called the kingdom of his dear Son. Because Christ is the king of the kingdom of God he has the highest position of authority in the kingdom. There is no one higher than Christ in the kingdom of God, for he is the king.

If God has translated us into the kingdom of his Son that makes him our king today. This is an important fact many believers overlook. We are not only members of the body of Christ, but we are also members of the kingdom of Christ and God. In 1 Thess.2:12 Paul said; ***That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.***

The kingdom of God is the inheritance of the church. We will spend eternity in the kingdom of God with Christ our king. This is why Paul preached and wrote so much about the kingdom of God. (See Acts 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 28:31)

The New Birth is the door into the kingdom of God. In John 3:3 Jesus said; ***Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*** When you are born again God takes you out of the devil's kingdom and he puts you into his. When God places you into his kingdom, his Son becomes your king. This of course means we are kingdom saints and Christ is our king. In 1 Timothy Paul writing of Christ said: ***Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*** Of all the positions in the kingdom God gave Christ the highest as the king. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. See 1 Timothy 6:13-15.

(2) In Forgiveness Christ Has Preeminence For He Forgives Sin And Pardons Sinners.

Verse 14 says; ***In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.***

Redemption is through the blood of Christ and he alone has the power and authority to forgive sin and sinners.

In Act 13:38-39 Paul said: ***Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.***

These verses tell us Christ even forgives the sins and pardons the sinners the Law of Moses could not forgive or pardon. Under Moses Law many sins and sinners could not be forgiven. But, because of the death and shed blood of Christ this is no longer true. Today, thanks to Christ there are no unpardonable sins or sinners.

Whoever forgives sins occupies a position of great honor and powerful authority. These verses plainly say sins are forgiven by Jesus Christ. If

Jesus Christ has the power and authority to forgive sins, he must be God, for only God can forgive sins.

In Mark 2 he forgave the sins of a cripple man. After he pronounced his sins forgiven the scribes said: *Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?* What the scribes said was true. Only God can forgive sins. By forgiving this man's sins Christ made himself equal with God. That is why they accused him of blasphemy, because they did not believe he was God.

In Luke 7 he forgave the sins of a prostitute and in John 8 the sins of a woman taken in adultery. When he forgave the sins of these people he blotted out their sins, he released them from the guilt of their sins, he took their sins away and no longer held them against them. This is what forgiveness is and by forgiving the sins of these individuals he proved he could forgive the sins of the whole world. In 1 John 2:2 he wrote: ***And he (Christ) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*** Only God has the power and authority to forgive sins and by forgiving their sins and ours Jesus Christ proves again he is God manifest in the flesh as he claimed to be. There is no other man in this universe who can forgive your sins but Jesus Christ.

(3) In The Likeness Of God Christ Has Preeminence For He Is The Exact Image Of God

Colossians 1:15 says; ***Who (Christ) is the image of the invisible God.***

An image is a reproduction or likeness or similitude of something. A photograph is an image. But a photograph is not an exact image. In real life there are three dimensions, but photography is one dimensional. It is impossible for a camera to catch every detail about a person. It may give you a good likeness of the person, but not an exact likeness. It may add or take away something from a person's features.

Jesus Christ is the image of God, but he is more than a faint resemblance of God. Hebrews 1:3 says: ***Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.***

Christ is ***"the express image of his person"***. The word express means exact. For example, your son or daughter may resemble you in many ways. They may be an image of you, but they are not an exact image. They are not 100% like you. There are differences. But when men saw God's Son they didn't see an image or a resemblance of God or a hint or idea of God.

They saw the exact image of God. Jesus Christ is exactly like God in every way. He does not differ from God in any way. Anything that is true of God is equally true of Christ.

There is no difference between him and the Father. He is exactly like the Father in every detail. He is exactly like the Father in deity, power, holiness, perfection, glory, authority and honour. Any attribute the Father has, Christ has, for he is the express, the exact, the precise image of God the Father. This is why Jesus said; ***He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*** He did not say he is the Father for he is not. He is saying he is equal with the Father. The Father was in him and he was in the Father. They are mirrors of one another. They reflect one another. Jesus Christ reflects the Father. Anything that is true of the Father is true of the Son. Any attribute the Father has the Son has. They are equal in all things. This is why he said: ***I and my Father are one.*** (John 10)

In Philippians 2:6 Paul wrote concerning Christ; ***Who, (Christ) being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*** When Jesus said; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, he made himself equal with God. And when he made himself equal with God he was not robbing God for he is the exact image of God. He has the same identical attributes of God which makes him equal with God in every way. If I made myself equal with God I would be robbing God for I would be dragging God down to my level. But when Jesus made himself equal with God he was not dragging God down to a lower level, for he is on the same level as God, for he is the exact image of God.

God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are both invisible. No one has seen the Father or the Spirit. But Jesus Christ is God made visible. He is the part of the Godhead who is visible. Jesus Christ is God manifest in a body of flesh that men actually saw. He is the exact physical and spiritual and moral manifestation of the invisible God.

(4) In Resurrection Christ Has Preeminence

Colossians 1:15 says; Christ is the ***first-born of every creature.***

Colossians 1:18 says; Christ is the ***first born from the dead.***

The word firstborn in these verses refer to the resurrection of the dead. When it comes to resurrection Christ has the preeminence. He is number one. In the resurrection he has the preeminence in two ways.

He is the first born from the dead

In Acts 13:32-34 Paul said that when God raised Christ from the dead he was begotten from the dead. The word *born* in Colossians 1 and *begotten* in Acts 13 is the same word. Christ was begotten or brought forth from the dead as a child is brought forth from his mother's womb. As a child is brought forth to life from the womb, Christ was brought forth from death unto life in resurrection.

What made Christ's resurrection different from all others is that when Christ was begotten from the dead he did not return to corruption. He did not die again. Others like Lazarus were raised before Christ, but they all returned to corruption, they all died again. Jesus Christ is the first born from the dead; he is the first to be raised from the dead never to die again. This is why he said in Revelation 1:18: ***I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for ever more.*** Once he was raised from the dead he will never die again. He is alive forever more.

Christ is the first born of every creature

The creatures he is the first born of are those who are saved and in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says; ***If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*** If Jesus Christ is the first born of every creature and if the creatures are those who are in Christ, this means those who are in Christ will be raised from the dead, like him never to die again. 1 Corinthians 15:21-23 says: ***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. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.***

In these verses the resurrection of the dead is like a harvest. In a harvest there are the first fruits and then the harvest. Christ is the first fruits and we are the harvest. The first fruits was Christ's resurrection from the dead and the harvest is ours at his coming. (Notice there is only one coming and resurrection of saints in the future not two, three or four as some extreme dispensationalists teach.)

In Colossians 1 Christ is given first place when it comes to resurrection. He is the first be raised from the dead never to die again. He is not only the first to be raised from the dead never to die again, but he is the first of many creatures who will be raised from the dead never to die again. The creatures are those who are in Christ.

(5) In Creation Christ Has Preeminence For He Is The Creator

Verse 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:**

In this verse God elevated his Son again to a very powerful position. This position is over the visible and invisible universe. He declares Jesus Christ to be the creator of all things in heaven and earth. If Jesus Christ created all things he has the most powerful position of authority in the universe and he must be God for only God can create something out of nothing. .

Ephesians 3:9 says: **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:**

Hebrews 1:1-2 says: **God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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;**

John 1:1-3 says: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

When we worship, serve, and praise Jesus Christ we are worshipping and serving and praising the creator of heaven and earth. We are worshipping and serving the God of Genesis 1:1 which says; ***In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*** Jesus Christ is God the creator.

(6) In Creation Christ Also Has Preeminence Being The Sustainer Of All Things

Verse 17: ***By him all things consist.***

The word consist means; to be supported by, upheld by, and sustained by. According to Hebrews 1:3 it is by the power of his word he upholds all things. He not only made all things, but he holds them together. Jesus Christ is the “glue” that keeps the universe together. He not only created heaven and earth, but he holds it all together by the power of his word.

In Genesis 1 he spoke words and heaven and earth came into existence. He said: *let there be light* and it came into existence.

He now holds the heaven and earth he created together by the power of his word.

The day is coming soon that he will speak it out of existence by his word. See Hebrews 1:11-12.

And by the power of his word he will create new heavens and a new earth that will never be destroyed. See 2 Peter 3:13.

(7) In Time And Eternity Christ Has Preeminence

Verse 17 says: ***He is before all things***

Before heaven and the earth were created; before the angels and principalities were created; before all things were created; the person we know as Jesus Christ was in existence because he is *before all things*. He never had a beginning and will never have an ending. He didn't begin to live and will never cease to be. There has never and will never be a time when the person we know as Jesus Christ does not exist. He stretches from eternity to eternity because he is the eternal God. (His name has not always been Jesus, but the person we call Jesus has always been. At one time his name was The Word. John 1:1-12)

In Micah 5:2 is found a prophecy of the birth of Christ. Its says: ***But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.***

Psa.102:25-27 says: ***Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.***

(8) In The Church Christ Has Preeminence For He Is The Head And Beginning Of The Church

Verse 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.***

The church was built by Christ.

The church was chosen in Christ.

The church was redeemed by Christ.

The church is the body of Christ.

Therefore, it is only fitting for God to give Christ the highest position in the church as the Head of the church. He made him the head of the church when he raised him from the dead and set him at his right hand in heavenly

places according to Ephesians 1:19-23. When Christ sat down at the right hand of God he was made to be the head over all things to the church which is his body. Therefore, he holds the most important position in the church because no one is higher than the head.

Being the head of the church also means he is the beginning of the church, just like Colossians 1:18 says. The church did not begin with Peter like the Catholics say. It did not begin with John the Baptist like many Baptists say. It did not begin with Paul like many dispensationalists say. If Christ is the head of the church he is the beginning of the church. The church begins with the head. He is the beginning because he is the head. He not only holds the most important position in the church as its head, but he is the first member and the oldest member in the church because he is the beginning.

(9) In Deity Christ Has Preeminence For He Is Filled With All The Fullness Of God

Verse 19: ***For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.***

What is the fullness that dwells in Christ? What is Christ filled with? Colossians 2:9 says: ***For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.***

He is filled with the fullness of the Godhead bodily. What does this mean? It means everything it takes to be God is in Christ. The Godhead dwells in Christ. All of the attributes, power, glory, divinity, majesty, holiness, and authority it takes to be God, Christ is filled with. He is God in a body of flesh.

The preeminence of Christ in Colossians 1:12-19

In the kingdom of God, Christ is the King.

In the creation, he is the creator and sustainer of all things.

In time, he is eternal because he is before all things.

In the church, he is the head and the beginning of the church.

In the heavenly and earthly principalities and powers, he is seated and exalted far above them all.

In the likeness of God, he is the express, exact image of God.

In the resurrection, he is the firstborn from the dead and the first of many who will be raised from the dead never to die again.

In forgiveness he alone has the power and authority to forgive all sin and sinners who come to him by faith.

In the Godhead, he is filled with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. If God gives his Son the preeminence over all things then so should we. This is our most important ministry in this present evil world. As God sent the Spirit into the world to glorify Christ, God has left us in the world to glorify Christ and one way we can do it is by showing all men the preeminence God has given him in Colossians 1:12-19.

After seeing all these glorious truths written about Christ our love for him ought to increase and abound. How can we help but to love someone as glorious as him?

Seeing what is written of Christ in Colossians 1 our service for him ought to increase and abound. How can we help but to want to serve a person like him?

What is written about Christ ought to cause us to trust him with every detail of our life. Being God the creator what is too hard for him?

Seeing what a glorious person Christ really is should constrain us to sacrifice everything we have for him. He is worthy of every sacrifice we can make for him in our lives. Every sacrifice you make for Christ will be worth it now and later at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

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