

AWED BY GREATNESS / Sunday School- February 3, 2013

Unifying Topic: THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS CHRIST

Lesson Text

I. The Image Of The Invisible God (Colossians 1:15-17)

II. The Fullness Of God (Colossians 1:18-20)

The Main Thought: For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, (Colossians 1:19), (KJV).

Unifying Principle: Because of the immediate availability of images of greatness, from athletics to space to technology, our grasp of the amazing becomes desensitized. What does it take to inspire true awe that commands reverence? Paul's use of metaphor strongly conveys Christ supremacy, which helps us realize who Christ is.

Lesson Aim: To help students see—just as Paul wants the Colossian Christians to see—the supremacy of Christ in all things.

Life Aim: To help students to approach Jesus in both corporate worship and everyday devotion with a sense of reverence in light of who He is.

1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

1:16 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:

1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

1:18 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.

1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

HISTORY:

Colossians 1:9-14 At some point Paul had been visited in prison by Epaphras, pastor of the great Colossian church. Apparently, he felt a need for some counsel and advice on how to handle the false teaching that had seeped into the church. This is the purpose for the letter to the Colossians; to encourage the church and its believers to get rid of the false teaching and to continue on with Christ. Being in prison and unable to reach them, what could he do? Only two things:

1. He could write them and share the Word of God in a letter.
2. He could pray for them.

Paul did both. The present passage covers his prayer. He asked three things; All three requests are needed by every church and all believers, in particular those who face false teaching.

1. Prayer Request 1: to know God's Will—*"to be filled with the knowledge of God's Will"* (1:9).

It is not enough to hear of God's Will, but our desire is to be filled with the knowledge of God's Will. Nothing is to flow through us nor out of us that is not of God's Will. God's Will involves all of life, everything we do every moment of every day. The point is this: God tells us how to live life, and what He tells us is His Will.

- i. Therefore, we are to study what God has said. We are to study and learn until the knowledge of His "Will" just floods our lives to such a degree that doing His "Will" flows out into our conduct and behavior.
- ii. As we study, wisdom and understanding has to be established within us. "Wisdom" (*sophia*) is the ability to judge rightly; having insight. While "Understanding" (*sunesei*) is the ability to comprehend; applying the basic principles to decisions. How? By studying the Word of God! Think about how little most people know about God's Will. Is it any wonder that so many have been deceived by false teaching? That so much of our ministry is superficial and formal? *"Through wisdom is a house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches"* Prov.24:3-4.

2. Prayer Request 2: to walk worthy of Christ (1:10).

This is a critical point for the believer. After doing what we just talked about, we got to walk it out. There is a difference between hearing and knowing something and then having the ability to do that something. The critical point is putting what we know into practice. We are to live out the will of God; we are to practice and do the will of God including myself. Knowing the will of God is of no value until we have committed our lives

to do it. "Walk" (*peropatesao*) means that we set our lives—our behavior and conduct after Christ. "Worthy" (*axios*) means to have the weight of or comparing the value of. Our walk is to weigh as much as the walk of Christ. We are to live equal to; we are to live up to; we are to live with the same glory as, all of what God has called us to be! Our conduct is to conform to the will of God as much as the conduct of Christ. We are to live a life just as worthy as the life of Christ. The will of God is to control our behavior as much as it did the behavior of Christ. Christ is the pattern and we are the copy. The copy is just like the pattern (*Wuest*). There is only one way. We must be totally committed to do two things.

1. We must be **"fruitful in every good work."** No person is pleased when we do only half of what He says. To please anyone we have to do all that He says. How much more true with God!
2. We must grow in the knowledge of God. How? We walk with Him: associate, fellowship, and share with Him. The more we walk with Him, the more we **"increase in the knowledge of Him."**

3. Prayer Request 3: to **possess the power of God**; **"strengthen with all might"** (1:11).

This is seen by asking two questions:

1. What good is it if the believer knows God's Will, but he does not have the power to do God's Will?
2. How can the believer walk worthy of Christ if he does not have the power to do God's will?

Many in the world believe that man has the strength within himself to become spiritually strong; that it is a matter of the will and discipline; that man can apply himself and conquer the circumstances of life. And, to some degree, this is true. But man's flesh fails in three critical areas.

1. The flesh cannot become perfect; neither can it do anything about perfection.
2. The flesh cannot conquer death.
3. The flesh cannot do what this verse says; it cannot be patient and longsuffering against all the traumatic trials and temptations of life and be joyful at the same time in itself.

Where does such power come from? From God, and we secure His power through prayer.

1. God's power gives us a spirit of **"patience"** (*hupomonen*); endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, constancy, perseverance. Rather it is His Spirit that stands up, quickens our spirit, and faces the trials of life.
2. God's power gives us a spirit of **"longsuffering."**
3. God's power gives us a spirit of **"joyfulness"** through all the trials and tribulations of life.

God has done three great things for man. If we concentrate upon these three things the depth of what God has done will erupt in our lives for good and we will **"give thanks to the Father."**

1. God has given us an **"inheritance"** (1:12). Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that we have to do something to earn God's favor. The truth is you already have it. You have it through the blood of His dear Son Jesus. You have it because it was predestinated, that is foreordained. The fact that God would take sinners—totally depraved sinners—and save them will cause praise upon praise, and then give us an inheritance—that of being made the very heritage of God, the very possession of God is truly outstanding! It was predestinated that Jesus would go to the cross that we would receive the inheritance. Inheritance always comes after death.
2. God has **"delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son"** (1:13). Picture a person trying to walk and stumble through a world of darkness. The power of darkness is a kingdom, a realm, or world, but also a power, actively enslaving man and standing in opposition to the light. However, the Father Himself has **"delivered"** (*erurato*) meaning rescued or snatched us from darkness and **"translated"** (*transferred, brought*) **"us into the kingdom of His dear Son."** Remember, that if there is the power of darkness, there is the kingdom of Christ's light, existing. And God's kingdom is greater!
 - a. His rule and reign already exists in the spiritual world, in heaven.
 - b. His rule and reign already exists in the hearts and lives of believers in this physical world.

Why did God do that? Because of His great love for us! How did He do that? Through His only begotten Son dying on the cross and rising from the dead! He did it for us! **He delivered us!**

3. God **"has redeemed us through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins"** (1:14). The contract of sin was death for the sinner's life. The ransom God paid in full was with the shed blood of Jesus for our penalty of sin. The blood had to come from the Perfect Lamb, the spotless Lamb of Jesus; no other way. He bore the bondage of sin through His blood and sin's penalty was broken!
 - a. Any person who truly believes that Jesus Christ died for him is forgiven his sins.
 - b. God takes his faith and counts it as the death of Jesus Christ.

- c. God sees the man as being in Jesus Christ, as being in the death of Jesus Christ.
- d. God counts the death of Jesus Christ for the death of the man.
- e. Therefore, the guilt and penalty for breaking God's laws are completely removed.
- f. The man's sins and guilt are sent away or washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul was allowing them to see that he was still praying for their growth, and their maturity. And, he was still giving thanks to the Father for what He had completed in them through His Son Jesus.

LESSON:

Colossians 1:15-17 The Image Of The Invisible God

1:15 *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"* This scripture comes because false teaching had seeped into the Colossian church. It was called "*Gnosticism*." The false teaching attacked Jesus Christ; both His work and Person. Therefore, Paul takes up the pen and proclaims the Person of Christ to the Colossians.

1. First, Jesus Christ is "*the image of the invisible God*." The image expresses Christ's deity in relation to the Father, it is the very stamp of God as He was before the incarnation (Jh.17:5). The word is not form (Phil.2:6), He is not the form but "*image*" (eikon) meaning the exact image. In the incarnation, *the invisible God became visible in Christ*: deity was clothed with humanity (Matt.17:2), deity under some human limitations. *Christ in God*: visible, audible, approachable, knowable, and available. All that God is, Christ is.
2. Second, Jesus Christ is "*the firstborn of every creature*." This expresses Christ's deity and sovereignty in relation to Creation. Christ was the first-born not the first created. First-born signifies priority in time. All creation is His heritage.

So we have here declared the invisible God was before Creation, the visible God came to Creation, and the firstborn of every creature has all authority over Creation because He was not created and His name is Jesus Christ.

1:16 *"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:"*

"By Him" means that He is the divine agent. It means creation took place in Christ, within His very being. The word "*created*" at the beginning, shows that Creation is a past, perfect work. The second time, "*created*" shows that Creation is a permanent work. The Gnostics believed all matter is evil, thus the creation is evil. Paul says that indeed God the son, who also came in a material body, is the God who created all things. All means all. And God did not see His Creation as evil, but as very good (Gen.1:31).

- "*all things*" collectively, that is, all things within the universe were created by Christ.
- "*all things*" individually, that is, every single detail of Creation, was created by Christ.

The heretics at Colosse taught people to worship various levels of angels (Colo.2:18), but Christ, not angels should be worshiped. Created things are never to be worshiped. All visible and invisible things, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers were created in heaven and earth by the Lord Jesus Christ: by Him and for Him.

1:17 *"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."* Christ existed prior to all creation. He is the great "I Am!" (Jh.8:58). The Gnostics had taught that Christ was created at His human birth and He did not have preexistence. But Paul lets them know that Christ was before everything else and in Him all things hold together.

1. Jesus Christ was before all things in time—before the first thing was ever created.
2. Jesus Christ is before all things in importance, supremacy, and preeminence—nothing is superior to Him.
3. Jesus Christ is what holds the world together.
 - a. that keeps the universe from flying apart and disintegrating.
 - b. that keeps all creatures from utterly destroying themselves through savagery.

Things are held together by His: • love • energy • unity • force • power • order • cohesion • solidarity.

Colossians 1:18-20 The Fullness Of God

1:18 *"And he is the head of the body, the church:* Just as Christ rules and reigns over the natural creation, He also rules over human creation, the church. He is **THE** authority over the church. The picture is: the human body with Christ as the Head, and the church as His body. When the church is called the body of Christ, at least three ideas are pictured.

1. There is the idea of life. A body cannot live apart from the head and a head cannot live apart from the body. Both the head and the body are absolutely necessary for there to be life. Now we see that without Jesus Christ, the church does not exist. And without the church, the life of Christ on earth could not be known or exist. Christ is made known only through the lives of His people, the church.
 - a. If any part of the world is without the church (His body), that part of the world cannot know Christ the Head.

- b. If the world sees a body of people with some head other than Christ, then that body of people is not the church, not the true church.
2. There is the idea of activity and its source. It is the body that acts, but it is the Head that tells the body to act.
 - plans for the body • directs the body • guides the body • inspires the body • activates the body...
 The body does nothing without the Head. All that the body does begins in the Head.
3. There is the idea of control. The Head is to rule and reign over the body. The body is to be controlled by the Head, not act apart from the Head. When Christ does not control the church body, it is because there is some malfunction, some problem within the body.

1:18b *who is the beginning,* — Jesus Christ is the beginning of the church. The word "*beginning*" (*arche*) has a twofold idea.

1. "*Beginning*" means creative power. When something first begins, it is created or brought into being by some person or thing greater than itself. Jesus Christ was the Person who gave birth to the church. He is greater than the church; therefore, He had the power to create the church and bring it into existence.
2. "*Beginning*" means first in time. Jesus Christ was the Person of the church. He began the church; therefore, He was the Head, the great and glorious Founder of the church. All others who come into the church follow Him. A person, who does not follow Christ the Founder, fails to really enter the church which He founded. A person may sit in the pews of a building and hear the voice of the preacher, but unless he follows Christ, he is not in the body and movement of the church's Founder. He follows some other body and movement.

1:18c *the firstborn from the dead;* — Jesus Christ was the first to arise from the dead. There are three ways that the resurrection of Christ and the church are closely related.

1. The resurrection of Christ is the very reason the church exists. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead, there would be no church. Now the church can live forever with Christ. Therefore, when a person truly believes in the resurrection of Christ, God takes that belief and counts the person as being in Christ. When man is ready to leave this world, he will be resurrected right into the presence of God. Death is conquered!
2. The resurrection of Christ and the life of the church means there is a new life available for the church. When Christ was raised from the dead, His body and life were entirely different from His former body and life. So it is with the church. The church is to be a picture of the resurrected and changed life of Christ.
3. The resurrection of Christ is the power by which the church is to live. The church is to live as resurrected beings—beings with a new life, a life of power and energy that conquers all the trials of life; power to conquer all the trials and temptations of life. Such power is available, and it is to be alive and active in the church. In fact, the resurrected power of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be the very life blood of the church.

1:18d *that in all things he might have the preeminence.*" Jesus Christ is eminent above all others. Paul first proclaims the preeminence of Christ in creation, and then His preeminence in redemption.

- Jesus Christ is the preeminent Person in the universe because He died and arose again for man's salvation. Christ was perfectly obedient to God the Father in dying and being raised from the dead, that God the Father has made God the Son preeminent in all things. The point is this: God's great love for His Son explains why the church exists. God had created the world and man to worship and serve Him, but when man rebelled and refused to honor Him, God had to accomplish His purpose some other way. He provided the way through His Son Jesus Christ.
 - a. Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God the Father (Mk.16:19).
 - b. Jesus Christ has been given a name above every name (Phil.2:9).
 - c. Jesus Christ has been given all things (Rev.5:12).
 - d. Jesus Christ has been both Lord and Christ (Messiah, Savior) (Acts 2:36).
 - e. Jesus Christ has been exalted above all (Jh.3:31).
 - f. Jesus Christ is Lord of both the living and the dead (Rom.14:9).
 - g. Jesus Christ has a more excellent name than the angels (Heb.1:4).
 - h. Jesus Christ has more glory than even the greatest of men (Heb.3:3).
 - i. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (Rev.1:11).
 - j. Jesus Christ has all things under His feet (Eph.1:22).
 - k. Jesus Christ has all things subject to Him (1Pt.3:22).

1:19 *"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;"* ¹God put everything that **He has** into Christ. And God put everything that **He is** into Christ. This includes all God's character, His nature and His power. Jesus Christ is filled with all the fullness of God Himself. All that God is, dwells in Jesus Christ. ²Actually the Spirit of the Father, Word,

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/col-lbw.htm>

² <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/colossians/02.html>

and Holy Ghost were all caught up in the working of the Spirit within the body of Jesus. Jesus Christ is fully God in all God's divine nature. The word "*dwelling*" (*katokeo*) means to make permanent abode or to be at home permanently. All the fullness of God was at home in Christ before He came to earth, at home in Him while He was on earth, and shall continue to be at home within Him throughout all eternity. In fact, because of what God the Son has done in coming to earth—dying and rising from the dead—God the Father wants His Son to have the preeminence and which pleases Him. The church can please the Father only by praising and serving the Lord Jesus Christ, the One in whom dwells all the fullness of God.

1:20 *"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; — Sin separated us from God because of Adam and Eve and ³caused man to become spiritually dead. Once Christ went to the cross, by His blood, He had reconciled the Elect of God back to God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" Rom 5:1. Romans 5:1 states that those who are saved have peace with God. Therefore, those who are reconciled unto God are brought into the same fellowship Adam and Eve had before they sinned, and that is why the word in the Greek for "*reconcile*" means "a reconciliation of a former relationship." We have peace through the blood of His cross. How does the "*blood of the cross*" reconcile us to God?*

- The cross was the place where criminals were executed. This means that Jesus Christ died as an unjust criminal, yet He was not a criminal. He did not deserve to die, for He had broken no law. He was not there because of His own sins. He was there dying for someone else. He was the Just dying for the unjust. If the Just died for the sins of the unjust, then the unjust is no longer guilty of sin. He is freed from the charge of being a sinner: he is no longer considered unjust; he is considered just. How? by faith. When a person truly believes that the Just Christ died for his unjust sins, God counts it so. Being freed from the charge of sin, the person becomes acceptable to God.

1:20b *...by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."* All things are reconciled to God, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. This does not mean universal salvation. Scripture does not teach that every person shall be reconciled to God. Those who are not the Elect of God are still at enmity with God, that is, they are still the enemies of God. The next verse makes that clear. Therefore, as we look ahead to the life that will exist in the new heaven and earth, the life of the future will be a life of reconciliation with God. It means that everyone who is there, will be reconciled to God.

SUMMARY:

⁴ In these verses we find Paul explaining the relationship of Jesus Christ to *creation*.

- I. He existed before *creation* (v.15). The "Firstborn" cannot be a part of *creation* if He *created* "all things." This means that He preceded the whole *creation* and He is Sovereign over all *Creation*.
- II. He *created* all things (v.16). "Through Him all things were made" (Jh.1:3). This includes all things in heaven and earth.
- III. All things exist for Him (v.16b). Christ is not only the one through whom all things came into being, but also the one by whom they continue to exist. Everything in *creation* exists for Him.
- IV. He holds all things together (v.17). Jesus Christ not only made all things, He controls all things and by Him all things are held together. Even though rulers (human or spiritual) may oppress us, they are what they are by God's permission and power; they can do nothing except He permits it (Rom.13:1-7). This is certainly comforting for us to know.
- V. He is the head of the Church (v.18). No believer on earth is the head of the church. This position is reserved exclusively for Jesus Christ. Therefore, no denomination or local assembly can claim to be "the body of Christ", because that body is composed of all true believers.

⁵If there is to be *reconciliation* between God and man, the initiative and action must come from God. The false teachers in Colosse said that the angels could in some way bring men closer to God. But it was only through the blood of Christ that peace was made between God and man (vv.19-20). Religion is man seeking God; Christianity is God seeking man (II Cor.5:18-20).

APPLICATION:

After reading this lesson, one has to be in awe of Jesus Christ and His greatness. He has done so much for us and He is who He says He is. He is preeminent, supreme, self-existent, messiah, and Head of all Creation! Accept His love and salvation today!

³ http://www.scionofzion.com/colossians_1_16_20.htm

⁴ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/colossians-115/>

⁵ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/colossians-119/>