

Preeminence of Christ

Colossians 1:15-20

Introduction

1. In the world there has been much speculation concerning the person of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Some have questioned whether Jesus was perfect, or whether He was a man well acquainted with sin (the movie, *The Last Temptation*).
 - b. Others have questioned whether Jesus is deity (of a divine nature), or if He was just as godly man.
 - c. Also, many people who call themselves Christians are reconsidering whether or not Jesus actually requires that we fully obey Him as Lord, saying, “We do not have to do everything the Bible says.”
2. In Colossians chapter one, however, Paul makes the person of Jesus unmistakably clear.
 - a. In Colossians 1:13-14 Paul introduces Him as the one through whom we have the forgiveness of sin.
 - b. In verses 15-18 Paul describes the exalted position of Christ among all things created and eternal.
 - c. If there is any question as to why we should glorify Christ it is answered in Paul’s comments in this passage.
3. Who is Christ?

Discussion

I. The First Born Over All Creation (Vs. 15).

A. The image of the invisible God.

1. Until Jesus became flesh no man had ever seen God (1 John 4:12).
2. But at the appearing of Jesus the angels were able to proclaim that God was with us (Matthew 1:23).
3. Through the life Jesus lived, the teachings that He brought, and the sacrifice that He offered all men are able to see God in Jesus as they read story of the gospel (John 14:9-10).
4. Paul was able to affirm by inspiration concerning Jesus, “*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (Colossians 2:9).
 - a. In Jesus we not only see the power and authority of God (Matt. 28:18, Heb. 1:8), but with these divine attributes we also see the personality of God.
 - b. For this reason, all that we may know about who God is can be seen in Jesus for He is God along with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
 - c. Since we can see these things in Him He is the image of the invisible God.

B. “The firstborn over all creation.”

1. Some have used this passage to argue that since Jesus is the “first born,” that makes Him a created being. Some have even affirmed that He is simply an exalted angel.
 - a. But the preceding statement in this verse disproves that. Jesus is God; He is the image and fullness of God – the full manifestation.
 - b. Hebrews 1:4-14 (esp. 4, 7-8) greatly disproves the idea of Jesus being an angel or any created being.
2. The word “first born” does not always mean “born first” as some would argue. Consider:
 - a. The word “first born” can mean the first one born: Gen. 27:19, Ex. 11:5; Luke 2:7.

- b. This same phrase also expresses the AUTHORITY or PRIVILEGE that is seen in a “first born”:
- c. In Exodus 4:22 God was not saying that Israel was the first nation ever born, for it was not. However, it was the most privileged of all the nations seeing that through Israel the law of God would come and the Messiah who would bless all nations (Romans 3:1-2).
- 3. Thus we find that Jesus as the first born was not created (as Paul goes on to prove), but has all authority and preeminence as of the first born of God – as the exalted One
- 4. *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

II. The Creator of All Things (Vs. 16).

- A. As Creator of all things Jesus Himself could not have been created.
 - 1. Thus Paul expands upon his statement in the previous verse.
 - 2. We must also note in John 1:2 that it says of Jesus, *“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”*
 - 3. Therefore when we read in the Beginning that God created the heavens and the earth we may conclude that it was Jesus, as God, along with the Father as well as the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2), who created the heavens and the earth.
 - 4. Since *“without Him nothing was made that was made,”* Jesus cannot be a created being for He would not have been able to create Himself. Jesus is the beginning and the end – eternal God.
- B. Paul describes the comprehensive authority of Christ.
 - 1. In Him, or by Him, all things were created.
 - a. He is the source of all created things.
 - b. When John said nothing was created without Him, he meant nothing. For all things that were created include things both visible and invisible, substance as well as authority.
 - c. All things have their existence and their continued being in Christ; that is to say, by His power.
 - 2. If there is any question as to our need to submit to Christ in all things it is answered here.
 - a. All that we have is not our own, but was created and given to us by Christ.
 - b. Our very lives were given to us by Him.
 - c. If any man holds a position of authority on earth they have a duty to acknowledge God, for that authority comes from Him (Romans 13:1).
 - 3. For all things were created through Him:
 - a. “In Him,” means that the power comes from Him.
 - b. “Through Him,” means that Jesus is the active agent, or the instrument, within the Godhead through which all things were created.
 - c. Therefore John was able to write, *“without Him nothing was made that was made.”*
 - 4. Not only were all things made by Him, they were also made “for Him.”
 - a. This means that until a man or woman obeys Jesus as Lord they have not found their true purpose in life.
 - b. We are all created beings and the purpose for our existence is to serve our Creator and obey Him in all things, in order that through us He may be glorified.
 - c. *“Let us hear the conclusion of this whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

- d. This is the purpose for the entire universe. For the heavens, while they exist, declare glory unto the Creator (Palm 19:1). And even when these things are destroyed their destruction will proclaim the fullness of God's glory and majesty as every enemy (the disobedient as well as all that is defiled by disobedience) is destroyed.
- e. By the existence of all things the wisdom and majesty of Christ are seen. By the destruction of the wicked His eternal glory, authority, and sovereignty will be seen.

III. To Summarize His Authority (vs. 17).

- A. Christ is before all things:
 - 1. He existed before all things; He is eternal and self-existent.
 - 2. In priority He is before all things.
- B. In Him all things consist:
 - 1. This means that Jesus did not merely create all things; He is also the one who holds all things together.
 - 2. He is the one who makes the universe a "cosmos" (which means order – cosmetics) instead of "chaos."
 - 3. Since all things exist as well as consist in Christ He has the power to create as well as destroy. There is a judgment coming – all Jesus has to do is let go and all will be fulfilled.
- C. Let us take a moment here to be impressed with the Christ's condescension and love.
 - 1. In spite of His power and authority over all things He still saw it worth His while to come down and live as a man that we might have salvation (Phil. 2:5-8).
 - 2. Who are we to reject Him? "Dare we lift our hearts to complete and credit" His salvation (Dunagan).
 - 3. This is the love of the true God, what logical reason could a person have to refuse Him?

IV. The First Born from the Dead (Vs. 18).

- A. Christ's authority translates into His church.
 - 1. We have seen the supremacy of Jesus over all creation, it is only necessary that we include the church in this as well.
 - 2. For not only has Jesus created all things, He died in order to offer eternal salvation to His creation – to all men (John 3:16).
 - 3. Can it be any wonder then that Jesus would become the head of that body which was purchased by His own blood?
 - 4. Let us, therefore, acknowledge that just as all men who walk in disobedience to God cannot be called His children (1 John 3:8-9), every congregation that does not function with Christ as its head cannot be His church.
- B. He is the Beginning.
 - 1. Just as all things began with Christ in the beginning, so the church began with Him at His resurrection.
 - 2. Therefore He is the beginning of the church, the sanctified, those whose hope is in the resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).
 - 3. By His resurrection this hope is made possible.
 - 4. By His resurrection He has become the first of those who will be raised from the dead unto eternal life.
- C. Therefore He is the "first born from the dead."
 - 1. As discussed before, "first born" does not necessarily means first one to be born, but also refers to position and authority.

2. In the case of Christ's resurrection it means both.
3. Jesus is the first to be raise unto eternal life:
 - a. Jesus was not the first person to ever rise from the dead (John 11:43-44).
 - b. But Jesus was the first to rise unto eternal life, just as all His saints will do at the last day (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
4. Jesus is the most important to be raise.
 - a. Though others had been raise from the dead before Jesus, He is the most important because it was in His resurrection that we are able to have eternal life.
 - b. *"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"* (Romans 5:10).
 - c. See also 1 Corinthians 15:17.
5. Through His resurrection Jesus has proven that He has conquered all things and has power over death so that on the last day He will destroy the last enemy and give eternal to life to all who obey Him (1 Corinthians 15:20-26).

V. The reconciler of all things to God (Vs. 19-20).

- A. It is here that we see the full force of what Paul is arguing.
- B. Because of Christ's authority in all things, He has become the reconciler of all things to God.
 1. No one can come to God except through Christ (John 14:6).
 2. No person can be made clean except by the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).
 3. He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega.
- C. What, then, can we answer those who ask, "Why Christ?" Why not any other (Buddha, Allah, etc.)?
 1. We can take them to this passage and show them that there is nothing without Christ. In Him all things exist.
 2. All things were created by Christ, all things are sustained through Christ, and all things were created for Christ – including you.
- D. There were some among the Colossians who were teaching things that were not of Christ.
 1. Binding traditions that Jesus did not bind.
 2. Teaching doctrine that Jesus die not teach.
 3. Judging men based on a standard that was not from Christ.
 4. Men do this same thing today in the denominations and in every church that practices anything that is not from Christ.
 5. If we are to have the salvation that comes through Him then we must acknowledge His preeminence in our own lives and submit to Him as our Lord and King.
 6. We have seen that He is deserving. In spite of His authority Jesus died so that we may have life. It is the least we can do to give Him our lives in return (Galatians 2:20).

Conclusion

1. What is your view of Christ?
2. How do you approach the command of the Lord found in the New Testament?
3. Remember the words of Jesus in John 12:48. Heed His words, obey His call, and follow Him. He is Lord!

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