

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Three fundamental facets of Jesus Christ the Man

READINGS

Colossians 1: 13–22

John 1:1-18

MESSAGE

Preamble

It is no double we live in a fractured, broken world. No two people can agree. Truth cannot be abjectly determined. Truth is what satisfies the heart rather than being reality. Yet the influencers that dominate social media seem to be of full of hope and joy; believe this, do this and eventually all will be right.

So we see that while **secular optimism looks to what might happen someday**, the hope of a Christianis based in the assurance of what has happened already.

So if the hope is based in the assurance of what has happened, it follows that our belief in Jesus Christ has a huge bearing on how the church conducts itself.

The fundamental belief around who Jesus is will define a church. That is, how a church considers and treats the man, Jesus will define their gospel.

The scripture reading today is from a Letter Paul wrote to the Church at Colossae, which is in modern day Turkey. ¹

Colossae was considered a small and most insignificant town – a back water if you like, yet Paul takes time to write to the Christians in Colossae one his most remarkable letters. Indeed this letter along with his letter to the Ephesians contain the fundamental truths of the Church.

¹ Its near Ephesus and Hierapolis. Hierapolis is still famous today, especially for Russian tourists escaping the cold winters of the north, because it has many famous hot springs it has. And Ephesus has many archaeological sites including its famous library and well preserved public theatre.

The occasion of this letter – that is the reason why Paul felt compelled to write was the doctrinal error that had crept in to the Church. This error was so bad the entire church could have folded and disappeared, and the Holy Spirit saw fit to ensure this did not occur.

The error concerned the Man Jesus Christ and the fact Jesus had done everything needed to redeem a believer to God. They were being seduced by philosophy and ritualism.

I fear that our modern churches are also being enticed by the spin of influencers – the philosophy of humans, where there is no truth, no reality, not consequence.

Paul is informed by the evangelist Epaphras, a friend of Paul's, whom he was imprisoned with (Philemon 1:23) about this church. Epaphras' concerns included the fact that:²

- **There were false teachers undermining the person and pre-eminence of Jesus Christ**
- They were introducing man-made philosophies in place of sound Christian doctrine
- They were battling increasing legalism from Judaism and other forms of ritualism
- The church was being taught by false teachers that they must not eat certain foods or observe certain festivals or do certain things.

Indeed, this list could have been prepared in 2025 about the general state of our churches today.

Today we will focus on the first – the Colossians were undermining the person and pre-eminence of Christ Jesus. This is a very serious charge.

The readers of this letter were being deluded by specious arguments and by plausible theories. (Colossians 2:4) (AB) They were not treating Christ as supreme, nor Christ's work as sufficient.

Jesus the Man

A church's ability to declare the gospel of Christ, rests entirely with the way the church treats Jesus the Man.³

And this forms the absolute core of what a church is. The gospel is from Jesus Christ – indeed the gospel is the **glory of Jesus Christ**.⁴

Your good message – for this is what the gospel is, that tells of man's unrelenting sin, his fallen position, impossibility to be made right with God, the incarnation of God's Son – come to this

² Mentioned in Colossians 1:7, 4:12

³ Technically this is the division of Theology called Christology, which is the area of Theology that concerns the person and work of Jesus - what a church believes about Jesus Christ, how the Church treats Jesus Christ, and how it responds to Jesus Christ will show whether the congregation is in step with the Father or not. It determines whether a church bears fruit or not.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Titus 1:11

earth to offer his life a ransom; his birth, death, burial and resurrection all dependent upon how you view Jesus the Man. Therefore, the central question is, who is the Man Jesus Christ? ⁵

- Is Jesus merely one of many gods?
- Is Jesus seen merely as an important figure, rather than as the Son of God?
- Is Jesus divine, part of the trinity or some created being?
- Is Jesus pre-eminent, or does he share his position with church leaders?
- Where does Jesus fit into the doctrine and theology of Paracombe Uniting Church?

What is Paul's landing point – what is the rubric Paul is using

Before we delve into what Paul writes in verses 12 – 20, we might ask; what does Paul expect us to do with this knowledge? At the end of this session, what should I be doing; what should you be doing? And Paul like any a good teacher has set this out in verses 9 – 10.

Paul wants you and I to:

*(9b) ... be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, **bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.** ...*

Be filled with the knowledge of His will

Paul joins together what we know with what we do.

Its knowledge that is revealed by the Holy Spirit – which means we must be listening to the Holy Spirit.

And it is what we do: how we respond to those difficult tasks we are going to grow in God's knowledge, if we rely upon God to solve them. In this we must open our mind to the Holy Spirit.

Paul says that the purpose of this Letter is that individuals, and ultimately the church must be filled with the **knowledge of His will**, that is, the will of the Father **in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**.

We know we don't advance a student's understanding of mathematics by doing the same old sums over and over again. We move on to trigonometry or number theory or algebra. Our children read ever harder books, and doing so they become knowledgeable in the English

⁵ Stephen Armstrong, Colossians Lesson 1B <
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/colossians_lesson_1b >

language and literature. So it is with the knowledge of God – we need to strive to know him each and every day through reading the Bible.

As the church busies itself with doing the good work God has prepared for her in its local area, it will grow as the challenges are dealt with.

We call this bearing fruit.

It is based on the relationship between what you believe to be true and how you live.

That is, our fruitfulness depends upon our understanding of Jesus Christ.

If we fully believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that all humans are fallen and destined to hell we will want to share this knowledge with the entire district.

How do we know that someone knows Jesus – **it's by his or her behaviour?** This is why this lesson of Paul is about Jesus Christ the Man. Jesus puts it succinctly:

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **You will recognize them by their fruits.** Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15)*

This means that scripture should be reflected in our lives.

What our kids do in the school yard, how spouses treat each other, how neighbours help each other all should reflect the man, Jesus Christ.

It's about a **right relationship** with Christ, which is established when you spend time in his presence. Fundamentally, the grounding is the Bible – it informs the way each should treat each other. **Thus like a marriage knowing the Bible is preliminary, but knowing Christ experientially is the key for fruitfulness.**

Three areas of knowledge that is vitally important for a church

Three areas

Paul introduces to three areas of vitally important knowledge for a church and all three concern the Man Jesus Christ. Indeed, as said, this is the fundamental starting point of every church.

1. The Deity of Jesus Christ
2. Jesus Christ's relation to all of Creation
3. Jesus Christ's relation to the Church

These are the three areas of knowledge we must get right if we are to mature properly as a Christian, and for the church to bear fruit.

Its purpose is to set in our minds, **the fullness of the glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

The Deity of Jesus Christ

Verse 15 sets out Jesus Christ's absolute deity.

Proof of his deity is in this – he is omnipotent – which means all powerful - as taught in John 10:18:

No one takes it away [my life] 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 received I from my Father.

Only a person who is divine – that is God, can both lay and take up his life. The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way:

[Jesus Christ] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint [image, representation] of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3a)

Paul writes here to the Colossians:

- Jesus is the **image of the invisible God**, who has been made visible. No one can see God and live.
- In Greek word image means "prototype," which is "the image in its revealed reality." It is the visible manifestation of the invisible, specifically, the invisible God. He is the exact image of the invisible God.
He is the image in its revealed reality.
It is an image that specifically emphasizes Jesus' divinity.⁶
- By Jesus Christ being born of a virgin he provided the physical connection to God.

It is hard for us to understand, but God does not live in a physical world that we know and understand. He lives in a spiritual world, which we cannot comprehend.

- It is a remarkable verse: Jesus was not just a person born of Mary, but also is the second person of the trinity who is born of a woman. **He is God Man.**⁷

⁶ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Deity of the Messiah (Come and See series)*, ariel.org

⁷ He was holy, sinless, humble, meek, lived a life of prayer (dependence on the Father), a worker. He had a real body (his body bleed, and when exsanguinated, he died – or rather he gave up his spirit), was a real human, evidence by his birth, he had a human ancestry, he had human names, he was called a man by people, he called himself a man (John 8:4), he was subject to the laws of human development, he was subject to the laws of human experiences: hunger, thirst, weariness, sleepiness, he was subject to human

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in **the form of God**, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself [made himself of no reputation], by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7 ESV)*

- Note that before time, he was in the form of God; this makes Jesus Christ deity.
- Jesus Christ, the man is the member of the trinity
 - Today we see Him living out in the lives of His church
 - That's why we reflect Jesus in our actions and words
- We see Jesus visibly today through the church, or at least we ought to.

Jesus himself, says he and the Father are one. Indeed the Apostle John's gospel sole purpose was to demonstrate that Jesus Christ, the man, was the Son of God. Jesus Christ does the work that only God can do.

Paul in Colossians 2:9 states: *For in him the whole fullness of deity [Godhead] dwells bodily⁸*

- This means that everything true about God the Father is true about Jesus Christ
- In our passage to day in verse 19, Paul says: *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*

How do we respond to this fact?

Will the world experience Jesus the Man in the coming festive season merely as babe in a manger, when in fact he is everything God is.

Supremacy of Christ – Jesus' relationship with Creation

(15b, 16) the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

emotions: love, compassion, anger, and grief. In his humanity he had limited knowledge e.g. Mark 13:32, John 11:34. His humanity is evidenced by his death (John 19:30, 34; Hebrews 2:14; 5:8). His divinity is evidenced by his resurrection.

⁸ Fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9) means the fullness of God dwells within the Son. This attribute emphasizes that everything that is obligatory to deity, everything that proves the deity of the Father and the deity of the Spirit, is also true of the Son; therefore, He, too, is deity. Everything that is true of the divine nature of the Father and the Spirit is therefore also true of the divine nature of the Son.

Paul brings out this very important fundamental attribute of Jesus Christ, the man. That Jesus Christ is the agent of Creation.

Churches with poor doctrines on creation cannot understand or explore this concept.

The first concept is creation is work only God can do. Human's cannot create or destroy matter (or energy) – indeed this is an acknowledge law of physics. God can do both!

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:3)

Paul say Jesus is the firstborn over all creation. Jesus was begotten of the Father. He was, and existed before all of creation.

Some have gone wrong in believing that Jesus only came into existence when he was born a man; but the Bible says he existed before all things – indeed Jesus could say: *Before Abraham was I AM.* (John 8:58). Jesus is saying that he never 'came' into existence. He was and is, always.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.
(Psalms 90:2)

Jesus is the firstborn – first amount the born. ⁹

Verse 16 states that the creator was Jesus Christ – the entire universe and all that is in it was created by Jesus for Jesus. Since only God can be a creator, it is logical to say Jesus must be God.

Verse 17 then states the logical conclusion. Since he is the firstborn **over** all creation, and thus the creator of all things, then he must be above all, or before all things. **Jesus is supreme**

And furthermore, Paul adds that the very fact we exist and consist solely because of Jesus. The universe does not simply exist – it exists because Jesus Christ is deity, the Son of God who holds it together.

Churches need to be well reminded of this to deal with pantheism – which is rapidly advancing. Pantheism is an enemy of God and of the Church. We hear it every day: "Nature speaks to me", "the universe is telling me". It believes that God is creation, not separate from creation; and not God is the creator!

Radical environmentalism, in keeping with other self-centered and self-authenticating spiritualities, assumes in one way or another that nature that is creation—encloses and contains

⁹ But of most importance it provides the heirship of the son to all that is the Father's. Jesus is the heir of the Father. The word "firstborn" has bothered some here – indeed the Nicene Creed to some extent arose from this discussion. Paul uses the same Greek word twice: firstborn over all creation and firstborn from the dead. In each case prototokos (πρωτότοκος), "firstborn" means first or foremost – since God has no beginning nor ending, it is obvious Jesus is the "firstborn" first among those born. It means foremost in time, place, order and importance.

the sacred. This means we must look inside of ourselves to find the sacred or divine. This is manifestly wrong. We find no good within us, but we find good looking up to Jesus.

Before creation, God dwelt alone; 'In the beginning, God created' the Bible says, which means he existed before the beginning. God is not creation but totally separate. Jesus is the Lord of creation.

The Church must emphasize the supremacy of Jesus the creator – only Jesus can deal with the blackness, the awfulness of life. Because he came to reconcile as to the Father.

Supremacy of Christ – Jesus' relationship with the Church

- Jesus Christ is the head of the church – and this headship can have no true meaning if it doesn't mean that Jesus is actively making decisions and directing the work of the church through men.
- What is happening in the church must be according to His plans and purposes
- This means the church follows Scripture in all things

Christ is not a figurehead CEO, or governor of a church – he is the head. The **pre-eminence** of Christ is Paul's point here:

- **There is nothing else of value or meaning in our religious experience as Christians except Christ, and Him crucified**

Jesus has reconciled all things to Himself – verse 20

Verse 20 is complete.

[The Father] through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Jesus has come in order that he might reconcile. He came to reconcile all that is dislocated and all that is broken, all that is collapsed to be brought back under the domain of his power and of his authority.

This is the meaning of peace. A sinner is at war with God – God's wrath will prevail. But Jesus Christ has made peace with God.

There is nothing else to add. The task is completed. It is finished – indeed the exact words Jesus uttered on the cross.¹⁰

We can have confidence that the work of Jesus and its completeness and there is nothing more we need to do to enter heaven.

¹⁰ John 19:30

Our duty is to continue in faith – being steady and stable – not being influenced by the shifting sands of time.

- It was Christ's work on the cross that was the saving work of creation.
- This is important, because one of the false views entering churches is that a believer still requires to do something to enter Heaven. That somehow he or she is able to help God redeem themselves.
 - This is manifestly wrong
- The false teaching in the Colossians church that had gained a foothold was you needed to do more to be secure in your place with God
 - The only way you become susceptible to that kind of thinking is if you are not confident about what the scriptures say about your relationship with God.

Conclusion

1. We must make sure we all understand Jesus the Man; we do this in prayer and in reading the Bible
2. We must bow beneath the supremacy of Christ.
3. The Church must be absolutely convinced on the completeness and efficacy of the work of Christ – the work he accomplished on the cross. ¹¹

But we often counter this. We say I still sin; my thoughts are ugly, my failures are evident, not just to me but by those around me, most commonly to my wife. What am I to do when my conscience accuses me? What when I say; "is there hope?"

There was a young man, Murray M'Cheyne, who died at twenty-nine—a Presbyterian minister in Dundee who use to say to his congregation: **"For every look that you take at yourself, take ten looks at the Lord Jesus."** "Take ten looks at the Lord Jesus."¹²

Because when you only look inside of yourself, what do you see? Reason for despair. Reason for disappointment. But when you look at Christ, what do you see? All that is provided for us there in him.¹³

¹¹ William Booth was never more engaged in this kind of thing than anyone else in the nineteenth century. They asked him at the end of the nineteenth century, "What is your concern for the church in the twentieth century?" This is what he said: "My concern is that the coming century"—that's the last century now—"will involve religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

¹² Andrew Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert McCheyne* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1844), 236, 253

¹³ Alistair Begg Sept. 13, 2021 "In Christ Alone My Hope Is Found" Colossians 1:15–23 (ID: 3523)

These believers in Colossae were once: alienated from God, hostile to Him, wicked and with no interest in God; blind. And yet they had heard the life changing gospel from Epaphras (Col. 1:7, 8); they had believed, they had been reconciled to God. Why have we been given Jesus: it is so that we can be “holy,” “blameless,” and “above reproach”. (Col 1:22).

We also have this hope in Jesus Christ.

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name.*

*Chorus
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

...

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

Edward Mote (1797-1874)

David L Simon
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\\God\\The Man Christ the Son of God



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