

The Preeminent Christ Part 1

Text: Colossians 1:15-17

Introduction

1. Brief review of theme, background & previous lesson
2. This section: The exaltation of the Preeminent Christ
3. Key phrase – "...that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Vs. 18). **'preeminence'** means "to have first place." Speaks of a position of priority and authority.
4. Christ's preeminence is demonstrated in two areas: The material creation of the universe & the spiritual creation of the church
5. In these verses, Christ's preeminence in relation to the universe is seen in 5 ways.

Jesus Christ is...

I. The Head of Creation (Vs. 15)

There are two Titles of Christ in this verse. He is...

- A. The **Image** of God (15a)
 1. Invisible – one of the attributes of God
 - a. Exodus 33:20 *"And he said, **Thou canst not see my face:** for there shall no man see me, and live."*
 - b. 1 Timothy 6:16 *"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; **whom no man hath seen, nor can see:** to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."*
 - c. John 1:18 *"No man hath **seen** God at any time;"*
 - d. John 4:24 *"God is a **Spirit...**"* (A spirit has not flesh or bones. Lk 24:39)
 2. Image – Christ is the Revelation of the Godhead
 - a. 'image' = exact likeness, portrait. The same word used by Christ in the Gospels to refer to Caesar's image on a penny (Matt. 22:20, Mk 12:16 & Lk 20:24)
 - b. 2 Corinthians 4:4 *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, **who is the image of God,** should shine unto them."*
 - c. Hebrews 1:3 *"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;"*
'express image' = used to describe an tool for engraving or carving. Refers to a precise reproduction in every respect, a stamp or impression.

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- d. Christ is called **“the Word”** in John’s Gospel. He is the exact expression of the Father.
 - e. John 14:8-9 *“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, 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, Shew us the Father?”*
 - f. Illustration: The Gospels reveal God’s nature as displayed in the Son of God. E.g. His **compassion** at the grave of Lazarus, His **righteous anger** at religious hypocrisy with the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day, & His **love** for sinful mankind.
- B. The **Firstborn** of every creature (15b)
1. ‘firstborn’ = can mean first in time. E.g. Mary *“...brought forth her **firstborn son**...”* (Luke 2:7)
 2. ‘firstborn’ = often means first in rank or position in Scripture. Context makes this plain.
 - a. Example: Verse 14 – The Resurrection of Christ
 - b. Example: Romans 8:29 – The Firstborn among many brethren
 3. Micah 5:2 *“...whose goings forth have been from old, from **everlasting**.”*
 4. Hebrews 7:3 *“Without father, without mother, without descent, **having neither beginning of days, nor end of life**; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”*

II. The Means of Creation (Vs. 16a)

A. The Material Universe

1. Things in the heavens
 - a. Psalm 19:1-3 *“The **heavens declare** the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”*
 - b. Romans 1:20 *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are **clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”*
 - c. E.g Stars, Galaxies & Planets
 - d. Illustration (number of stars): Scientists estimate that the number of stars in the universe is somewhere in the order of 10 to the power of 25. Or to put it another way, the same number as all the grains of sand upon all the world’s beaches.
 - e. Illustration (the sun): The sun has a diameter of 864,000 miles (one hundred times that of earth’s) and could hold 1.3 million planets the size of earth inside it.
 - f. Illustration (the star Betelgeuse): Has a diameter of 100 million miles, which is larger than the earth’s orbit around the sun.
2. Things in the earth

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- a. Botanical life
- b. Human life
- c. Animal life
- d. Illustration (the eye):

The human eye is extremely complicated – a perfect and interrelated system of about 40 individual subsystems, including the retina, pupil, iris, cornea, lens and optic nerve. For instance, the retina has approximately 137 million special cells that respond to light and send messages to the brain. About 130 million of these cells look like rods and handle the black and white vision. The other seven million are cone-shaped and allow us to see in color. The retina cells receive light impressions, which are converted to electric pulses and sent to the brain via the optic nerve. A special section of the brain called the visual cortex interprets the pulses to color, contrast, depth, etc., which allows us to see ‘pictures’ of our world in three dimensions. Amazingly, the eye, optic nerve and the brain’s visual cortex are totally separate and distinct subsystems. Yet, together they capture, deliver and interpret up to 1.5 million pulse messages every milli-second (one thousandth of a second)! Dr. Gary Baxter Pg. 77-78

- e. Quote: “Max Planck, winner of the Nobel Prize and one of the founders of modern physics, wrote, “According to everything taught by the exact sciences about the immense realm of nature, a certain order prevails – one independent of the human mind...this order can be formulated in terms of purposeful activity. There is evidence of an intelligent order of the universe to which both man and nature are subservient.”

- B. The Immaterial Universe
 1. Angelic beings
 - a. Principalities or powers
 - b. Good and evil spirits
 2. Note: This was very important in light of the false teachers’ false concepts of angelic emanations.

III. The Goal of Creation (Vs. 16b)

- A. For His Purpose
- B. For His Glory
- C. For His Pleasure
- D. Revelation 4:11 *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure they are and were created.**”*
- E. Note: True satisfaction comes from fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

IV. The Forerunner of Creation (17a)

- A. Eternal – ‘is’
- B. Pre-existence – ‘before’
- C. John 8:58 *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am.**”* (Cf. Ex. 3:14)
- D. Note: Not ‘was’ before all things but ‘is’ before all things. Christ is eternal!

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V. The Sustainer of Creation (17b)

A. 'consist' = to cohere or hold together

B. "...and upholding all things by the word of his power..." Heb. 1:3

C. Illustrations

1. The Atom – 8 positively charged protons closely associated together within the confines of its tiny nucleus with 8 negative neutrons. According to the laws of physics, these should attract each other and the whole history of electrical phenomena and electrical equipment have been built on these principles known as Coulomb's law of electrostatic force and the law of magnetism. What holds the nucleus together? Why doesn't it fly apart? (D. Lee Chesnut) In seeking to explain the powerful force that holds protons together within the nucleus, scientists coined the phrase "strong nuclear force," but have no explanation for why it exists. Karl K. Darrow, a physicist, comments: "You grasp what this implies. It implies that all the massive nuclei have no right to be alive at all. Indeed, they should never have been created, and, if created, they should have blown up instantly. Yet here they all are...Some inflexible inhibition is **holding them relentlessly together**. The nature of the inhibition is also a secret...one thus far reserved by Nature for herself."
2. The Planets in their orbits
3. The order and structure of the entire universe

Conclusion:

1. Does Christ have preeminence in your life?
2. What is your view of Christ? Do you have a high, exalted view of who He is?
3. Do you trust in His infinite Power?
4. Are you seeking to live your life entirely for His pleasure?