

## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Importance of the Epistle to the Colossians
  - 1. This letter from Paul is a book on Christian doctrine.
  - 2. Doctrine gives instruction against heresy.
- B. The heresy at Colossae
  - 1. It was tied to Judaism and Gnosticism.
  - 2. They emphasized special freedom, super protection, strict behavior, super knowledge and a superior attitude.
  - 3. Like all heresies, Jesus is not enough.
- C. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
  - 1. Introduction (1:1-14)
  - 2. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15-2:5)
    - a. The supreme person of Christ (15-20)
    - b. The supreme work of Christ (21-23)
- D. Review
  - 1. All the spirituality one could ever hope for is summed up in Christ.
  - 2. Spiritual knowledge of God's will enables Christians to live what they believe.
- E. Importance of Colossians 1:15
  - 1. D. McCullough, *Only a wholly other God could save, and only a God wholly other in self-giving love would save. Only a God different from humanity, outside the world of self-centeredness has the power to reverse the deadly order of things.*
  - 2. J. McGee, *...what we are talking about here is not that the Lord Jesus was born a creature; we are talking about the fact that He is God. When He came into the world, a child was born but the Son was given, and He had come out of eternity.*
  - 3. Jesus is supreme in heaven and on earth because He is fully God and fully man in one Person.

### COLOSSIANS 1:15-20, THE SUPREME PERSON OF CHRIST

- A. Jesus is God-Man (15) (See Lesson on Colossians 1:15)
- B. Jesus is supreme in creation (16)
  - 1. He created all things (16a), ***For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities***
    - a. *by Him*
      - 1) Jesus is the originator of creation, all things originated with Him.
      - 2) His role will be explained more fully at the end of this verse.
    - b. Jesus' creative work included that which is *in heaven and on earth.*
      - 1) T. Constable, *God mediated the life of the entire universe through His Son.*
      - 2) *Visible* speaks of earth and *invisible* speaks of heaven.
    - c. *thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*
      - 1) Paul noted ranks of heavenly powers.
      - 2) False teachers were teaching that angels were to be worshiped, Colossians 2:18, *Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,*
      - 3) Jesus is superior to all angelic beings because He is creator of all things, including angels.
        - a) Ephesians 1:21, *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*
        - b) Philippians 2:9-10, *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

2. Creation came through Jesus and for Jesus (16b), ***all things were created through him and for him.***
  - a. *through Him*
    - 1) Jesus is the *instrumental cause* or the *agent* used by the Father in creation.
    - 2) John 1:3, *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
    - 3) Hebrews 1:2, *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*
    - 4) Revelation 3:14, *And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'*
  - b. *for Him*
    - 1) Jesus is the *goal* or *reason* for creation.
    - 2) Wiersbe, *For centuries, the Greek philosophers had taught that everything needed a primary cause, an instrumental cause, and a final cause. The primary cause is the plan, the instrumental cause the power, and the final cause the purpose. When it comes to Creation, Jesus Christ is the primary cause (He planned it), the instrumental cause (He produced it), and the final cause (He did it for His own pleasure).*
3. The eternal Jesus maintains creation (17)
  - a. He existed before anything was created (17a), ***And he is before all things,***
    - 1) *before* is prior to a point in time which in this verse, is creation.
      - a) John 1:1, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
      - b) John 17:5, *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*
      - c) Proverbs 8:27-31, *When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.*
    - 2) This statement combined with verse 15b, declares that He is not a creature but above creation.
    - 3) Jesus is eternally existent which is an attribute only of God.
  - b. He controls all of creation (17b), ***and in him all things hold together.***
    - 1) *in him*, by means of Jesus all creation is held together.
    - 2) Hebrews 1:3, *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power...*
    - 3) C. Spurgeon, *He holds everything together. He maintains creation. He directs it...He is the super glue of the universe.*
- C. The supremacy of Jesus detailed (18-20)
  1. He controls the church (18a), ***And he is the head of the body, the church.***
    - a. Jesus is supreme in the church because it is His body.
      - 1) Ephesians 1:22, *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,*
      - 2) Ephesians 5:23, *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*
    - b. His body is the universal church into which all believers are placed by the Holy Spirit when they place faith in Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13, *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
    - c. The emphasis of headship is supremacy demonstrated by authority.
  2. He defeated death (18b), ***He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,***
    - a. Jesus is the *beginning* of the church, the originator, founder of it.
      - 1) He is its authority and source of spiritual life.
      - 2) The church began at the resurrection.

- b. Jesus is *the firstborn from the dead*.
  - 1) He was the first Person to rise from the dead with a glorified body and never to die again, 1 Corinthians 15:20, *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*
  - 2) W. Wiersbe, *Paul did not say that Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead, for He was not. But He is the most important of all who have been raised from the dead; for without His resurrection, there could be no resurrection for others.*
  - 3) His death and resurrection restored His supremacy over nature which had fallen under the control of Satan, Hebrews 2:14, *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,*
- 3. He is over all (18c), ***that in everything he might be preeminent.***
  - a. Paul used the same word *firstborn* in verse 15 concerning Jesus' supremacy over creation and now in verse 18 concerning His supremacy over death.
  - b. Jesus' supremacy is all-encompassing so why should anyone look for anything or anyone greater than Jesus?
- 4. His supremacy is based on Who He is (19), ***For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,***
  - a. *fullness*
    - 1) The word means *completeness*.
    - 2) This word is used in Colossians 2:9, *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*
    - 3) Here, it speaks to the nature or essence of God.
  - b. *dwell*
    - 1) The word means *to reside permanently*.
    - 2) The complete nature of God resides in the body of Christ, before and after His incarnation.
  - c. Jesus has authority over all of creation because He is fully God and fully man.
    - 1) M. Anders, *He is the full embodiment of God's attributes and saving grace.*
    - 2) C. Spurgeon, *That little baby that was lying on the bosom of Mary over nineteen hundred years ago seemed so helpless, but He could have spoken this universe out of existence.*
- 5. The purpose of Jesus' supremacy is reconciliation (20), ***and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.***
  - a. Jesus' supremacy is most evident in man's reconciliation to God, T. Constable, *It is God's reconciling of man 'unto himself.' God never has had need to be reconciled to man; He has always loved man.*
  - b. This reconciliation includes all of creation, seen and unseen, T. Constable, *In what sense did Christ reconcile all things in heaven to Himself, including Satan and his angels? He did not do so in the ordinary sense of bringing them into salvation but in the wider sense of bringing them into subjection to His will. Christ's death has pacified Satan and his angels. They now have to submit to Him (cf. 2:15) even as He created them.*
  - c. Reconciliation removes wrath and replaces it with peace.
    - 1) This peace, or atonement is *by the blood of his cross*.
    - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
    - 3) R. Wilson, *The whole universe has been at war with itself, and Christ has brought peace into man's life because he has reconciled all (things), destroying those mysterious forces which have everywhere caused disunion.*
  - d. Reconciliation pictures the supremacy of Christ, Acts 4:12, *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. Jesus is supreme in all of creation.
- B. What sin destroyed, Christ restored through reconciliation.
- C. H. House, *Christ's supremacy is seen at every turn. The first portion focuses on His preeminent role in creation, while the second emphasizes His work as Redeemer. To any Christian, in Colosse then or elsewhere today, who may have been or is confused about Christ's role in the world, these six verses testify to Christ's absolute authority, which is not to be shared with any person, angel, or demon.*