

Christ Above All

Scripture: Colossians 1:15–19

Code: 2135

We are tonight going to look again at Colossians chapter 1, and a very vital portion of Scripture, one that speaks to me of the most important personality in the universe. That is, the God of heaven revealed as the Son. This is the very heartbeat of Christianity. This is the very essence of all that we believe, the very foundation of our faith. This is the battleground over which we fight with the cults and the –isms and everything that wants to take out of Christianity its very lifeblood. That is, the issue of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is Paul's theme in Colossians 1:15-19. Now, this is a very vital passage to the argument of the book, and a much more vital passage to the argument for the whole of Christianity.

Somebody once called - and it's been repeated multiple of times - called the Bible the "Jesus Book." In a sense, that is true. If you understand the Bible, you understand that it is the book about Christ, the book about the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament, there is the preparation for Jesus coming. In the gospels, there is the presentation of Christ; He is come. In the Acts, there is the proclamation. The message of salvation in Christ is announced. In the epistles, we study the personification. That is, "For to me to live is Christ," or how Christ, who has died and risen from the grave, returns to live in His people. In Revelation, there is the predomination or the Christ on the throne, the reign of the King, the Lamb on the throne.

So, in every sense, the Bible is Christ's story. It is the book that tells us all about Him. In Acts chapter 8, that is indicated to us in verse 35 when Philip, talking to the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza, the Holy Spirit says, "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Of course, he was beginning in the Old Testament with the prophet of Isaiah.

You can begin at any point in the Scripture and teach Jesus. In Luke, a familiar passage, chapter 24:27, Christ, after His resurrection, meeting the disciples on the road to Emmaus, "And beginning at Moses," or the Pentateuch, "and all the prophets," or the prophetic books, "He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures," or, the Hagiographa, the holy writings, "the things concerning Himself." The Old Testament was to the Jew and still is, divided into three parts: Moses, the Pentateuch; the prophets, all the prophetic books; and the Hagiographa, or the Scriptures or the sacred writings, which make up the books of the poetry and history. In all of those things, Jesus, "Gave them the things concerning Himself."

So, the Bible is the book about Christ. It is the book about the revelation of God and the coming of Christ into the world. It is about God becoming a man. In every aspect of the Bible, facets of this are made clear. But of all the statements in the Bible, in the Word of God about God becoming man, none is more significant than the one in Colossians 1:15, for here we have the identification of the Son as God very, very clearly. Let me read it to you. "The Son" in verse 13 is the antecedent of the word "who" in verse 15. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him were all things created that are in that 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. And He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together. 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. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.”

Now that is a tremendous statement, a vital statement to the understanding of the Christian faith and the removal of any confusion over who our Lord Jesus Christ really is. Now, let me just put it in its setting, if I may, in terms of the book of Colossians. Paul understands that there is a certain false system of doctrine being propagated at Colossae, and he understands that because Epaphras has visited him. Epaphras, undoubtedly one of the pastors of the Colossian church and perhaps its founder, has come to visit the apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul hears from Epaphras that there are some terrible things going on in terms of propagation of heresy in Colossae. One such heresy relates to the deity of Jesus Christ. The heretics are saying that Christ is not God; that He is not sufficient for salvation; that in addition to Christ, there must be the worship of other spirits, perhaps other angels, if you will. There must be special visions. There must be certain knowledge that is sort of super knowledge beyond that which is attainable in Christ. In fact, the heretics had said that Jesus Christ is only one in a long line of emanating spirits descending from God, and Jesus was one of those good emanations. He is not God. He is not even an adequate Savior. Knowledge beyond Him is the only way to salvation.

So, the attack of this particular heresy, which apparently later developed into what we know as Gnosticism, the attack was at the deity of Christ and His total sufficiency as Savior. So, in the first three chapters of Colossians, Paul takes this issue on. For example, in 1:27 of Colossians, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” What Paul is saying there is that there does not need to be anything in addition to Christ to bring a man to perfection. He is arguing against the theology of these heretics who are saying, “It is Christ plus knowledge plus special visions plus worshipping angels, et cetera.” A man can be perfect in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 2, verse 2, further develops Paul’s argument, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hidden,” not some, not many, but “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Again, the sufficiency of Christ. There is no knowledge added to Christ necessary for salvation. Look at verse 9, “For in Him,” and the “Him” modifies Christ in verse 8, “dwells all,” not some, not a lot, but “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Verse 19, “The head,” that’s Christ. “The body,” verse 17, is Christ. That is, in the fulfillment sense of the Old Testament, being a shadow of the fulfillment of Christ. But here the head in verse 19 is Christ, “From whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God.”

In other words, the head of everything is Christ. All of the growth and all of the nourishment and all of the knitting together and increasing is related to Christ. There is no other necessary.

Chapter 3, verse 1, “If ye then be risen with Christ,” that is, if you’re a Christian, “seek those things

which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life," or better, when Christ our life, "shall appear." Everything is Christ. Our life is Christ. Our hope is Christ. All wisdom is in Christ. All knowledge is in Christ. All growth is in Christ. All perfection is in Christ. That is his whole argument. In the first three chapters of Colossians, he is saying to the Colossian people, "Please don't let anybody make you think that you need Christ plus some other angels plus some other super-knowledge plus some other visions. All you need is Christ. That's all you need."

Verse 19, I think, says it so beautifully, "It pleased the Father." implied that in Him, that is in Christ, should how much fullness dwell? "All fullness." It's all in Him. So, the apostle Paul is counteracting the heresy that had arrived at Colossae. The heresy was pretty well based upon a philosophical dualism, as we saw in our introduction to Colossians. Philosophical dualism says that matter is evil and spirit is good, and since God is Spirit, He is good. But since all of creation is matter, it is evil. So a good God can't create an evil creation.

So what happened was God started sending out emanations, or spirits started coming out of God like ripples in a pond. They kept coming and coming and coming, and the first ones were good and good. Then they got neutral, and then they got bad. A zillion emanations down the line, you got some bad emanations, one of whom was bad enough to create the world. Now, Jesus was just one of these process of emanations, a good one to be sure, but nonetheless, one of them. He is equal to an angel, and that is why they worshipped these emanations or spirits or angels.

Paul's point here is to tell the Colossians Jesus is not an emanation from God. He is not something down the ladder from the character of God. He is God in human flesh. Paul has pretty well dispensed with the opening thoughts. He has greeted them, initially. He has thanked God for them in verses 3 and following. He has prayed for them that they would be filled with all of the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and they would walk worthy unto all pleasing, et cetera, et cetera. He's gotten all the amenities out of the way, and now he drives right in on the main issue.

He thanks God for the salvation that they enjoy in verses 12 to 14; the redemption, the forgiveness. Then he moves right in from there to make his point that this one, who has redeemed us, who has forgiven us, who has delivered us from the power of darkness; this one who is the dear Son, who possesses the kingdom, this one is the image of the invisible God. That's vital to his message.

Now, as we look at these verses 15 to 19, we want to see Jesus Christ in relation to five things. We'll see Him in relation to God, in relation to the universe, in relation to the unseen world, in relation to the church, and in relation to anything else that might be left, just a sort of a catch all. First of all, Jesus in His relation to God, verse 15. Here's a great definition of Jesus in terms of His relationship with God. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

Now, the heretics had tried to show that Jesus was simply an emanation, that He was just some ripple from the character of God; one of an infinite series of lesser beings that finally reached to evil and were able to create the world. But Paul says, "Christ is God." In fact, in verse 16, he says, "He created everything." He's the one that did it. The heretics went so far even as to teach that God could never enter a body, because if God entered a body, then good God would be in evil matter. A good emanation could never have a body, because a good emanation couldn't take on a bad matter

body. So they taught that Jesus didn't have a body, that He was a good emanation who was a phantom. You remember, I told you they said that wherever this emanation Jesus went, He left no footprints because it was only an ethereal phantom-like, ghost-like body.

So Paul wants to make it clear that Jesus is God, that He is God in flesh, and that He is the Creator of the universe. That alone will take one great swoop, and wipe out their whole position. Now, let's look at it. He says in 15 that, "He is the image of the invisible God. He is the image of the invisible God." To begin with, God is invisible. In 1 Timothy, it tells us that God is invisible. It tells us in the Old Testament that God is invisible, that God cannot be seen. God is not visible to the human eye. God is a Spirit and "A Spirit," said Jesus, "hath not," what? "flesh and bones." God is invisible, but God became visible. God became a man, and Christ was God made visible. He is the image of the invisible God.

Now, back in Genesis 1:27, we have the use of the term "image." It says, "God made man in His own image and likeness," but that is not really what Paul means here. It's a different concept. First Corinthians chapter 11 - we need to at least brush by it - says this in verse 7. It says, "A man is the image and glory of God." Now, God created man in His image. First Corinthians 11:7 says, "Man is the image of God," again, repeating the same truth, but man is not a perfect image of God. You say, "In what way is a man the image of God? In what way am I, are you, human beings made in God's image? What is the significance of that?" Well, I think, basically, we are made in God's image in terms of the ability to think and to feel and to decide.

We are certainly not made in the moral image of God, right? He's holy; we're not. Even Adam was not created holy. He was created innocent. He failed the first test. We are not created in God's image morally. We are not created in God's image essentially. That is, in essence, because we are not floating spirits. We are not able to move freely through the universe. We are not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient, or immutable. Unchanging, that means.

So we're not created in God's image essentially. We're not created in God's image morally, but we are created in God's image in the sense of personality. That is, we can think, we can feel, and we can make decisions. In that sense, we are in the image of God. Now, to be sure, it is a very marred image, and it marred at the fall. The vision of God in Adam was much more clear. In a sense, Adam was close enough to God to represent Him in a sense morally. Adam was close enough to God in a sense to represent Him essentially because he could not die; therefore, he had an eternal quality about him. There was a certain immutability about Adam. So that whole thing was in a part, the image of God in other ways, but it was all lost in the fall. The only way it can be restored is when a person comes to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

You see, when you get saved, then the image of God in you is restored. There's a sense in which, now mark it, you come into the moral image of God when you're saved, right? Because God morally makes you to be like, whom? Like Christ. In a sense, you come into the quality of God's character essentially because God makes you a possessor of what kind of life? Eternal life. That is the quality of God's existence. So there is a sense in which the thing restores in you the image of God, and I think maybe Ephesians 4 will help us.

I can't be too definite on these things. I'm just giving you general things because I really can't get any more definite. I don't like to pin things down to a fine tooth comb and say, "This is precisely where it is." But in Ephesians 4:24, it says this, and I think that this helps me, "And that you put on

the new man, which after God is created.” Did you get that? The restoring of a man into the image of God is when he puts on the new man. Then God, in a sense, is restored in him in righteousness and true - what? Holiness. The image of God then comes when you put on the new man.

You say, “Does that mean salvation?” Well, in part, but it also means when you behave yourself like a new man. It becomes visible. It becomes manifest. In Colossians 3:10, we find this, “And have put on the new man,” or the new, “that is renewed in knowledge,” again, after the image of Him that created him.” Now, there is the same truth again; that the image of God is restored in a man when he becomes a believer and allows God to be manifest through him when he puts on that new man. When he not only is that new man, but when he wears that new man. When he manifests that new life, then God is made visible.

So, there is a sense in which man reflects the image of God. All men, I think, reflect the image of God in terms of being able to think, and feel, and make decisions. I think all men, I mean decisions, that are based on fact and logic, not just what you would call animal instinct. But also, when you become a Christian, there is a sense in which the moral image and the essential image of God is restored to you. But all of that added together, beloved, is imperfect. The best that we can do is going to fall short.

So, it is Christ - here we come back to Colossians 1 - who is the only really, true, graphic, perfect, flawless, absolutely accurate image of the invisible God. Beloved, were it not for Him being in the image of God, none of us would ever be able to approximate it. Look at Hebrews 1:3, and here again, you have a statement about Christ who, and “who” refers to the word, “Son,” in verse 2, “The Son” or His Son, “who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.”

Now, here we find, first of all, that the Son, that is Christ, is the brightness of His glory. Now what that means is the setting forth of God. He is that which comes from God to reveal the essence of God.

Secondly, notice that in Hebrews 1:3, “He is the express image of His person,” the exact image, the perfect image. The substance is the same. The word there, incidentally, “image” is used in classical Greek for a stamp or an engraving tool that made an exact stamp, an exact reproduction. Jesus is the exact reproduction of God; nothing missing, altered, nothing changed. In John 1:18 it says, “No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” “And when we saw the Son,” John says, “we beheld His glory, and it was the glory of the only begotten of the Father.”

It was just obvious that He was manifesting God. In Philippians 2:6, “Who being in the form of God,” Christ having all of the character and form of God, became a man, “made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant,” et cetera.

The Hebrews always thought of the revelation of God’s personality in terms of what God said. They couldn’t see God, but invariably, they could hear God, couldn’t they? How many times in the Old Testament do you hear, “And the Word of the Lord came to so-and-so, and the Word of the Lord said.” They always thought of God being expressed in terms of speaking. God’s manifestation was verbal. No wonder when Jesus Christ came into the world, John wrote, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word,” what? “was God.” Because the Jew always

thought of God as revealed in His Word.

God is revealed verbally. No wonder it says in Hebrews chapter 1 that “God, at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has at these last days,” what? “spoken unto us by His Son.” The revelation of God was always His Word, and the Word is Christ. Christ is the identical thought and expression of God. That’s why Jesus said in John 14:9, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” In Matthew 17, Jesus even let them have a little glimpse of the fact that He was God. This should end for all time any speculation or argument about it, where we find the Lord Jesus Christ revealing Himself. Matthew 17, a transfiguration. Verse 2, “He was transfigured before them: His face did shine like the sun, and His raiment was as white as the light. And a voice out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased said God, “hear Him.”’ He revealed, He rolled back His flesh, and said, “You see God now in His *Shekinah* glory.”

The Son, then, is the only perfect representation of God. Men are not. They are a marred image. Even when restored in Christ, they are less than adequate. Only in Christ is God seen in absolute perfection. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, this is beautiful. “For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” Now how did He do it? How did God give to man the light of the knowledge of the glory of God? Here it comes, “In the face of,” whom? “Jesus Christ.” God has declared His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. That is where God is manifest.

Now, going back to Colossians 1 and looking at that word “image”, it means a precise copy, a replica. Christ is the perfect, unblemished replica of God. He’s not just a sketch; He’s all filled in. Colossians 2:9, “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Colossians 1:19, “It pleased the Father that in Him should all *plrma* dwell, all fullness.” Jesus then, beloved, is the full, final, only revelation of God with nothing missing. To think anything less than that of Jesus Christ is blasphemous toward God, idolatry, as we saw this morning.

In Genesis 32, 1 think it is, isn’t it? Verse 30, “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel.” Verse 30, “For I have seen God face to face.” Peniel means the “face of God.” “I have seen God face to face.” Who did he see? I believe he saw the Son, pre-incarnate manifestation.

We are a marred image, inadequate. Christ is the only adequate one. But I’ll tell you something that is exciting for me to think about is 1 John 3:2, that someday we will be like Christ. That’s a staggering, staggering reality. To think that God became a man, God invaded the world in human form is a staggering thought.

Ephesians 4:13 says that our objective as Christians, here and now, is “To come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of stature of the fullness of” whom? “Christ.” We’re going to be like Him. We’re marred now. We’re going to be like Him. We ought to strive to be like Him, even now.

So, Christ is God revealed in the world. If you want to know what God’s like, look at Christ. He’ll tell you what God is like. If God were man, we would expect Him to be sinless. Jesus was. If God were a man, we would expect Him to speak the greatest words ever spoken. He did. If God were a man, we would expect Him to exert a profound influence on human personality like no other being that ever lived, and He did. If God were a man, we would expect that He would do miracles with ease,

and He did. If God were a man, we would expect Him to love, and He did, because He was God, and God cannot be known other than through Jesus Christ. Paul says you can't even call Jesus Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. So, it's a matter of divine revelation.

Further, Colossians 1. We don't want to get bogged down on those terms. "Who is the image of the invisible God." Secondly, in verse 15, "The firstborn of all creation." That particular phrase has caused people a lot of trouble, because they don't understand what He's saying. The first begotten, or the "firstborn of all creation." This is a reference, beloved, to position, not time. It is a reference to position, not time. He is not the first created being in terms of time.

There are two good reasons for that. Number one reason, He never was created. He said, "Before Abraham was," what? "I am," in John 8:58. Revelation calls Him the One who was, and is, and is to come." People say, "Well, He was created." No He wasn't created. People say, "The firstborn of all creation? Well, He wasn't the first one created. Plenty were created before Him if you want to look at it that way." What does "firstborn" mean? *Protokos* the Greek term refers to position. Now mark this, very important. It refers to rank; it refers to right of authority, to primacy; not to chronology. The firstborn is the one who has the rights of inheritance. In the Jewish context, everybody knew that. Even in the Gentile context, everybody understands that. They had no question in Colossae about what he was referring to; that Christ was the honored One, the privileged One, the prestigious One, the Father's heir.

Jacob and Esau, you remember? Esau was born first. Jacob was the *protokos*. He got the blessing. Psalm 89:27, "I will make him my firstborn," and then he defines it, God does, "the highest of the kings of the earth." What is a firstborn? The highest. Psalm 89:27, there's a definition of it. Somebody who is the highest, the elevated.

Back to Hebrews 1 again. He says, "In these last days, God has spoken unto us by His Son." Now listen to this, "His Son whom He has appointed heir." The heir was appointed by the Father. Normally it was the firstborn, but if the firstborn was disqualified for some reason, the father wanted to give it to another he had the right to do that. But he had to be appointed by the father.

Do you remember in the Jewish situation, the father had to confer a blessing on the firstborn? The issue wasn't who was born first necessarily, but who was to be the honored, prestigious son to inherit all that the father possessed. The inheritance goes to Christ.

In Revelation chapter 5, God is on the throne and the scroll is in His hand, the title deed to the earth, sealed with seven seals, as was customary with Roman law. For sealing a will, it had to be sealed seven times so you couldn't unroll it without it making an obvious distraction. "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals?'" Who is the possessor of the earth? Who is the heir to take over the world? Who has the right to control the earth, to take it back, to inherit it? "And no man in heaven and earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the scroll or even to look at." John says, "I cried a lot because nobody was found worthy."

Where's the firstborn? Where is the *protokos*? Where is the primary one? Where is the heir? "Weep not," one of the elders said to me, 'The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll, and loose its seven seals.' And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the

throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood the Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne.”

Here is Christ, taking the title deed to the earth as the *protokos* to take over and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. From chapter 6 to chapter 19 is the takeover of the earth until He finally reigns in chapter 20. Verse 13 echoes the sentiments of heaven. “Every creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard I saying, ‘Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.’” You see, all the universe echoes in, chiming in, that this one is worthy.

The sad fact is, beloved, that the one thing Satan wants to do is make sure nobody understands that, make sure nobody really believes Jesus is God, make sure nobody really believes that He is not a creature, but that He is the primary one of all personalities. So in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “In whom the god of this age,” who’s that? Satan, “has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Satan doesn’t want people to know He’s the image of God. Satan doesn’t want people to know He’s the only one who has a right to rule in the world. Satan doesn’t want them to know, so their minds are blinded by unbelief. That’s a good verse to show somebody when they tell you, “Christ isn’t God.” You can explain to them why they believe that.

In John 10:33, the Jews answered. Jesus made a lot of claims, but the Jews got the message. People say, “Well, Jesus never claimed to be God.” Oh baloney! That’s mild. Jesus never claimed to be God? The Jews answered in John 10:33, “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” They got the message. Believe me, they got the message. They knew exactly what He was claiming. He had claimed divine authority over angels. He had claimed divine authority over men. He claimed, in fact, divine authority over everything when He said, “All authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth,” Matthew 28:18. He claimed divine authority over the law, over the Sabbath, over the tradition of the elders, every bit of it. He claimed power to forgive sin, power to raise Himself from the dead, and He proved it.

No, Jesus is no emanating sub-God. He is God. So we see Jesus in His relation to God so powerfully in verse 15. Now, look at verse 16, Jesus in His relation to the world. Jesus, in His relation to the world. “For by Him, were all things created that are in heaven, that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.”

Now, we’ve just learned that He has the primacy over all creation, and you know why? Because He created it all. John 1 says, “Nothing was made unless it was made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made.” Look at it again in verse 16, “For by Him were all things created.” Who created everything? Christ, not some sub-God, some demiurge, some minor emanation, not some evil being. Christ. He is Creator-God. He created for Himself and He created for His glory, as well as by Himself. Hebrews again, 1:2, “By whom also He made the worlds.” By His *dia*. In the Greek it means “through.” Through Christ, the worlds were made.” I’ll tell you, when you think about it, it’s absolutely incredible.

Al Oliver, who was with us in our little dedication an hour or so ago, has a little baby - not very little, a big baby - a cute little guy name Matthew. He was sitting there holding Matthew in his hands, and he said, "The other day I was looking at this little guy, and I was thinking, could you believe, that the God of the universe became one of these, and put Himself at the mercy of men? Incredible!" I said, "That's really a heavy thought." Do you believe that that little thing was the Creator of the universe? Look at yours. Could you believe that? Incredible! God became a man. God took on a body. God that created the - you stop to think.

I'm no scientist. I mean by any stretch of the imagination am I no scientist. I remember all I did was burn up the Bunsen burners when I was in science. I cracked the beakers. I am no scientist, but I'll tell you one thing. I know enough, and I read enough to know that this world is a pretty complex thing, and whoever put it together is something.

You stop to think that you could have a hole in the sun. Let me show you how big the sun is. You can have a hole in the sun, and you could put into it 1,200,000 earths, and still have room for 4,300,000 moons to lie around it. That's big! The nearest star is 200 billion miles away. The North Star is 400 billion miles away. One particular star, the name of which always amazes me - "Betelgeuse" it's called - that star is 880 quadrillion miles. Don't ask me how far that is, 880 quadrillion miles. Science says it is so big that its diameter is bigger than the earth's orbit. That's a lot of material.

Jesus Christ made it all, and people say, "I don't believe that miracle about turning water into wine." Oh come on! "I don't believe He actually healed that lame man." Guess again, fella. If you want to argue to me about His creative power you'll have to get past me, because I'm a new creation, and I know what He can do. That's why I reject evolution. Evolution to me is absolutely inane. There's only one reason a person could believe in evolution. Well, two reasons. I'll take it back, two reasons. One, ignorance. I mean you just didn't know, right? You just, you never heard the truth. Two, just plain willful unbelief. Like I read in an article by a scientist once who said, "I reject the idea of a transcendent God, so what other option do I have?" There you are. He made it all. That's the only thing you could possibly believe if you thought about it.

So, Paul is laying down a super foundation for who He is. Just another thought in verse 17 that I think is really something. "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." He is before all things. You know what I love? That statement in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am." I wish I'd have been there. I would have loved to see the reaction there. That's just a shattering thing. He is before all things. Before there was anything, there was Him. That's necessary if you're going to make everything. He said in Revelation 1:17, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and am alive forevermore." Revelation chapter 2, "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and is alive." Great statements.

The first, the beginning source. Revelation 22:13, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first, and the last." Verse 16, I love this, "I am the root and the offspring of David." Think about it. How could you be the root and the offspring of the same person? How could you be David's father and David's son? He is. He is before all things. I love this. It says, "And by Him all things hold together." Do you see it there? "By Him all things hold together." Hebrews 1:3 says, "He upholds," present tense, "all things by the word of His power."

Now, I wanted to get some ideas on this, so I was reading this little book that Bob Heinmiller gave me, and it had some very interesting things in it. I'll just share some of them with you in just a minute, but when you think about how the earth is held together, it's really incredible. I mean it is incredible. If the earth's rotation slowed down, we would alternately freeze and burn. So, it has to rotate at the same speed constantly. If the temperature of the sun changed from, I think it's 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit, the same thing would happen. Our earth is tilted at, I think, at a 23-degree angle. It enables us to have four seasons. If it wasn't like that, vapors from the ocean would move down over the North and the South, piling up the continents with ice. If the moon didn't remain at the exact distance that it is, the ocean tides would drown us. I mean, who holds that whole thing together? Paul says, "The Son of God, the Christ of God."

This article that Bob gave me was written by a man named Chestnut, a doctor, a nuclear physicist. He said some fascinating things. Let me share some of them with you. These are just really mind-bending. "Nuclear science tells us that all substance in the universe is constructed from three fundamental little particles called protons, electrons, and neutrons." You have all studied this in school. You have a nucleus in which you have protons and neutrons and little electrons shooting around the outside. You can't see that; it's just infinitesimal in size, but those are the basic building blocks of all matter.

Now, he says in this thing that, "Since these subatomic pieces are the smallest fragments of the universe, they must hold the secret facts of design and behavior. If God is God, then these things will point to Him. The protons and neutrons make up the nucleus while the electron is a long ways off, relatively speaking, shooting around. So, we'll just disregard the electrons for our little thought, and let's concentrate on the nucleus of an atom, which is a combination of protons and neutrons."

Now, Dr. Chestnut says, and this is simply known material, "Each proton carries a positive charge of electricity. The neutron does not carry any electrical charge. Scientists avoid discussing why. Frankly, they don't know why. But the strange part of it is for decades scientists have had an inviolable law which says, 'Like charges of electricity and magnetism repel each other.'"

The point is, if you've got a whole pile of little protons shooting out an electrical charge, why aren't they blasted out? What is it that holds that nucleus together? The law says protons should not be able to live side by side in the nucleus of an atom, because the charges repel each other. "Nuclear scientists in the '30s concluded that Coulomb's law of mutual repulsion between objects is at work in the nucleus of every atom, trying hard to destroy it from within."

They had this law, Coulomb's law it's called, and they said, "It is at work, and it is trying its best to shatter that atom. Now, in modern time, we have figured out how to negate the force that holds it together and let it shatter." It isn't easy. Have you ever seen that thing up there by Palo Alto that goes on for miles and miles and miles and miles, trying to do that? "But they said, strangely enough," and this is something we cannot understand, "there is a second force in a nucleus that fights against the force that splits and hold it together. They call it 'nuclear glue.'" They haven't got the faintest idea what it is. We know.

So here is an atom. So here is an atom that exists with two conflicting laws present. I mean, when man with all of his scientific knowledge, gets down to the very most basic thing, he comes up with an

unanswerable problem. His laws of science tells him that baby is going to blow up, but something holds it together. Something resists the splitting factor. There is one law, the Coulomb's Law it's called, trying to destroy the atom, and an overriding thing holds it together.

Karl Darrow, physicist with the Bell Labs in New York City, said that, "These nuclei have no right to be alive at all. In fact, they never should have been created; and if they were created, they should have been blown up instantly. Yet there they are." And there they are? They are everything. "Some inflexible inhibition is relentlessly holding them together." I'd like to introduce you to an inflexible inhibition.

George Gamow, professor of physics at George Washington University, said this: "Every object is a potential nuclear explosive, without being blown to bits." It's incredible, isn't it? Who holds it together? We know who. Science can call it "nuclear glue." They even come up with the name "Colossus." It isn't "Colossus." It's Colossians. I say it's Colossians 1:17.

Just to give you an idea, my dad was talking about this last Sunday night. Look at 2 Peter 3:10. Now, you're going to be much happier that God holds things together, aren't you? Because if He ever lets go, goodbye! Second Peter 3:10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." That means unexpectedly, "in which," now watch it, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are in it shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be," what's the word? "dissolved." It literally means to loose something that has been bound. Do you know what that describes? That describes the end of nuclear glue.

Some day when it gets to be God's time, He's going to unstick the atoms. The universe will explode in nuclear fission. The heavens will pass away with an explosion that is called "a great noise," and I can imagine that it will be something unbelievable. "And the elements will melt with fervent heat," another result of this terrible electrical charges going across the universe. Everything is going to melt. It's going to be literally dissolved. *Lu*, "to loose." "To loose" is the word. It means "to loose that which is bound."

The nuclear glue is gone and everything is dissolves and melts. The releasing, the loosing of the binding force destroys the nuclei of all the atoms. The law of repulsion takes over. Coulomb's law will destroy the universe. When Paul says, "He upholds all things," or "By Him all things consist," he tells us who it is that holds it all together.

Back to Colossians 1 again. I want to show you Christ in His relation to the unseen world. We'll hurry, and be done in a minute. Christ and His relation to the unseen world is in verse 16 again, "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, in earth, visible, and," what? "invisible." Here comes the names of different kinds of angels, different ranks. "Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers." All were created by Him. There you have the classes of angels. We don't know the difference in the ranks. We don't know what their organization is. We do know they do have different ranks. Some are called principalities, some powers, some authorities, some dominions, and some powers or thrones. So, whatever ranks of angels there are, He created all of them. He made them. He isn't one of the emanations. He made all the emanations, Paul is saying.

Hebrews 1:7 is helpful, "And of the angels He says, 'Who makes His angels winds and His ministers

a flame of fire.” There you have the idea of angels being made. “Unto the Son He says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness and a scepter of Thy kingdom.’” Incidentally, here you have in Hebrews 1 - I won't take time to go into it - seven Old Testament quotes to demonstrate Christ is superior to angels. The angels are created. Christ is superior. He's the Son. In fact, it tells us in Philippians 2, isn't it, that, “Every knee shall bow, in heaven, and earth, and under the earth.” Whether they be angels, whatever they are, they're going to bow.

In Ephesians 1:21, he says, “Christ is far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come.” All things have been put under His feet. That's a symbol of reigning. A king sat on an elevated throne, and everybody was under his feet. All the angels, all the principalities, all the powers, all the dominions, all the ones who were reigning in the angelic realm and operating in that realm, are subject to Jesus Christ. He is not one of them.

In 1 Peter 3, it says in verse 22, “He is Jesus Christ who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.” So He is not an angel. He is over the angels. We see Jesus then, in relation to God, in relation to the world, in relation to the unseen world.

Fourth, verse 18, we see Jesus in relation to the church. We've been over this a lot, and I'm not going to spend time on it. I just want to point it out. Verse 18, “He is the head of the church, the body: who is the beginning,” the *protokos* again, or the primary one from the dead, “that in all things He might have the preeminence.”

Now, four great truths are presented here about Christ. Number one, He is the head of the body, the church. The church is called the, “body of Christ.” There are many metaphors used for the church. We are called a family, a kingdom, a vineyard, a flock, a building, a bride. But I think most singularity, and the one with no Old Testament equivalent for Israel as the church, is a body. It's an organic thing. Christ is like the head, and we are the limbs and the organs and those parts that function in response to the domination of the brain. This is Paul's, I think, most dominant metaphor for the church. As we get into 1 Corinthians 12 in our morning studies in a couple of weeks, we're going to get into this in great depth and intensity. So I'm not going to spend a lot of time dealing with it tonight.

Suffice it to say, that the church is an organism. We are inseparably tied together by the living Christ. As He lives within all of us the same life, we are joined inseparably to Him and inseparably to one another. All of us minister as a body. We have to minister in conjunction with each other. All of us have a responsibility to fulfill toward one another.

First Corinthians 12 just lays this out in beautiful detail. The body is to be characterized by unity. That is, we're all one body going one place. We're not a spastic body. We're unified, and we're obedient to the controlling of the mind.

In the body there is, secondly, diversity. Even though there is a one-mindedness and a unity of response to the head, who is Christ, there at the same time is the diversity of different gifts and different ministries and different operations.

Thirdly, there is in the body mutuality. That is, the common ministry of one member of the body to the other member. This is vital. So, we are the body, and Christ is the head. He is the divine, guiding, directing dominating force. We are not dependent on angels, Paul says to the Colossians. We are not dependent upon super visions. We are not dependent upon some knowledge other than Christ. Christ is the head, and He will rule the church.

At the base of your skull is located the pituitary gland that, among other things, controls the growth hormone. You grow in response to your head. The cerebellum in the brain is called the "harmonizer of muscular action." You move and function and are guided by the brain. Likewise, Christ causes growth and causes guidance to occur in the body. He is the head. He rules the church. We are in response to Him. He dominates. He's not just one of many. He's not just one angel that we choose to worship, and we have to add supplements. He is the head of the church, the body.

Then he says, secondly, "He is the beginning of the church." The beginning, *arch*, beginning in this sense. The sense of source and rank. In the sense of primacy, He is the *arch*. It can be translated "chief" or it could be translated "pioneer." The out front, the up top, the number one, and also it means "source." He is both the source of the church, that is its originating power, and the chief or primary one in the church.

Then Paul says, "He is the firstborn," *protokos* again from the dead. I told you what that means, people. Of all the people who've ever been raised from the dead, He is the chief. He is the one who is primary. He is the leading one, the ranking one, the greatest of all.

Fourthly, that in all things He might have the preeminence. The thing that gave Him the preeminence, beloved, was the fact that He was raised from the dead. Because He died on the cross and was raised from the dead, the Father highly exalts Him. He has the preeminence. It stands to reason, I believe, that one who is first in rank in the universe, one who is the point of reference for history, one who is the agent, the goal, the forerunner, the sustainer, the governor in the sphere of creation, the one who is the head of the church, the one who is the beginning, the source, and chief one, the one who is the ranking one of all those resurrected, the one who is the first fruits, if you will, of them that slept - that one has the right to the title "preeminent." Wouldn't you say? So, in relation to God, the universe, the unseen world, the church, we see Christ.

Lastly, Christ in relation to everything else, verse 19. This just picks it all up. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." Just in case anything got left out, there is nothing in anybody else of God. It's all in Him. Just in case somebody didn't get covered, the power, now mark this, the powers of deity. Listen to this, the powers of deity, the attributes of sovereignty were not distributed among a multitude of beings. They are possessed by one manifest in this one, Christ. You don't need other angels to help you get saved. That's what they were teaching. You don't need other spirits. You don't need other beings. "In Him all fullness dwells."

He had no supplement. Chapter 2 verse 3, "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He has no rivals. Chapter 2, verse 9, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and you are complete in Him. There is no other necessary. What's incredible is when you become a Christian - I love it. John 1:16 says, "Of His fullness have we all received, and grace upon grace." When you become a Christian all that He is becomes what? Yours. Great truth.

John Owen well said, “The revelation made of Christ, and the blessed gospel is far more excellent, more glorious, more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness than the whole creation, and the just comprehension of it, if attainable, can contain or apprehend. Without the knowledge hereof, the mind of man, however priding itself in other inventions and discoveries, is wrapped up in darkness and confusion. This, therefore, deserves the severest of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, our utmost diligence in them. For if our future blessedness shall consist in living where He is and beholding of His glory; what better preparation can there be for it, than in a constant previous contemplation of that glory, in the revelation that is made in the gospel unto this very end, that by a view of it, we may be gradually transformed into the same glory.”

My response is in the words of Peter, “Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our Father, we are grateful for what you’ve taught us again tonight, as we’ve seen Christ. Thank you for the marvelous miracle of you entering the human stream. I thank you for these precious people, for their love for you, for their faithfulness to come and to hear and to teach and to go out and to live these truths. Thank you for what they mean to me, for how they encourage me, and how they rub against me as stone upon stone to sharpen me, how they force me to be diligent in order that I might feed their souls.

I thank you for you, that I can come to you and be fed. That I, in turn, might feed them. My greatest prayer tonight was to exalt the Son, and I just ask Father, that that has been done; and that we would go from this place seeing Jesus Christ in all the majesty of His person.

While you’re still praying and meditating and contemplating our blessed Christ, it might be well if we allowed some response in your heart. I am confident there are some in our midst tonight who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior. You have heard about Him. You have certainly heard about Him tonight. He came into this world as God. He died on the cross for your sin and mine. He died that you might live, paid the penalty for your sin. He offers you a free gift. It is a gift of God, not of works or we would boast. That free gift is salvation, and He says, “If you’ll just take out your hand and put it my way, I’ll give you the gift. I don’t ask anything except that you turn in your own self for me, that you stop trying to live your life your own way and do your own thing; that you let me take over and rule it and make it fulfilled.”

I don’t know about you, but I tell you, I’m thrilled that I have received the fullness of Christ, as John 1:16 says. I just say to you, if you want to take the gift, why don’t you just tell Him that? You can even say that, “Lord I just don’t understand everything about this. But I understand that you died for me, and you provided salvation as a gift, and I want to take it.”

Can you pray that in your heart? If you do, you’ll hear an answer. He always does. Maybe you’ve got some trials and some anxieties, and you’ve kind of come to the end of your rope, and you don’t know where to turn. Turn to Jesus Christ, and you’re going to be restored. You can’t really lose. It’s a personal thing between you and God.

Father, thank you for our fellowship tonight. It’s been so good. We’ve just had a great time with the family tonight. This has just been rich. We thank you for being able to get to know the people around us a little. Thank you for being able to sing and express our love to you, and teach us how to

truly love one another because you first loved us. Most of all, we thank you for Jesus Christ. We just will never understand the mystery of why you have chosen us. But we say thanks, and ask that you'll bring to yourself tonight those that your Spirit is wooing, for your glory. Give us a good week to share the truths we've learned. In Christ's name, amen.

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