

**“The Preeminence of Christ”**  
**Colossians 1:18-23 [Part 1]**

**I. DOCTRINE:**

**CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED—Colossians 1**

**A. Christ’s Preeminence Declared In the Gospel Message—1:1-12**

**B. Christ’s Preeminence Declared in the Work of Redemption – 1:13-14**

**C. Christ’s Preeminence Declared in the Work of Creation –1:15-17**

**D. Christ’s Preeminence Declared in the Church—v.18-23**

The purpose of God is to give Jesus the first and foremost place in the church. After all, Ephesians 1:22 says, “*he [God the Father] put all things under his [Jesus] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.*” Now, Jesus is the head over all things to the church and also to the rest of creation. All of creation will answer to Him as it Creator and Judge. Why should we have to defend the Lord’s place of preeminence in the church that He redeemed and owns? The answer is, because we know that in many fronts of Christianity Christ has not been given that place of preeminence.

**1. Christ Holds Preeminence in the Church—v.18**

We have looked at the four truths about Christ and His relation to the church as it’s Head.

- a. Christ is the Commander** (Head of the church)—“*he is the head of the body*”
- b. Christ is the Cause** (Source of the church)—“*He is the beginning*”
- c. Christ is the Conception** (Life of the church)—“*the firstborn from the dead*”
- d. Christ is the Crown** (Preeminence in the church)—“*the firstborn from the dead*”

There is no place in the church that Christ does not fill. He supplies everything that concerns the church. We might say, He reigns over the church. After all He is the King!

**2. Christ Has Reconciled the Church to God—v.19-23**

Christ lived, died, and rose again to reign supreme over everything in the universe; the world, heaven and the church.

This is evident as Paul now expands on the person and work of Christ to the church. IOW—These things apply only to the church. They do not express any relation to the rest of the world. The rest of the world doesn’t care.

I have broken down this section into four points on which we might hang our thoughts and ponder in the shallows some of the depths that reside in Christ.

The four are, <sup>1</sup>**God’s plenitude is at home in Christ—v.19**; <sup>2</sup>**God’s placation is in harmony with Christ’s sacrifice—v.20**; <sup>3</sup>**God’s prospect is to make us holy through Christ’s death—v.21-22**; <sup>4</sup>**God’s precaution is for us to hold firm to faith in Christ—v.23**

**a. God’s plenitude is at home in Christ—v.19** “*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,*”

This, in a sense, is a summation of the previous verses on Christ’s preeminence in all things. We find here the final purpose and pleasure of God in Christ.

You will notice that v.19 begins with “*for*”. It introduces the reason why the Son is supreme in the new creation called the church. It is a vehicle to move us along his train of thought.

Verses 19-20 show how Christ is able to hold this position assigned to Him in v.18. Also, v.19 leads us to v.20 and the glorious gift of reconciliation accomplished in the Son because of His blood. This elevates Him to the place He deserves—Head of the body. This is the impact of “*for*”.

Now let’s take the phrase and unpack it, for in it lies a wealth of treasure that we will only see at it’s fringes.

Notice the phrase, “*in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*”. This phrase speaks of the high honor that was bestowed upon Jesus as a matter of God’s sovereign and eternal design.

The word “*fullness*” means, “that which is brought to full measure or abundance with the emphasis on completion.” The term is found 17

times in the NT. It speaks of the sum total of fullness and the super abundance of it. IOW—Jesus was filled with everything that was God in His person. That happened as a result of His obedient righteous life and His obedient sacrificial death. He is the full measure of deity in every respect.

It is interesting that the Gnostics (who believed in divine power in the sense of emanations, of which Jesus was only one of many) used this word to speak of the spiritual universe as the abode of God and of the totality of the divine powers and emanations. They believed these powers were divided equally among these spirits. Jesus was just a link in the chain of other intermediaries on the way to heaven. He was like a halfway house with better links on ahead.

Paul counters this by saying that this divine fullness is not spread out among the spirits (angels), but that Jesus is the **only** divine One and as such He has all the divine attributes and power that belong to God because He is God. The complete embodiment of God dwells completely in Christ.

This same idea of fullness is used in other places in Scripture. In Mark 6:43 after Jesus had fed the multitude they took up 12 baskets “full” of the leftovers. In Mark 9:16 it is used of a patch that “fills” a hole which later tears and spills the contents. Ephesians 3:19; 4:13

He says the same thing in Colossians 2:10.

It has been said that nature hates a vacuum. Water or air will automatically begin to fill an empty space. In like manner the Divine Nature hates emptiness. God’s desire through Paul’s revelation in his prayer, is that God wants his redeemed ones to be filled completely with Himself.

Now this filling is the same fullness with which God is Himself filled. It comes from Christ who is the fullness of God. That means that Jesus has all the riches of grace and mercy that God has, as well as, all the wrath and judgment against sin. It includes God’s glory and wisdom and goodness, all the fullness of God’s power, all the fullness of God’s purposes was purposed to dwell in Jesus. It can be said that the whole totality of the Godhead dwells in Christ. That is, it finds it home in Christ, making Him its permanent abode.

As Barclay says;  
“[Fullness] is the word which is needed to complete the picture. Jesus is not simply a sketch of God or a summary and more than a lifeless

portrait of Him. In Him there is nothing left out; He is the full revelation of God, and nothing more is necessary.”

We might ask, “To what end? Why did He confer all attributes and characteristics of divinity to Christ?” Then he explains why this is so.

God’s reason is twofold. First, it was His **pleasure** to do so, because that was what pleased Him. This is found here in v.19 “*was pleased to dwell*”.

Jesus has all this fullness because God the Father planned for Him to have it. This was what pleased God. The word “*pleased*” means “to delight in; to have a high degree of pleasure and mental satisfaction in.”

The word “Father or God” is not found in the text, but it is demanded by the context. Christ is the fullness of the invisible God as stated in v.15.

It did not please the Father to distribute the attributes of Deity among the angels. Hebrews tells us that there were no angels that were chosen for this. Hebrews 1:4–8

We must understand that angel worship was a common practice among the Gnostics. (Colossians 2:18)

Paul’s aim is to show them that it was not the angels that God was pleased to fill with His fullness, but the Son, and it is because of His fullness that we enjoy the blessings of God in salvation. John 1:14, 16

Now, we have been talking about Christ’s fullness as it relates to His deity, and certainly that is an accurate description. However, it seems that the fullness Paul speaks of here is more in relation to the work of Christ in salvation. Specifically, His work of reconciliation. This then becomes the second reason for God to place all His fullness in Christ. We see in v.20ff.

- b. God’s plaction is in harmony with Christ’s sacrifice—**  
v.20 “*and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*”

Not only was God pleased to fill Christ with all His fullness, but that

fullness now become the subject of His redemptive work.

This uncovers the remarkable doctrine of **reconciliation**. Reconciliation is one of the outstanding truths concerning the great salvation given to us by God, in Christ.

I do not have time to develop all that is entailed in this word, so, I want to set the stage for next week.

Why is reconciliation such an important doctrine? (*We're going to come back to these next week for they are found in our passage.*):

- Reconciliation is important because mankind is at enmity with God.

The whole natural man's existence is hostility, discord and estrangement. This is the description of an enemy. Romans 5:6–10

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:25 that “death is the last enemy.”

- Reconciliation is important because without it we would be forever estranged and separated from God. Isaiah 59:1–2
- Reconciliation is important because God took the initiative to reconcile His enemies.

It was man that needed to be reconciled to God, not God to man. 2 Corinthians 5:19

Reconciliation produces the restoration of a **relationship** of peace which has been disturbed. (Where was it disturbed? In the garden of Eden). But at the right time (Rom 5:6, the "fullness [or pleroma] of time" Gal 4:4) through Christ's propitiatory death (satisfying the justice God's holiness demanded). Through that sacrifice, God was reconciled in that justice was satisfied at Calvary in the pouring out of His wrath on the Lamb of God. Sinful man is reconciled in that his attitude of enmity toward God is changed from one of enmity to one of friendship.

- c. **God's prospect is to make us holy through Christ's death**—v.21-22 “*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,*”

- d. **God’s precaution is for us to hold firm to faith in Christ**—v.23 *“if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”*