

Who Is Jesus?

by David Hocking

The sermon explores the importance of understanding who Jesus is, emphasizing His identification with the Creator, involvement with creation, and intention for the Church.

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Scripture: Colossians 1:16-17, Colossians 1:19, Colossians 1:23, Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 12:22-23

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Gospel Proclamation"

Description

In this sermon, Dr. David Hawking emphasizes the importance of proclaiming the gospel and sharing the good news of Jesus with others. He encourages believers to serve God by getting involved in the process of proclaiming the gospel to everyone they can reach. Dr. Hawking highlights that Jesus is a revelation of the invisible God, as he had a human body and lived among us. He explains that Jesus is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind, and through him, we can know and understand the invisible God. The sermon concludes with a prayer for those who are unsure of their relationship with God, inviting them to see that Jesus alone can save them.

Transcript

This message is entitled, Who is Jesus? and is given by Dr. David Hawking. Who is Jesus? Who really is Jesus? Colossians chapter 1, one of the greatest passages on the person of Jesus Christ in all of the scripture, and one which contains some amazing statements about the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Colossians chapter 1 and beginning at verse 15.

And He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things have been created through Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

He is also head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven, and although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach, if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of

the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Join me in a moment of prayer. Our Father in heaven, how we thank You and praise You for Your Word that brings us the truth, the truth concerning Your Son, Jesus Christ. Remember again His words on that last night, that last evening before He went to the cross, we remember that He said, I am the way and the truth and the life, and that no man cometh unto the Father but through Me.

God, we realize the seriousness of that, as we are attempting in our own way to find peace with God, as human beings all over this planet try to discover ultimate reality through their own efforts. They try to be what they think is a standard of goodness, in order to be acceptable with You and to find favor with You, and yet Jesus, Your Son, has said that there isn't any other way to the Father, there isn't any hope of everlasting life except through Him. God, we pray that You will impress upon our hearts today that truth, that it is only Jesus Christ who is capable of bringing us salvation, and it is only possible for us to have eternal life through what He has accomplished.

And we thank You for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Who is Jesus? We want to approach this today in three ways.

One, by looking at His identification with the Creator, mentioned in verse 15. In the last part of that verse, we'll be looking at His involvement with creation. Where does the Son of God stand in terms of creation? And then third, we're going to look at His intention for the Church of Jesus Christ, which is a vital part of understanding who He is.

Really, do you know who Jesus is? All of the discussions that one reads about Jesus, one wonders how much people really know. Who really is Jesus Christ? I might also tell you that if you are a Christian and have been for a long, long time, and you know the Word of God and you know the truths concerning Christ, you'll be interested to know that this particular passage is the one passage that receives probably more various interpretations concerning the person of Christ than any other. There are certain cultic groups who love to harp on this particular passage as though it somehow detracts from the person of Christ, or at least brings Him down from recognizing His deity.

It's very interesting and very important to the believer, as well as to the unbeliever, certainly, because without your confidence in the person of Christ, without your trust in Jesus as Lord, the Bible says you can't be saved. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, whatever that means, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you should be saved. So to understand what it means when it says Jesus is Lord is vital to knowing that you are a Christian, that you are truly saved.

You cannot simply believe in the Jesus many people talk about, that simply a human being who died as an example, great martyr, who gave us teachings that we can follow and have a measure of happiness, that is not the Jesus that can save you. There are important aspects of that Jesus, for certainly His lifestyle is one we should emulate. It will bring the greatest happiness to us if we do follow His teachings, but that is not the point of Jesus Christ.

The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost, and apart from recognizing who He is, there isn't any salvation, no matter how much you try to follow His teachings, no matter how much personal happiness you may want now. Well, the issue is, is He who the Bible says He is? If He isn't, then He can't save you. Salvation is relegated to only being in this life.

If there is a life after death, and if there is an eternal life, then Jesus has to be what the Bible says He is. Otherwise, it's impossible to have a Savior, and we'll show you why before we're through. So let's look first of all at verse 15, His identification with the Creator.

A lot of people do not want to accept the fact that the Bible equates, in some sense, Jesus with the Heavenly Father. This particular statement appears in verse 15, that He is the image of the invisible God. He is the image of the invisible God.

Now, if you do not believe that Jesus is the same as God, He certainly is not the same as the Father, but He is the same as God, as we shall show you in a moment. If you do not believe that He is God, one of the passages that people who hold that will argue is Colossians 1, verse 15. They will say He's merely the image of God.

He is not truly God, or He couldn't be the image of God. Is that really so? Well, let me share three things with you about that particular phrase. Number one, He is a revelation of God.

He is a revelation of the invisible God. Jesus had a human body. Jesus ate.

He got tired. Jesus ate food. He walked.

He did things that normal human beings do. He was all man. He was a man who lived here.

Yet the Bible says He's an image of the invisible God. Therefore, He is, in some sense, a revelation of the invisible God. How can you and I know the invisible? The answer is it's impossible because we've been constructed as three-dimensional creatures.

We see, hear, taste, smell, touch, so forth. And we have to know through those senses the invisible God. How could you and I ever know who the invisible God is unless He revealed Himself in a visible, three-dimensional way? The truth of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ is the complete and final revelation of God to man.

Hebrews 1, 1, and 2 says God in various ways and in various methods and times in the Old Testament revealed Himself, spoke directly to the prophets. But in Hebrews 1, 2, it says God in these last days has spoken to us in His Son. Jesus Christ is the revelation of God.

How He speaks to you, how do you know who He is, God? How do you know who God is? Only by looking at Jesus. He's certainly a revelation of the invisible God by the very statement that He's an image. Number two, it also means that He's a complete and adequate representation of God.

I want to explain this, the meaning of the word image. To see Jesus is truly to see the Father. The word image used here is literally a copy.

And the best illustration would be to see your face in the water as you look down into the water or in a mirror. You see an image. Let me make this statement, it might help you.

Every image is a likeness, but every likeness is not an image. And that's very important. Two men can look alike, but it doesn't mean they're derived from the same source.

The word used here is an exact representation. It is that person, a reflection of that person himself, a complete representation of that person. Christ is a representation that is complete and adequate in every

sense of the Father.

In John 14, 8 and 9, Philip said, one of the disciples of Jesus, he said, Show us the Father, we've never seen Him, show Him to us. Jesus said, Philip, have I been so long time with you, and you have not known Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. Yes, Jesus Christ is an image, an exact representation of the Heavenly Father.

If you see Jesus, you have seen the Heavenly Father, according to Jesus. Number three, He has a specific relationship with the Father, in that He's called image. The word image does not mean He is the same as in every sense.

It does mean there's something that is the same. When I look into the mirror, the image that's in the mirror is not strictly me, but yet in another sense it is me. It is a reflection and a manifestation of the exact characteristics of me.

As I look into a pool of water, I see myself, I see, we say, our image. Now that in the water is not me, but it is in a sense me by way of representation. Let me explain what I mean.

Christ and the Father, the Son and the Father, are exactly the same in substance or nature or being. They are both God. In John 1.1, it says, And verse 14 says, Jesus, clearly, in substance and nature, is God.

The Father is God. Jesus is God. Are they one and the same? There are those who believe that there isn't any difference at all.

That Jesus, historically, is the same as the Father. It's just two different names of the same person. That is not what the Bible teaches.

Christ is a perfect representation of the Father, but He is separate from Him in personality and in work. He is an image. An image does not mean that He is the same as in every respect.

He is only the same as in terms of image, which means He is a full manifestation of all the characteristics and attributes of the Heavenly Father. Everything the Heavenly Father is by way of attribute, Jesus is. The Bible calls the Father eternal.

The Bible says Jesus is eternal. It calls Him immutable, as we heard today. So is Jesus, the unchanging Christ.

The Bible says the Father is omniscient. So is Jesus omniscient. It says He is omnipotent.

So is Jesus. It says the Father is omnipresent. So is Jesus.

As a matter of fact, everything I've said so far is also true of the Holy Spirit. They are all one and the same in terms of attributes, substance, nature, and being. But they are separate in terms of personality and work.

The word image, as far as I'm concerned, is the most accurate, the most beautiful word that could possibly be used to describe who Jesus really is. And the Holy Spirit of God chose the very word that would express equality in substance and nature, and yet separation by terms of personality and work. He is the image of the invisible God.

Well, let's look at His involvement with the creation. When you have that kind of a statement, your immediate question is, well, one who is that fantastic and great, what involvement does he have with that which is created? I mean, how do we get to know Him personally? And what kind of care and concern would he have for that which is created? And I love the little expression that you see in the screen of that shepherd with a sheep. Talk about involvement with the creation.

He loves us, and the Bible continues to remind us of that. But I think we need to get a glimpse of who He is in relationship to the creation in order for us to understand what our relationship is to Him. Let me show you what I mean.

First of all, as to His preeminence, in verse 15, it says that He is the firstborn of all creation. The firstborn. The first thing I want you to see about His involvement with creation is His preeminence.

Preeminence. He's the firstborn of all creation. Now, I don't know if you've come across this, friends, but this happens to be a phrase that is greatly contested and debated concerning the person of Christ.

People say something like this. If He's the firstborn, then how can He be eternal? If He had a beginning, then how could He possibly be eternal? And it says the firstborn of all creation. There are many people who realize that the Bible teaches that Jesus existed before He was born as a baby in Bethlehem.

I hope you know that. The Bible does teach He existed before He was born as a baby. That's called the incarnation of the Son of God.

He became flesh as a baby in Bethlehem, but He existed before then. The Bible teaches the preexistence of the Son of God, who willingly came to this world, invaded this planet, and became flesh and man and grew up as a man. So that we might know and understand the everlasting God in human form the only way we could properly identify with Him.

But that Jesus existed before He was born as a baby. But some people say, yeah, we know that, but this says the firstborn of all creation, which means the first thing created or born by God the Father would be Jesus. So some cults have Jesus being created just before the universe is created.

He's the first one to be created. Now, is that the proper view of this word firstborn? What does that mean? Well, it's used nine times in the New Testament. And I want to just quickly run through them for you.

It is so important. You better be ready because, folks, if you start sharing your faith in Jesus Christ, you're going to run into this problem with people. Because there are many people who use this argument against the person of Jesus Christ.

And if they can argue that, then they completely destroy the whole point of salvation. Firstborn of all creation. On two occasions in Matthew 1.25 and Luke 2.7, it's the same incident.

It's concerning Mary's son, and it calls Jesus Mary's firstborn son. That's very interesting. It is possible to argue on the basis of that that firstborn means exactly what you think it does, unless any other scripture usage of that word would reflect upon it.

It certainly does, but for right now, just looking at that, it appears that what it means is Christ was the first one born in the family of Mary and Joseph. That's used in Matthew 1.25, Luke 2.7. That's usually what they'll use to prove their point to you. Take your Bibles and turn to Romans 8.29. And go quickly with me if

you can.

Romans 8.29. It says, For whom he foreknew, speaking of God, whom he foreknew. He knew ahead of time. He also predestinated to become conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Now this usage of firstborn in Romans 8.29 immediately causes us to question the meaning of firstborn in the case of Mary's firstborn son. Why? Because from the standpoint of time, it simply is not true that Christ was born first among the other brothers. Referring to the person of Christ, why are we to be conformed to the image of his son? So that he be firstborn among the brethren.

Why is that even necessary? If he was the firstborn, he was. Period. If he's the firstborn from the standpoint of time, then he already is the firstborn.

Why does the Bible say that the father foreknew those who are going to come to Christ and he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his son so that he might be the firstborn? In what sense is Christ becoming the firstborn through you and me coming to know Christ? You see, from the standpoint of time, firstborn cannot mean the first one born in a family in that particular context. No, it must mean something different. I personally hold the word firstborn, by the way, to keep you flowing and thinking with me, means unique.

Unique, the only one of its kind. And that is true in that statement in Romans 8, 29, as well as in Mary's family. Because in Mary's family, Jesus was a unique son because his other brothers and sisters, and he did have them, by the way, mentioned in Mark 6, 3, after Joseph and Mary did get married and had children the natural way, Jesus was certainly unique among all those other children.

No question about it. He was born of a virgin and was truly the Son of God. But this passage clearly tells me it's impossible for Jesus to be first from the standpoint of time.

Turn over to Hebrews chapter 1. We're going to look at three passages real quick here in Hebrews. Hebrews 1, verse 6. And speaking of Jesus Christ and one of the great passages concerning Christ in the Bible, Hebrews 1, verse 6, the Father is talking, and the reference to what the Father has just said about His Son being special to Him, it says, Again, the emphasis of this passage is the uniqueness of the Son of God that would demand all angels to worship Him. The Bible specifically says that.

All the angels of God are to worship Jesus. It's quite a statement. Turn to chapter 11, please, of Hebrews.

Chapter 11, and look at verse 28. Here it's used in another sense. Hebrews 11, verse 28.

And the sprinkling of the blood. It's talking about Moses. Here the word firstborn is referring to the firstborn of the households of Egypt.

And again, you could argue, well, firstborn there means the first son born, obviously. Yes, it does. But also the uniqueness is the only word that is consistent with all these passages.

And uniqueness applies here also. Unique in the sense of the Passover and the sparing of the household of Israel if they had the blood in the doorposts. The Egyptians who did not put that blood in the doorposts experienced their firstborn son being killed.

And it was unique in the sense of what God had said in the situation surrounding their exodus from Egypt. Turn over to chapter 12, verse 23. Here's an interesting one.

Chapter 12, verse 23, talking about the church of Jesus Christ. It says, Now back at verse 22, he's talking to the believers and saying, Talking about our future hope. And that there's a church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.

Now they aren't firstborn, again, from the standpoint of time. I remind you that in heaven are many Old Testament believers. They are not firstborn from the standpoint of time.

They are firstborn from the standpoint of being unique. A unique body of people in heaven distinct from Old Testament believers. That's the church of Jesus Christ.

Again, the word unique. The other usage is in Revelation 1.5. But since it's the same as Colossians 1, let's go back to Colossians again. I know a lot of this seems a little thick, but let's come back again to Colossians 1. In Colossians 1, Christ is called the firstborn of all creation.

Then will you notice, please, verse 18. The word firstborn is again used here. And this particular phrase, firstborn from the dead, also appears in Revelation 1.5. Christ is called the firstborn out of the dead ones.

Now I ask you a question. Was Christ the first one to have been resurrected from the dead? No, he was not the firstborn in that sense. As a matter of fact, Lazarus himself was raised from the dead before Jesus died.

And arose from the dead. There are some examples in the Old Testament, at least, of resuscitation. But resurrection actually occurred.

We have also the incident when Christ died on the cross and the veil of the temple was rent. The Bible says Old Testament saints were resurrected. The graves of Old Testament believers.

And came out. And were walking around. Giving witness to the fact of what had happened.

An unusual event. A lot of people read over that scripture in Matthew 27 and forget that fact. No, Christ was not the firstborn.

First, in the standpoint of time, of those who were resurrected from the dead. However, we'd have to say he certainly was the only unique one. Who arose from the dead.

Because up until that time, everybody who was resurrected from the dead by miraculous power also died. Again. Christ never died.

He's still alive. And the Bible says he's therefore the first fruits. Of those who are sleeping in Jesus, waiting the final resurrection.

Which is based on his resurrection. Being unique above all other resurrections. And we will rise from the dead and live forever because Christ himself rose from the dead and lives forever.

Yes, I think the only adequate interpretation is that Christ is unique. Therefore, what does that mean? Colossians 1.15 again. He's the image of the invisible God.

Who is Jesus? The image of the invisible God. The full revelation of who God is. Secondly, he is the firstborn of all creation.

The unique one of all creation. In God's plan, everything he's been making. The world, man, animals, everything.

What is the point of that? The point of it is that Christ would be the unique one in all of creation. The Father wants the Son, by the way, to be glorified. The Father wants the Son to be glorified.

One lady asked me a question here recently. Isn't it possible that we will honor Jesus too much and not honor the Father? I think if we don't talk about the Father, that probably is true. But I want you to know that theologically, it is impossible to honor Jesus too much.

That is an impossibility. The Bible says he who honors the Son honors the Father. It is impossible theologically to honor Jesus too much.

Jesus ought to be number one in your life. The Bible continues to emphasize that. It is the Father's desire that he be first in our midst.

That there be no question about who is number one in our life in everything we do, say, and believe. He is the firstborn of all creation. So his preeminence.

Let's look at the matter of his power. Verse 16 and 17. It says he created all things.

Verse 16. For in him all things were created. Both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible.

Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things have been created. Watch this.

Through him and for him. Now if you're a good Bible student, I suggest three words to underline in verse 16. In him.

Beginning at the verse. And at the last part of the verse. Through him and for him.

Three different prepositions. In him. Through him.

And for him. The last one is technically unto him. But it does have the idea of for him.

In him. Through him. And unto him.

Let me show you what that means in terms of his power in creation. Number one. The origin of that power.

The Bible says that in Christ all things were created. I want you to realize one thing right now. That many cults do not believe.

According to the scripture. The power to create. Was not granted to Jesus by the Father.

But was already in Jesus. It is a power that he has in and of himself. In him.

All things were created. It's a very important point. No, the Father did not say to Jesus one day.

I'd like you to help me in creation. And I know that you're not able to do it. But I'll tell you what.

I'll do it through you. Believe me. Many, many people believe that.

Oh no. The Father was involved in creation. Jesus was involved in creation.

And so was the Holy Spirit. And the power to create was in and of themselves. It was not being worked through them by another source.

Jesus had the ability to create all things. In and of himself. Do you really know who Jesus is? The same one who walked the hills of Galilee.

Those dusty roads. The same one who taught the multitudes. So many years ago.

He is the same one. Who created all things. According to the Bible.

And has that power in and of himself. You know, I'm glad to know that. Because that means there's unlimited resources available to me.

Because the power of Jesus Christ is available to you and me. Did you know that it takes the same power to create the universe that it does to create a new life in you? Did you know that? Did you know the Bible describes a person becoming a Christian as making it necessary for the power of creation to act in order for it to happen? That may show you why it is so foolish for us to think we can turn over a new leaf or somehow reform ourselves. People, we don't have the ability to do that.

God says because of our sin we can't save ourselves. It takes the power of Christ to save us. The same power that was exercised in creating this universe.

The Bible describes it as the same power necessary to create spiritual life in you and me. To be truly born again. Now you'll realize the enormity of that issue.

To become a Christian demands the power of God. The same power that He used in creation. In terms of the operation of that power, the Bible says it is through Him.

That means that Jesus was actually involved in the creation. Not simply that He has the power in Himself but wasn't involved. No, He actually was involved.

In John 1.3 it says, All things were made through Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made. That's quite a statement.

Who? Jesus Christ. All things made through His agency. Third, the objective of that power, all things were created for Him or unto Him.

Everything that's been created is designed to go towards Jesus Christ and praise His name. That's why we read in the book of Revelation in chapter 5 how the one who came who was worthy to open the book, the title deed to the universe, was the same one who owned the universe, the same one who made the universe, worthy as the Lamb that was slain to receive all the glory and power. I ask you, have you watered down Jesus in your own life? Have you really? I think this is a serious issue.

Many of us, we get our ticket to heaven and we act as though Jesus is kind of being manipulated and directed by what we want to do. Even our prayer life reveals that. Yet it is He who is on the throne.

It is He who is in charge and everything that's been created is for His glory and His praise and that includes you and me. Romans 11.36 says, For out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things, all things have been created for the glory and praise of Jesus Christ. The third thing that we want you to notice about Jesus in this passage deals with His pre-existence.

According to verse 17, He is before all things. Some people have Him in the stream of all things, in human history. They see Him only as the baby born in Bethlehem who is somehow God-like in quality but never was quite what the Bible says.

Oh, listen. The Bible says He was before all things. Before anything ever was created, there was Jesus.

The Son of God. The Eternal God. Who became man was before anything that had ever been created or designed.

And the fourth thing we want you to see, an amazing fact, deals with the providence of Jesus Christ. The providence. What does providence mean? Providence refers to the control of things and sustaining of them.

We speak of somebody's providential control over them. And this is an amazing statement in verse 17. I want you to look at that.

It says, In Him, Christ, all things hold together. Literally, they stand together. They're in place.

Everything that's been created is in place through the power of Jesus Christ. Interesting argument along with this is from Hebrews 1-3 that says concerning Jesus, He upholds or sustains all things by the word of His power. All He has to do is speak a word.

It's interesting, by His word, He's going to destroy the heavens. By His word, He created the heavens. By His word, He controls them and sustains them and keeps them in their proper place.

Why do not the planets crash? Why do we have physical laws such as gravity? How does this whole thing sustain itself? I don't know if you're a scientific buff, but when you really get down to serious attention to those matters, it's impossible to prove the origin of those sources. It's impossible to sustain in your own mind how things can possibly hold together. What is the glue that is sustaining the universes? Galaxies upon galaxies as we know now, hundreds of them, millions of them, stars everywhere, over a hundred million in our own galaxy, not counting the many galaxies out in space.

What's holding it all together, people? Where's the orbiting processes? How do you understand that? Why are not the worlds crashing and colliding? Who can explain the weather system and how do we know all these things? Who can explain why we flip something in the air and it comes down? Why we get out into space and it doesn't? The Bible says that He is sustaining, He is holding all things together by His own power. He who is before all things, He who made all things, is the same One who is causing everything to stand together. Isn't that fantastic? That right now our whole world is being providentially controlled by Jesus Christ.

I kind of think that's why the Bible says that God sits in the heavens and laughs at those who mock Him. Those who think they're running things, those who laugh at these concepts, why God Himself is sitting in the heavens and laughing, according to the Scriptures. How foolish man is to think that He's in control of anything.

God Almighty is running things and Jesus is sustaining the universe by His own power. Man, anybody is as powerful as that and just think, the Bible says He lives in your heart. Every time I study a passage like this, I can't get over that.

Jesus lives in my heart to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. And He is the eternal God who has all this power. How foolish that we would fail to believe Him and to trust Him.

Not to believe that God could empower us. Not to see that inward strength is 5,000 times more important than outward external strength. Not to see that He who is great and mighty and created everything is working in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Paul wrote unto Him who is able to do, exceeding abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think, according to the power that is working in us. I have but a drop of that enormous eternal all-power of Christ Himself in my life. And yet I do not tap the unlimited resources of that power.

How foolish I am. Let's come to the matter of His intention for the church. Described in Colossians 1, 18 to 23.

Which is all a part of who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? By the way, much of what I've already said, not to promote anything for promotion's sake, but many people have expressed the benefit of this as a little pamphlet, Who is Jesus? You can pick them up in the book room. Spread them out. Give them to everybody you want to.

Who is Jesus? Many of the ideas that are here are in here, plus more. His intention for the church, I want you to see several things. First of all, His place of authority.

Verse 18 says, He is also head of the body, the church. He is head of the body, the church. By the way, in the original language, that's very emphatic, and we would translate it, He Himself is the head.

As though we all need to be reminded of that. It's as though we as human beings are always substituting ourselves as the authority. Let me illustrate this.

You know, I believe in leadership. I really do. I believe the Bible teaches leadership.

I believe God gave gifts of leadership to the church. He gave pastor, teachers, evangelists, apostles, prophets, the Bible says. I believe He also gave spiritual gifts to members of the body of Christ.

Gift of administration, gift of leadership. I believe leadership is important. You could illustrate it a hundred different ways in the Old Testament and New.

Leadership is important. But the other day I was reading in Judges chapter 1, verse 1. And when Joshua died, the people had nowhere to turn but to the Lord. Let me tell you something.

Leadership can sometimes be substituted for the authority of Jesus Christ. Do you understand that? I don't care how important that leadership is in any organization or any realm. Leadership can sometimes be substituted for the person of Jesus Christ.

The authority is Jesus. And if the leadership is not following God's word and not committed to Christ, then we ought not to follow that leadership. You say, wait a minute.

What about the chain of command? I understand the chain of command. But I'm talking about obedience to God's word. The apostles had to say we ought to obey God rather than man.

Do you really understand the authority of Jesus Christ that he is truly the head of the church? If you are a believer, you are a part of the church whether you want to be or not. Whether you have ever joined any external organization called the church or not, you are a part of the church whether you like it or not. He is truly the head of the body of the church.

And that headship of Christ is so important. That demands that we obey, that we submit to him in all things no matter what. He is truly head.

How much do you seek his advice? Is he really the head of your life in every respect? Very important. Ephesians tells us that he is the head of the church in a couple of passages that emphasize that the very working of our lives together with one another is dependent on the head himself. If the head is not giving direction to the body, the body is all disjointed and uncoordinated.

Its motor skills are all fouled up because the head is not controlling the body. Again, if Jesus is not truly controlling your life, if your life is truly not obedient to what he teaches in his word, then the whole body gets messed up and we don't function as we should. The headship of Christ is very important.

But I want you to also notice his position among the believers. His position among the believers. Now its based on three things.

His position. Look at verse 18 again. He is the beginning.

The firstborn from the dead. So that he himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him.

Jesus is to be number one in the body of Christ. In your life and in mine. Now this argument of the position of Christ, who he really is to be number one, is based on three things.

One, its based on the resurrection. He's the firstborn out of the dead ones. Again, the unique son of God even in terms of resurrection.

Because he lives, we live. His position is established from the beginning on the basis of his resurrection. Without the power of the resurrection, none of us could be saved.

The Bible says again, if we believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we should be saved. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, that if only in this life we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. If Christ didn't raise him from the dead, he says we're yet in our sins and our faith is a waste of time.

Yes, his position is based on the resurrection. Secondly, it's based on the relationship of all things to him. The Bible says in verse 18, so that he himself might come to have first place in everything.

In all things. Yes, the position of Christ in our lives is based on the relationship of everything to him. He's first.

You know why we get fouled up in our lives? We face many problems, difficulties, things get all messed up and our priorities out of line? Because he is not first. God designed the entire universe and the human race, so that everything that has ever been made would relate to Jesus Christ. That he might be truly first

in all things, in every respect.

Is Christ really number one in your life? There's no question he deserves it, after you find out who he is. And there's no question also about his power, that he who has such power should be number one. Then why do we not? Why do we not have Christ first in everything? There are many arguments to this and many excuses, but it seems to me the word of God narrows it down to one thing.

And that is that our viewpoint of ourselves is inflated beyond what the Bible says. We begin to think that we can somehow handle things and we don't need to look to Christ. We begin to think that somehow we can make it without him.

That we can somehow do it without him. And we get an inflated opinion of ourselves and our abilities and our talents. Instead of dependence upon him, as Jesus himself said, I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do, what? Nothing. It's hard to learn that lesson, isn't it? He is to be first in all things. The third thing that it's based on is mentioned in verse 19.

And that is it's based on the reality of his presence among the believers. Do you know the only thing that's putting this group together this morning, and I'm not sure everybody here in this meeting is really in this group, but if we're all in the group, do you know what's putting the whole thing together? It's Jesus. Let me show you verse 19 again.

It says, For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him. Now you notice if you look carefully at your Bible, the word Father is in italics. That means it's not in the text.

It's an interpretation, trying to organize the sentence in English like they think it should be. I kind of like the way it says it literally in this text. Literally it says, All the fullness was pleased to dwell in him.

What is all the fullness talking about? Turn back to Ephesians chapter 1 quickly. Ephesians chapter 1. And I want you to look at verse 22 and 23. All the fullness was pleased to dwell in Jesus Christ.

What does it mean, all the fullness? The fullness of what? Well, to put it simply, I think it's the fullness of God's life. Everything that God himself is. But that fullness is expressed in the church in an interesting way.

Look at Ephesians 1, 22 and 23. Talking about Christ, That God the Father has put all things in subjection under his feet, And gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, The fullness of him, watch this, Who fills all, meaning everyone, In all, meaning everything. Now let me read that again.

Christ is the head over all things to the church, which is his body, The fullness of him, Christ, Who fills all, meaning every person, In all, meaning in everything or in every respect. Don't you understand that that which makes a church Is the presence of Jesus Christ. I don't care if you've joined a dozen churches in your life, And a lot of us have had church backgrounds up to our ears, I don't care how many churches you have externally joined, You are never a part of this church mentioned in Ephesians 1 Until the life of Jesus Christ is in you.

No matter what you say or how many people look at you and say, Oh, he's a wonderful church member. Well, maybe he is and maybe he isn't. The question is whether you've come to know Jesus.

And if his life is in you, Then you are a part of his church. He fills all in all, in every respect. In other words, all the fullness means the full expression of his life As seen in the corporate lives of all the believers.

Let me show you what that means. I know something about Jesus that maybe you don't know. You know something about Jesus I don't know.

But did you know that any one of us individually is not all of the fullness of Christ? I believe there's a sense in which I'm to be like Christ. I believe that. Believe me.

Christlikeness is very important. But I want you to know that I'm not Christ. You say, you're telling us we know that already.

Now look, I'm not Christ. But there's some aspects of the beauty of Christ's life That are in my life seen through a very sinful vessel. There are some aspects of the beauty of Christ that are in your life Seen through a very sinful vessel.

Now the corporate life of the believers, as they're put together by Christ Fill in a total picture of the beauty of Christ. You understand? So the body of Christ, literal physical body that he had 1,900 years ago In that physical body, all the fullness of God was dwelling in it. That's what Colossians 2.9 says, in case you need the reference.

All the fullness of God was dwelling in the physical body of Christ. But all the fullness of God does not dwell in me. But it does dwell in the body of Christ, meaning many members.

I'm only one member. I am not the body. I'm only one member of the body of Christ.

You're only one member. But the fullness of Christ's life Everything about Jesus that makes him attractive to the outside world Is seen in a corporate body of believers. That's why Jesus said, By this will all men know that you're my disciples, if you have love one for another.

Why he also prayed in John 17 to his heavenly father and said, Father, I pray they may be one as we are one. That the world may believe that thou hast truly sent me. You know, the only way the world can really believe that is when they see the operation of love And ministry between Christians.

That's the only way they can possibly see the attributes and attitudes of Christ fully being revealed. You are not an island, spiritually. You are not isolated from the other members of the body of Christ And therefore reflecting all of Jesus.

That's impossible. We can only reflect the fullness of his life as we minister one to another. All the fullness.

What am I getting to in Colossians 1 again? The point is that all the fullness was pleased to dwell in the body of Christ. The whole idea of his position is based on the fact that you and I wouldn't even be in the body Unless we had Jesus living in us. And you and I are not the total picture.

Not one of us can claim what Jesus can claim. Jesus claims the number one position because his life is being totally manifested and absorbed In all the lives of the believers. One life filling everyone's life.

But no one life who is being filled can claim his position. No way. One other thing.

As to his plan to make the church a reality. Speaking again of his intention for the church. Let me show you what that plan is.

Colossians 1.20 Colossians 1.20 says For through him and through him to reconcile all things to himself. Having made peace through the blood of his cross. Through him I say whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Notice carefully it does not say things under the earth. Because that would be an incorrect statement. Things under the earth refer to demons and unbelievers as used in other passages.

He did not reconcile them. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds. Yet he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death.

In order to present you before him holy, blameless and beyond reproach. And so forth. Let's look at this matter for a moment.

Reconciliation. What does it mean? There are two basic words translated to reconcile. It means a change.

And the other word that's just a longer word simply means a complete change. Sometimes it means an exchange. Literally it's used in situations in Bible times of things like divorce.

For instance in 1 Corinthians 7.11. It says concerning a wife who returns to her husband. She's reconciled to her husband. Interesting.

It's also used in ancient times of changing from being an enemy of someone to being a friend of them. And you say he's been reconciled. He's now a friend.

Reconciliation from the standpoint of God with us. God doesn't need to be reconciled. Only we need to be reconciled.

We are enemies against God. And there is an enmity between us and God. A big barrier because of our sin.

And it was through what Christ did at the cross that the barriers removed and the enemy is now made a friend. There's been a change that has occurred. We call it reconciled.

You are reconciled now to God. And the ground upon which that plan is built is the blood of the cross. Unless Christ went to the cross, you and I could not be reconciled to God.

No way. We could never become a Christian. Unless the blood of the cross had actually occurred.

Turn, please, quickly to Romans chapter 5. Let me show you something. Chapter 5 of Romans, verse 10 and 11. We must hurry.

Verse 10 and 11 says, For if while we were enemies, Again, there's the idea, enemy to friend. If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exalt or rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

It was because of what Jesus did that you and I now have been reconciled to God. The guarantee that this can be done is certainly based upon what Jesus did at the cross. But let me emphasize that He has

reconciled you who were formerly alienated and hostile.

You know one of the neat things, and I just give an illustration that I read in a book. One of the neat things about reconciliation is that even though you haven't received Christ yet, you haven't believed in Him. Yet if you're one whom He has chosen to be saved, He has already reconciled you.

Because reconciliation happened at the time that Jesus died. Why is this important? Because some of us get the idea that I'm too bad or too awful or sin too much to ever be a Christian. Well friend, it's not based on whether you deserve it or not, because I can tell you already the Bible says you don't deserve it.

See, we don't deserve it. But the neat thing about it is that if God's going to bring you to Himself, He isn't holding anything against you. And I read this neat illustration.

It happened to a man about a hundred years ago, a famous preacher. But he walked into a bar one day to this bartender that's just an absolute crook and number one mean gun in town. And he walks into this guy, and he had prayed and prayed about an opportunity to talk to him.

He tried to witness to him over and over again, and the guy just wouldn't listen to him. So he walked into his bar one day, right up to this bartender, and he slammed his hands down on the table and he said, I just want you to know that God doesn't have anything against you. And the guy couldn't believe what he heard.

He said, are you kidding? Knowing what I've done in my life? And he went on to explain to him, you see, reconciliation is something that happened at the cross. God doesn't have anything against you because Jesus paid for it already. That's the exciting news about Jesus.

It's done, it's finished, it's completed. That's incredible. It's not based on your worthiness.

It's based on what He's already done. The guarantee is something He's done, not something you and I can do. And the goal He had in mind? Let me tell you quickly what that goal was.

Toward the believer, it's to present us absolutely perfect. Do you know that if God didn't already solve your sin problem, He couldn't present you perfect? It says holy, blameless, beyond any reproach. Isn't that fantastic? Do you realize that right now in Jesus Christ, God has presented you, because of the death of His Son, if you believe in Him, as absolutely perfect.

You say, man, you don't look perfect. Well, I know that. But let me tell you something, we are, by way of position, in Christ.

He looks at us through Christ, and it's done and it's finished. And that's His motive, to present us absolutely holy, blameless, beyond any reproach, right in His presence. And also involved in this goal is the manner in which we should respond.

I want you to look at verse 23, because some of you are going to ask me about that if I don't comment on it. Verse 23 says, If indeed you continue in the faith. Somebody is going to ask me afterwards, Aha, just like I thought.

You're not really a Christian unless you continue in the faith. Because it says if you continue in the faith. Well, I want to answer that one for you, because in the Greek language, there are four ways to express if.

And one of them is if and it is certainly true. And that happens to be the one here. It is not even probability.

And you don't even use the word if in English today to express what that Greek sentence says. It's simply since you are continuing in the faith. It is not a question of probability or possibility of losing your salvation at all.

It's saying if and we know it is true that you continue in the faith. The point of what I'm saying here is the manner in which you and I should respond is to the faith, which is talking about the Word of God. The only way I know about Jesus is in His Word.

And God says that the issue is remaining in the Word. But I recognize that it's that gospel in that Word, that faith that has saved me. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the message about Christ.

One last thing. You say you're hurrying too fast. I know, but I'm out of time.

What is time, huh? Three. The means by which it was made known. Yesterday we had a Here's Life training Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday.

And we've been kind of getting you all drummed up about this. But let me just drum you up scripturally. This is really exciting.

Verse 23. If indeed, and since we know you are, continuing in the faith firmly established and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister, a servant. Do you know how you can serve God and truly honor Him? It's to get involved in the proclamation process.

Just proclaiming this good news about Jesus to every one you can possibly get to. I'm a servant of proclaiming the gospel. The world needs to know that Jesus loves them.

Let's close with prayer. Father in heaven, how we thank you for your Word. Thank you for reminding us again who Jesus really is.

And God, I pray for those in our audience right now who are unsure of their relationship to God through Christ. Help them, Lord, to see that Jesus is the only one who can save them. What good news to learn that all sin was paid for by Jesus, but all the wrath of God was laid on Him.

God, thank you for that. Draw people to yourself by your Holy Spirit. Right now they may see that Jesus Christ alone can save them.

Because of who He is and what He has done, we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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