

Christ Is All: His Utter Supremacy

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient Lord of the universe and the church, who created all things, sustains the universe, and is the head of the church.

Duration: 50:26

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 6:33, John 1:14, Romans 5:1, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:15-20, Revelation 5:8-10

Topics: "Supremacy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the chaos and disarray in the world, with news filled with violence, injustice, and conflict. He compares the universe to a machine with gears that don't seem to mesh. However, he emphasizes that there is hope for harmony in the future, as prophesied in the Bible. The preacher highlights the role of the Son of God in holding the cosmos and history together, bringing order and completing a beautiful tapestry of divine purpose. He also mentions the impending disintegration of the universe, both morally and on a larger scale.

Transcript

Let us now turn prayerfully to the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians in chapter one and we shall read once again this morning verses 15 to 20. We have already considered the opening words of this passage but there is much else that remains for our meditation this morning so let us read it with earnest prayer in our heart that the Spirit of God will give us understanding and not only understanding but willingness to respond to the word as it demands response from us. I'm going to read then from the New International Version verses 15 to 20.

He that is Jesus Christ he is the image of the invisible God the firstborn over all creation for by him all things were created things in heaven and things on earth visible and invisible whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities all things were created by him and for him he is before all things and in him all things hold together and then very particularly what's going to be the focus of our gaze this morning and he is the head of the body the church he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on a cross. Now we indicated last Lord's Day that we see our Lord Jesus Christ here in in three contexts as it were or in three relationships. First of all the text speaks of his relationship to God the Father.

He is the image of the invisible God and that was where we were most of the time last Lord's Day and we simply introduced the second where our Lord Jesus Christ is set alongside of creation as a whole and Paul speaks of his relationship to the whole creation.

Now it's a very very profound statement that we have here he's the firstborn over all creation we considered that he has the rights and the authority of the firstborn son he's the heir apparent he has the right to rule and to dispose of the whole creation but that is brought out again in these words for notice by him all things were created he was the agent whereby creation sprang into existence and if you want to ask the question what things well Paul answers before you ask things in heaven and things on earth visible and invisible whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities all things were created by him but now notice he ends that sentence by adding something new all things were created by him and for him many of us who champion the doctrine of creation fail to champion the

doctrine that all created things were made for him as well as by him now let's put this in a nutshell this morning because I'm simply referring to these remaining elements in our Lord's relationship to the creation let's put this in a nutshell what have you you have health you have wealth you have a home you have prospects you have days and time given you you have some influence what have you everything that was made and therefore everything that you have was made for him now this is before we come to speak of Jesus Christ as redeemer we're only thinking of him as creator and if you acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the creator of all things as the new testament insists then even on the basis of his creative work all things were not only made by him but for him so that everything we have is

for him there's nothing that you can call your own which is not made for him further in this context we should go on and say that whatever is maintained in existence and in being your health for example your financial situation insofar as things are well and things are being maintained they are being maintained for who or for me don't you believe it for him worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive riches and power and glory and dominion and much much much much else everything was made for him and my friend if our lives and what we are and what we possess do not serve his purpose there is no reason why God should maintain us in life now it's as it's as it's as challenging as that there is no earthly reason why you and i should be sustained in life if we do not fulfill the purpose for

which we were created namely to serve the son of God and the father through the son but that's not all there is one other thing here he is before all things says Paul well now he said that already and in him all things hold together now this is a very remarkable statement and i have to say something about it before coming to the point of his relationship to the church in him everything holds together we hear a lot today about the pending disintegration of the universe morally things are disintegrating but according to the prophets there is a further and a far greater disintegration about to take place why is it that the universe is not disintegrated a long long time ago history according to the scriptures history is held together by a sovereign hand and is moving moving gradually but

decidedly toward a given end and the hand that steers the history of the world is the hand of the man Christ Jesus son of God all things came into being in and through him and form an ordered unity in him everything coheres in him he bears things forward toward the destiny that he has appointed now this is a tremendous word that you and i need to know and we need to derive the comfort from it that we can only find here you know there is an adaptation in the universe that saves it from disintegration and that adaptation is due entirely to the lordship of Jesus Christ over created things for their perpetuation certain plants need certain definite insects as some of you know if not all of you these insects are always found in

the right place at the right time or take a little thought like

this the polar bear is able to live where there is ice and snow as we know full well it is kept from slipping on the ice by having fur even on the soles of its feet i don't know whether i'm terribly simple i guess i am but i couldn't stop praising God when i first discovered that that the polar bear has special fur under the soles of his feet that other bears do not have who thought of the polar bear he in whom everything is held together and he gave the bear a special pair of slippers the yucca plant growing in the sahara desert and in other places can live in the hot dry desert because not only does it have roots reaching deeper down into the soil than any other roots but because it has foliage and that foliage is is such that the evaporation is very very slow and prolonged and the

minutest little bit of moisture will remain for a long long time who put the yucca plant in the sahara our lungs are adapted to the air we breathe and our eyes to the light we see and so forth who's responsible for this adaptation who holds us together where we are and where we've been placed we would die in another atmosphere who is the lord of all creation this too of course is also true of daily events of history here too things are not what they appear to be we are often challenged by the confusion that seems to be rampant but a guiding hand is is there though nowhere visible instead of seeing a guiding hand we hear a cry a shriek of anguish the newspapers are full of accounts of murder bloodshed rape people crying for their rights and unaware of their responsibilities one section

battling against another somebody parading for this or for that and others trampled in the business if we compare the wheel of the universe to a machine we might well say that its gear teeth don't seem to mesh to be sure one day in the far flung distant future and many of us refer to this and it's about our only hope one day in the far flung distant future all will be harmony the wolf shall dwell with a lamb and the leopard shall lie down with a kid and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the lord as the waters cover the sea and we rejoice to think of that but wait a moment my friend is it true that there is no order in the

universe at the moment is it not right that we should think of the universe at the moment and of history at the moment more as we see well let me give you an illustration i was visiting someone the other day and the lady of the house was making a little carpet by hand a little rug i should say and she had it rolled up and she brought it out to show us and of course the but the underside was facing us looking at it from the underside as she was showing it to my wife first there wasn't very much to look at in fact it was just a dab of color here and a dab of color here and some loose ends here and some loose ends there it just didn't make sense when we saw it from the other side it was quite a different story true it wasn't completed yet but it was a thing of beauty it was a thing of

artistry it was it was a beauty to behold and i believe that that is what the bible wants us to see there are many knots untied looking at things from our human vantage point but there is a tapestry in process of being made and being woven together and there's a divine hand of the divine purpose on yonder side that we cannot as yet see or if you want to change the the picture sometimes life looks to us as if everything's going to pieces it's just like the experience of standing in an international airport and the planes are coming in and going out one every minute of or often than that and you wonder what's going to happen next with all the noise but there's someone in the tower even though the folk in the tower the controls are human and frail and fallible nevertheless things are as they

are because they are there my friends the apostle paul wants us to see that he the son of god that made all things is holding the whole cosmos together and history together so that at long last when he's put the finishing touches on things we shall have nothing but order and all the loose strings and the unrelated strings will be tied up or done away with and cast in the fire now against that background we come to the third main feature here jesus christ in relation to the church now i want you to notice paul passes so naturally from the one to the other and there's something here there's a principle here you see we can so easily separate this material world this present history from things spiritual and things eternal and we can often drive wedges between things that are not separated in

the purpose of god as our wonderful picture to behold our lord as the lord of everything of every sphere of the material order of history here and now and there and then of the moral and the spiritual as well as the material he's lord of both worlds this is a precious gain when our hearts fail us on the borderline between the two worlds for one thing it sanctifies nature to us and it makes its immeasurable heights and depths at once safe and radiant with the name of jesus it connects the remotest age of the past with him it connects the remotest star in the sky with him it bids us when we feel as if we are lost in the enormity of space and time fall back upon the center with a capital c the center of both of them and the source of both of them and the lord of both of them and rest in his

arms kauper was right all things are under one one spirit his who wore the plaited thorns with bleeding brow rules universal nature with his name the traveler can rejoice in the glories of the mountain forest and the flood not worshiping nature but nature's lord and you and i in our service of worship as we speak of it on the lord's day can worship the same redeemer seeing him very especially in his redemptive ministrations to the lost sons and daughters of men and so we come to his relationship to the church he is the head of the body of the church the church within the general creation the creation at large history at large and beyond history likewise is the church the church of jesus christ comprises men and women called out of every kindred and every age to be messiah's people some

were called out before he ever came into this world he called them he chose them he made them his own abram rejoiced to see my day why because abram received the call in him he called them out during his incarnate ministry here upon earth and he called men and women out after he'd gone back to heaven by his apostles and he still calls men and women to himself by the word of the gospel and the spirit that he sent forth jesus christ calls men and women to himself now many of those that he's called to himself to be his people his redeemed have passed beyond the realm of space and time to go to be with their lord that's the church the church can be legitimately spoken of and i think is in paul's mind here envisaged as the new creation alongside of the natural creation and what he wants us to

see is this that jesus christ is lord not only of the material order and of history generally as we speak of it but but he is lord of destiny and he is lord of the spiritual realm he is lord of the church as well as lord of the world this is marvelous you see when you have spiritual problems you don't need to ask your god to go to another god who is lord over the universe and try to come to terms with him the things should be better for you he can communicate with you because he's lord of nature and he's lord of life it's the same lord over both spheres the church is one foundation is jesus christ her lord she is his new creation by water and the word paul thought of the church as humanity made anew through jesus christ as the new english bible rendering of 2 corinthians 5 17 makes very

clear it goes when anyone is united to christ there is a new world the old order has gone the new order has already begun any man in christ any woman in christ there's a new world don't we know what that is

brothers and sisters rejoice in your hearts even if you don't want to shout about it if you know what it is to be brought from death to life rejoice and give thanks to god in your hearts at this moment a new creation and christ is the lord of it he brought men and women into it he keeps men and women in it and he will bring men and women to the ultimate end and goal of the church as he will bring the material order to its appointed destiny he's lord of both but now notice the church is related to jesus christ in a special way and it's put here in language that we so easily gloss over

and it's too familiar for us it blinds us he he says that the church is related to jesus christ as the human body the torso is related to the physical head now i want to do something very prosaic this morning before we come to that and i i hope you'll forgive me for doing it but i just want to read from the pen of someone who should know what is this relationship between the head the physical and the human torso the human body listen to these words now they're not mine in a human individual it is to the head that the body in large measure owes its vigorous life and growth from the pituitary gland housed in a small cavity located in the base of the skull comes the growth hormone and several other hormones this hormone is known to be closely related to the health and growth and of of

connective tissue cartilage and bone consider also the other functions of the head those related in large measure to guidance it is in the head that the organs of special sense are mainly located the brain receives impulses from the outside world and from inside the body it that is the brain organizes and intercepts these impulses it thinks it reacts and this both voluntarily and involuntarily thus it guides and directs the actions of an individual in the cerebrum are located among other things the areas that control the various parts of the body the cerebellum has been called the coordinator and harmonizer of muscular action unquote the medulla controls such action as winking sneezing coughing chewing sucking swallowing etc etc here also the cardiac center regulates the rate of the

heartbeat whilst the respiratory center is in charge of the activity of the respiratory organs and all this in the head what's this man saying what he's saying is this that the physical body is largely governed and ruled and guided and directed by the head and paul takes hold of this image and he says jesus christ is the body of which you are the head did he say that no he did not he said you are the body the church is the body of which he is the head he's the ruler he's the lord he's the guide he's the director he's the sustainer he's the master that's how it was meant to be the inspiring ruling guiding combining sustaining power the mainspring of its activity the center of its unity and the seat of its life is in the head says bishop lightfoot to add another testimony and all these

things reside alone in the christ whom god has appointed to be the head of the church now that meant of course in this particular context that since christ is the organic and the ruling head of the church then it doesn't the church is not dependent on any creature angelic or otherwise you remember that in colossus they were trying to introduce the worship of angels or semi-worship if there is such a thing they were bringing angels in and wanting to give them some honor and some prestige not given in the new testament some kind of angels unknown save in this in in this kind of setting you don't need them you don't need them says paul because everything was made by our lord jesus christ and he is the head of the body the ruler the governing factor wesley was right you see when he sang thou

oh christ art all i want more than all in thee i find you don't need to go outside of him and get some other little angel from here or somebody else from there and bring them together to help the lord jesus to do his work he's enough he's adequate he's lord now that jesus christ is head and thus lord of the church is stressed by the additional statement he is the beginning and the first born of the dead and let me hurry

here he's the beginning and the first born of the dead he's the beginning again we have a technical word here and uh the clusters and is not theirs though it is in them the life did not originate in them it doesn't belong to them ultimately it is not their life it is the life of the vine it is in them but they didn't put it there jesus christ has given us life and he keeps

his life in us and we say it is ours and it is right that we should say that it is ours but it is only right that we should say that it is ours because we are in christ in christ it is life in christ considered as the beginning then jesus christ is not to be thought of as simply the first flower that blossomed in the garden of the church but rather he is rather the root whence every other sprig and flower emerged he's the root of all things he's the beginning in that sense now jesus christ is the also here designated to be the first from the dead and if time permitted i would have wanted to say a number of things about that but i must just summarize what i wanted to say what does this mean what is really stressed here well it's not quite accurate to put it like this there are many things

stressed there but i think the main thing that paul wants to refer to is this jesus christ is the is the first born from among the dead in this sense he's the first born to leave the territory of the dead never more to go back oh there were people who were raised from the dead before jesus was conceived in the virgin's womb a child of the shunamite woman in two kings you remember and there are others maybe in the old testament that were brought to life before jesus was born but they died again the dear shunamite had to see her she if she lived long enough she had to go to the funeral of her son he was brought back to life but he went back again to death so did lazarus in the days of our lord he was brought back to life and you say that's wonderful i'd like a lazarus experience well all

right but i'm not so excited about a lazarus experience because lazarus had to die again but our lord jesus went into the darkness of the grave and was buried and the royal seal of rome was on the stone he was buried and done with and to be forgotten by all and sundry but up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph for his foes he arose a victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign hallelujah christ arose and so the writer of the epistle to the hebrews is able to say because he ever liveth he is able to make intercession for us and that's why he says he's able to save to the uttermost those that come to god by him you see he lives evermore in the power of an endless life death has no claim upon him he's not going back into the grave again my lord will

not go under six feet of sod again he'll not be buried again he's come out never more to go back and he stands according to the language of saint john in his apocalypse with the keys of hell and of death dangling to his loins did you ever see another with those keys never men and women young men and young maidens there is none other like your lord jesus christ get to know him you will travel the world over and you will not see anyone worthy to be a shadow of him thus our lord occupies a place of unique headship and lordship in relation to the church he's the beginning and the end the creator and the perfecter the donor of eternal life to begin with and the pattern of the perfect redemption with which our eternal life will conclude in due course and lastly the fact of our lord supreme and

sovereign relation to the universe and to the church has a purposeful end in view so what you say you've talked about all this well now one could apply it in a myriad ways but there is one way in which it is applied here so that in everything he should have the pre-eminence in everything what do you mean we'll start with the individual in the way we think of him in the way we talk about him in the way we pray to the father through him in the way we worship him in the way we represent him to other people that in all things as individuals and as groups of people he should have the pre-eminence he's the icon of god the image of

god in his essential nature he's the lord of the universe it began in him and it will end with him and he keeps it moving until it comes to its destiny and he's the

lord of the church the head of the body now paul does something here i i don't know whether this fascinates me more than it would anybody else but you know i like to see paul unable to stop he's quite unable to stop here the language the grammar makes it absolutely clear paul's thoughts seem to be able seem quite unable to stop because logically his argument reached its climax with those closing words in verse 18 that in all things he might have the pre-eminence now logically and grammatically everything was leading up to this climax what for for this that in everything he should have the pre-eminence well now you've stopped you've come to the end of your subject start with a new one you know paul couldn't i like that i like that you see he was no cold calculated uh armchair philosopher

or theologian but he was a worshiper the late bishop handley moon was quite right when he said of the apostle paul he is more an adoring theologian than anything else and perhaps this is something that theologians need to learn how to adore unfortunately when some of them have gone through their disciplines there's very little left to adore but the apostle paul adored and in his adoration the subject he's already finished comes back again and he adds this i want you to see it even though he can't stay with it for god was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on a cross now really that's an afterthought that that he puts in after putting the period

in its place it's a recapitulation now let me just say two or three things about it and we are through this morning all the fullness of god was pleased to dwell in him can i just make these statements with a minimum of comment god dwelt in jesus christ dwelt in him the fullness of god dwelt in jesus christ not a bit of him not a shadow of him but the pleroma and that's a special word the whole fullness of god all the fullness of god dwelt in him now when you've used the word pleroma there's no need to add any adjective but all is tautology the word all because pleroma means everything nothing left out but you see paul no new our our temptation we wouldn't see it and so he brings in his tautology and yet tautology and he repeats and he says all the fullness you people open your eyes not

just i want you to get it you see all the fullness of the god had dwelt in in him wait a moment there's one other thing i haven't said god was pleased that all his fullness should dwell in him god was pleased jesus did not rob anything of the fullness of god to have it in himself and squeeze it into himself as it were and get a some sort of an outpost of rebellion against the father that was not him he didn't cry for his rights let me have this or use intrigue let me have that no that was not him at all but the father was pleased that all his fullness should dwell in him and there's one other thing to say i nearly forgot that word to dwell means taking up permanent residence we have people come here and they change their addresses so often dear people we love to have you however often you

change your addresses but it's difficult to keep up with some people's addresses but i want to tell you that my lord jesus christ is the repository of all the pleroma of god and that pleroma will never change its address it will only be in him for all eternity last of all there is reference here to all the vastness of the reconciliation that was accomplished by him now i can't start with this through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things in earth or things in heaven by making peace through the blood of his cross can i just say one thing and one only and it's perhaps not the most important but it gives you a picture our lord jesus christ brought angels and men together things in heaven and things on earth this is not everything there are many other things perhaps more

important left out jesus christ took upon him the nature of men but he originally enjoyed what we may perhaps speak of as the condition and state of angels is that not what paul had in mind when he said the first man was of the earth earthy the second man was the lord from heaven the savior was a native of the world where the angels have their home thus though men may claim that the reconciler of sinners took upon himself their nature the angels might claim with equal propriety that he hailed from their country but in him angels and men have their meeting point more specifically angels and men are reconciled by his blood and appear in the same kingdom in the same spirit and this is the picture i live with you you can read it when you go home in revelation chapter 5 verses 8 to 10 and you

come into the very sanctuary of heaven and in the center is the throne of god and of the lamb and around the throne of god and of the lamb you see redeemed men and women of every nation clime people tongue etc and there they are blessing god and praising and worshiping ah but didn't you see i hope you've seen it before if you haven't seen it before see it today around the circle of the redeemed is the circle of angels and archangels and they're in the same place they have the same center of gravity their hearts and their eyes are moving in the same direction what's more they sing the same song though the saints sing something they do not but what i want you to see is this that angels and men have been reconciled and are united in the same place singing together the glories of the lamb

their song is one here it is thou hast redeemed us to god by thy blood and thou hast made us kings and priests to god say the saints but there then is something there is something in the song of the saints which is not in the song of the angels worthy art thou cry the angels worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seals thereof the seven seals thereof for thou wast slain the angels lead in the chorus worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches etc their song is one their song is one they dwell together around the same object but the saints have this one note to their praise that angels have not what is it this thou hast redeemed us to god by thy blood and has made us kings and priests unto god and his father reconciled and prepared to take their places that's

heaven they're all there they're all rejoicing and they're rejoicing to take their stations according to god's appointment and not argue with the divine appointment that angels should serve men as they serve god in the glory you know this makes me feel so ashamed of myself and so ashamed of many of my fellow christians that we cannot take the humble position that god has anointed and appointed for us oftentimes we can't be the messengers the angels we've got to be next to the throne or nothing may god have mercy on us but here he has reconciled all things to himself and here in the glory they're all prepared to take their place and this is heaven and that heaven came into being only by the redeeming work of the one who was the image of the father the lord of creation the head of the

church so what that in all things he might have the preeminence that we should trust him that we should worship him that we should represent him and count it the privilege so to do even to suffer for his name's sake oh may the lord thus enable us in this confusing age to his glory and to his praise amen almighty god our father your word finds its way into our deep most souls and its principles has a way of barbing our consciences that have sometimes got very dull in particular oh lord do we feel this morning the need to have such an understanding of the person and the greatness and the glory of our savior that we can trust him and see that we can trust him and realize that when the purveyors of other alleged deities or messiahs come and knock at our doors we have him who is the first and

the and in the knowledge of him we have a salvation that is both past present and future covers everything and we are filled to the full in him oh lord enable us as a people and as individuals today enable us we

pray to begin to see things clearer so that our lord may fill the horizons of our lives satisfy the deepest yearnings of our souls and drawing from him such grace as you have promised we may come to know the reality and authenticity of the faith which is in him lead us on our way with this in mind for jesus sake we pray amen

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