

# The Preeminence Of Jesus Christ

## Making Christ Preeminent

I think maybe we need to have a men's meeting some Sunday night after church to have amen practice. Amen. Thank you, ladies. I'm sure glad I'm a Christian. I've been reading a number of books for the last couple of days. Let me make mention of one particularly good book. However, before I do that, let me engage in a hobby of mine that many of you are quite used to at this point. I want to chase a rabbit. And the rabbit that I want to chase is, folks, you ought to read. Don't vegetate in front of a screen or a smartphone all your life. People who grow read, and people who read grow. Especially, of course, God's word. Amen, amen, amen.

So, back to this special book. It's a history of Western civilization that was written by a dynamic Christian scholar by the name of the late Francis Schaeffer. Perhaps you've heard of him. An outstanding fellow. Everything that's going on in our culture, he predicted back in the 60s and 70s. In his books, he sets forth his opinions about why we're in the mess many of us are in. It seems that when our country was founded upon certain Christian principles and began to function according to those principles, things ran smoothly for a while. Did you know that one study showed that at no time in our country's history has the general population been so well educated as they were in 1776? It's been a constant, judging by letters and things that people have written and the vocabulary they use, the complexity of the ideas that they exchange to each other, it has been a downhill slide in the United States of America since 1776.

And so, things run smoothly for a while. But when the Christian principles upon which our country are founded are abandoned, the machinery began to grind to a halt.

Schaeffer claimed the beginning of the end comes when apathy sets in. He indicated that he was happy to see a rebellious period in the 60s because it showed to him that the young people of this country still thought there was hope. He wasn't pleased with the direction, but at least they believed there was hope. But the 70s brought something that made him cry, and it was apathy. The young no longer had any hope. They tended to concern themselves only with themselves. Apathy takes two forms: number one, leave me alone and mind your own business; and number two, gorge yourself on material things. All of this happens, according to Schaeffer, because the human race no longer has any absolutes to focus on, no longer has any awareness of the God who is infinite, and that's reflected in the very lackadaisical and apathetic approach to worshiping Him.

I believe Schaeffer's estimation of our country is essentially correct. I believe only a revival can guarantee the country's survival. The first step in seeking revival is to begin to focus our attention upon the only hope for a lost mankind, to once again make the Lord Jesus Christ preeminent in our lives. We cannot stir up, we cannot drum up, we cannot conjure up revival. We can pray for it, but a revival that cannot be scheduled, of course. Hey, we're going to schedule a revival at church. No, you can't do that. You

can schedule evangelistic meetings or a crusade or a conference. You cannot schedule a revival. That is heaven-sent. God decides when and how and where to do that. Turn with me, if you would, please, to Colossians chapter 1, Colossians chapter 1, verse 15, where we will see that Jesus Christ does indeed deserve to be preeminent in our lives. That is to say, He deserves to be preeminent in my life. He ought to be preeminent in your life as well. So, when you find that verse, I invite you to stand for the reading of God's word. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 15 is where we begin: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Won't you please be seated.

There are three reasons presented in this passage why the Lord Jesus Christ deserves to be number one in our lives, why He deserves to be the number one consideration in your life. Excuse me. The number one consideration in your life should not be your wife, should not be your husband, should not be your son, should not be your daughter, should not be your career, should not be your schedule, should not be your bank balance, should not be your health. If those are your priorities, your priorities are out of whack. It's the Lord Jesus Christ who deserves to be your number one priority. Amen. For three reasons.

The first reason Jesus Christ must be recognized as number one in your life is because of His relationship to Almighty God. Verse 15 states about the Lord Jesus Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." There are two statements here. The first declares the Lord Jesus Christ to be the very image of the invisible God. The word "image" comes from the Greek word "icon," from which we get the word "icon." Very prominent in Greek Orthodox churches, the term "icon." The term carries two connotations here. The first is the idea of being a representative of something. This would mean that the Lord Jesus Christ is the representative of Almighty God, which is true. The second connotation is of a manifestation or exposure of something. This idea is even closer to the Son's relationship to His Father in heaven. Jesus Christ is the image of God in that He shows us the invisible, or more correctly, He shows us the unseen God.

Turn, please, to John chapter 1:18. John 1, verse 18. A couple of these verses, it would be good for you to get eyes on. John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." That which is to be seen of God can only be seen in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is the very image of the invisible God. Now, please, Hebrews chapter 1:3. Hebrews chapter 1:3, where the Lord Jesus Christ is described again for us: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." The Lord Jesus is not the image of God like a 50-cent piece is the image of John F. Kennedy. No, no. Put that out of your mind. The Son of God is of the same essence and is of the same nature. He is God. The Lord Jesus, then, is the perfect expression and representation of God the Father. Without Him, we

could not know God. So, if you don't know Him, you don't know God. If you do know Him, you do know God.

Not only is the Lord Jesus Christ the image of God, but it is also stated that He is the firstborn of every creature. Protokos. Protokos. See, well, what does that mean? This is the verse, and particularly this is the word, that the Muslims, the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the modernistic preachers of our day seize on and try to prove that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God. The cultists say that He is the firstborn, and if He is the firstborn, then He must have been born, because obviously the firstborn has to have been born. Such a conclusion results from an inadequate approach to Bible study and an ignorance of the way a language's use of idioms determines a meaning. Every language and every ethnic group has idiomatic expressions. See, what's an idiom? Let me illustrate. In response to the question, "What is an idiom?" This is how Grok responded, because I don't Google anything anymore. I like Elon. I wish Elon would come to Christ, but I like Elon. So, this is Grok: "What is an idiom? An idiom is a phrase or expression with a figurative meaning different from the literal meaning of its words, often specific to a language or culture. For example, 'kick the bucket' means to die. It doesn't mean you actually kick an actual bucket." Does anybody not know that? There are people in this auditorium that probably don't know that. Idioms are used to add color and convey ideas succinctly, but they can be confusing for non-native speakers due to their nonliteral nature. That's the reason, for years, I conducted a cultural literacy class here at Calvary Road Baptist Academy, and in which I reviewed with the students—how many of you took that and remember that, called my cultural literacy class that I love—that to explain, explain the 1,500 words and phrases in American English that causes Brits, Scots, Irish, Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians to not understand what we're saying. Okay. You get these 1,500 words down, frequently idioms, you get these, and you know what Americans are talking about. Okay.

So, with this in mind, there are two areas that I'd like to develop. First, in Exodus 4:22, it reads, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." So, Jehovah said, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn." You think maybe He could have been using an idiom here? Notice that this, in this verse, "firstborn" is clearly a reference to the nation of Israel as Jehovah's firstborn. The term "firstborn" used to describe the intimate relationship between God and Israel, as contrasted with His relationship with other nations. It doesn't mean that Israel, all—what, one and a half million of them—were the first of the babies to be born, because Israel is not a baby. It's a nation. We're dealing with an idiom. So, undeniably, "firstborn" is an idiom that refers to being in first place in someone's affections. The thing I'd like for you to notice next is the fact that this phrase, "firstborn of every creature," distinguishes the Lord Jesus Christ from every creation of God on our plane of existence. Looking up to God, our Lord Jesus is the image of God. It is Him we envision in our hearts when we consider, when we consider and reflect on God. But "firstborn" has a different meaning. "Firstborn" came to be recognized as a title of the Messiah by Jews, and it reached that point not too long before the actual birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Firstborn," then, shows that the position of the Messiah would be exalted as in relation to everything else. "Firstborn" shows the absolute pre-existence of the Lord

Jesus Christ. And, finally, the late J.B. Lightfoot, who was a great Greek scholar of days gone by, concludes that “firstborn” shows Christ’s sovereignty over all creation. The second reason Jesus Christ must be recognized as number one in your life is shown in verses 16 and 17 of Colossians chapter 1. I read again: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” This passage shows His relationship to creation—His relationship to God, now His relationship to creation. The Colossian heretics had a problem with angels. That’s what Paul was dealing with. They believed the universe could be divided into seven spheres. This is a Gnostic heresy. On the lowest sphere lived the human race, inhabiting human bodies. Ours had to be the lowest of the spheres, they reasoned, since matter was evil by their way of thinking. In the six other spheres were angelic beings of various degrees of power and levels of holiness, who had varying means of access to God. In other words, the higher up, the closer you were to God, the more access you had to God. And they felt that one should render devotions to these angels and pray to them, hoping they would mediate for you to God. Sounds like a predominant religious system I’ve heard of, if you substitute the word “saint” for “angel.”

Paul is cutting a wide swath through these false beliefs that were being taught in his day. The apostle insisted that all things were created by Jesus Christ. Paul’s assertion demolished their belief that the Savior was a created being. He also pointed an accusing finger at them for not holding up Christ in proper reverence and worship. You do wrong with your casual attitude toward the Savior. You do wrong with a casual attitude toward the eternal Son of the living God, the creator and sustainer of all things. Show some respect. It is important to understand that Christ is—if that, when Christ is dishonored, then everything is dishonored, because He made everything. Further, Paul states the Lord Jesus Christ created things not only in heaven but also on the earth. If He created the heavenly angels they worshiped, then He must be greater than the heavenly angels they worshiped. And if He is greater than they are, and He created the material universe, then matter must not be evil, as they had been teaching. If the Lord Jesus Christ is good, and He is holy, and He is divine, then He’s not going to create something that’s bad. So, whether things be visible or invisible, the Lord Jesus created it. Whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, the Lord Jesus Christ created them. In fact, all things were created by Him, and all things were created for Him—not for you, not for me, not for Billy, but for Him.

But all this creation stuff is in the past, isn’t it? What about now? Turn your attention to verse 17: “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Once again, the Lord Jesus is set forth by the Apostle Paul as the pre-existent one. But there is even more. I was, by training, a mechanical engineer, long ago and far away, before I was a pastor, like a half-century ago. During the course of my many years in college, I have come across many interesting facts. I loved going to school. And here’s a couple of facts I want to share with you. Fact: everyone knows that there is a thing called gravity. Everyone knows that. But no one knows how it works. No one. You recognize a clown not by the clown suit he’s wearing, but by his declaration that he knows how gravity works. He’s a clown. Nobody knows how gravity works. Fact number two: opposite charges attract, while like charges repel. If you’ve ever played with magnets, you know

how that works. It is this behavior of matter that makes electricity possible, but no one knows how it works. They just know that it does work. And, by the way, it was Christians who discovered how it works. But nobody's ever discovered how. We use it, but we don't know how it works.

Here's another fact: the simplest atom is a hydrogen atom. One electron orbits one proton. The next simplest is the helium atom: two electrons orbiting two protons and two neutrons. Now, these protons are like the pole of a magnet. They have a very, very, very strong force of repelling other protons. It's like taking the north of one bar magnet and the north of another bar magnet and trying to get them to touch—you're not going to succeed, because there is a very, very strong repelling force. The protons, with their positive charges, repel each other when they get a chance. So, the question is, how—helium, where you've got two protons that strongly repel each other—occupy the same nucleus? What holds the protons together? No one knows. No one knows. It is the strongest force of nature. They have a name for it, but they don't know how it works. And when it's unleashed, it's called a nuclear reaction, but nobody knows how it works. You want to know something? I know what causes gravity. And I know what holds protons together by the strongest force seen in nature. And you know what it is? Paul wrote, "And by him all things consist." Not only did the Son of God create all things in ages past, but the very existence of the universe is currently, presently, as I speak, dependent upon Him. The word "consist" means to stick together. It means to cohere. It is the power of the Son of God that keeps creation from flying apart in the most massive explosion the universe has ever seen. But don't worry, He will hold on to things till He's finished what He started. So, He's doing this until He finishes what He started. And then, you know what He's going to do? He's going to do this. Can't wait. The third reason the Lord Jesus Christ should be, must be, number one in your life is because of His relationship to the new creation. His relationship to God, His relationship to creation, and then His relationship to the new creation. That's what happens after He does this. Verse 18 and verse 19 of Colossians chapter 1: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What does it mean to be the head of the body, the church? Please, please, please, do not think Paul is suggesting that the Lord Jesus Christ is, in a manner of speaking, the physical head that sits atop a physical body representing a congregation. That is most definitely not what Paul's language suggests. That's what all the Protestants believe, and they're all wrong.

When you came in, you should have been given one of these. I hope you have one. It's important, okay. Because, on the front of this, you have one diagram on the left, you have one diagram on the right. The one on the left represents what Protestantism believes about Jesus Christ of the church. And they're wrong. It's the one on the right, which is the more accurate representation of Christ's relationship to the church. Okay. And notice those two diagrams. The diagram on the left is not the word picture suggested by Paul, as I pointed out. Rather, the word picture on the right fits Paul's Greek construction throughout the New Testament references to the body of Christ, as here. And, if you want to read the actual pamphlet that goes behind that, you can go to that website, which is mentioned at the bottom of the page that you've been handed out.

Another thing to note is the appositive in this case. Does anybody remember what an appositive is, or what apposition is? Apposition is a grammatical construction where two elements, usually noun phrases, are placed side by side, with one element identifying or explaining the other. For example, “my friend, the doctor, is visiting.” So, “my friend” and “the doctor” are placed together in apposition, which means the one is what the other is, and the other is what the one is. Okay. “My wife, Pam.” Pam is my wife. My wife is Pam. That’s apposition. We use this all the time. But here, more clearly than in any other place in the Bible, we are shown that the Bible is that the church is a body. The church is the body. The body of Christ is the church. The church is the body of Christ. It must, therefore, function like a body. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He is sovereign and must be obeyed. The revealed will of the head to the body is contained in the word of God. That’s where you go to find out, so long as you don’t impose pre-existing beliefs on it, like Protestantism does with regard to this topic. Our response to the lordship of Christ must be based upon the truth of the word of God, not our personal preferences or baggage that we have brought to it.

He is also the “firstborn from the dead.” This refers to the fact that He rose from the dead, and through His victory over death, we also, who know Him, shall be raised up in resurrection glory. Too often, this verse is mistranslated. Who here has ever heard of Frederick K. Price? Ready Freddy, Frederick K. Price, yeah. Who used to be on television on Sunday mornings. I don’t even know if he’s still alive, but he had a large Crenshaw Christian Center in Inglewood. Years ago, I heard him, on two successive Sundays, misinterpret this verse as meaning that Jesus Christ was the first person ever to be born again. Not only wrong, but heretically wrong. To be born again is to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the result of which is being saved and having your sins forgiven. The Lord Jesus Christ was not born again, because He had no sins to forgive, number one, and because He was never spiritually dead and in need of being made spiritually alive, number two. So, this phrase, “the firstborn from the dead,” asserts the Lord Jesus Christ is preeminent because of His glorious resurrection. He was the first, and we will follow Him in resurrection glory.

In verse 19, Paul wrote, “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” These Gnostic heretics troubling the Colossian Christians back in the day generally believed that the Lord Jesus was only a man, and if He was the divine Christ, it was only temporary. They felt the Christ came upon this man named Jesus and indwelt Him until He was crucified, at which time the Christ left Him, leaving the man Christ Jesus on the cross. That might sound well and good to some people, except for one thing: it ain’t true. The Bible doesn’t teach any of this sort of thing. The Bible teaches here that the fullness of God’s deity dwelt in this one called Jesus the Christ. He is the God-man. Amen. “Fulness” means that whatever it is about God that makes Him God, the Lord Jesus Christ had all there was also. So, He is God, fully God. Not only that, but the word “katoikeo,” which is the word—it’s another word that drives the nail in the Colossian heresy. The word means to abide in a place constantly. In other words, the Gnostic heretics thought that the Christ came on Jesus of Nazareth for a while and then left Him. This word shows that there’s no “a while” in there. This is permanent. And so, the deity of Christ and the humanity of Christ are permanently together. They’re never going to be divisible. There was a time when the Son of God was God only and not man. But then, the virgin birth of Mary, right? The virgin birth of Christ. Mary

delivered Him nine months later. That's when God became a man and was the God-man from the moment of His conception and throughout all eternity.

There is, by the way, currently a man sitting on the throne of the universe. Do you know Him? There's somebody sitting on the throne of the universe, and I know Him. Do you know Him? If you don't, it's not good. So, whatever quality it is that makes Almighty God Almighty God, the Lord Jesus Christ had it, and does to this day have it, because that essence of divine nature forever has and forever will remain permanently in His person.

So, why should the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, have preeminence in my life? Well, He can't have preeminence in my life; I'm busy. Say what? Well, He can't have preeminence in my life; it'll make my wife mad. Are you kidding me? It'll make my husband mad. Are you kidding me? It'll make my kid mad. Are you out of your mind? Why should all worship go to Him? Why should I live my total life in such a way as to please not my spouse, not my kid, not my boss, but Him? Why should I always try to glorify and bring honor to Him? Well, there's three reasons why He is to be preeminent. He is the preeminent one because of His relationship to the triune Godhead. He is the very image of the unseen and otherwise unknowable God. He is the preeminent one because of His relationship to the natural creation. All things that were made were made by Him, whether they be visible or invisible, whether they be in heaven or on the earth. They were created by Him. They were created for Him. Not only that, but the very existence of the universe is the direct result of His omnipotent, sustaining power. He's doing this until He decides to do this. The third reason He is the preeminent one is because of His relationship to the new creation. If you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you are a part of the new creation. You are prepared for eternity. If you do not know Him, then you do not have that only relationship that is required to save a lost soul from eternal hell. And you are, therefore, unprepared for eternity. You are not ready.

Why do we study all these things? What's the point? Why do we go to church? Why do we witness to people? Why do we give our money to God's work? Why do we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ? So that in all things He might have the preeminence. You don't stay home from church because cousin Billy Bob came from Missouri. You bring Billy Bob to church with you, or leave him in your house until the service is over. Because Billy Bob is not preeminent; Christ is preeminent. And if you stay home for Billy Bob, you will never, ever convince Billy Bob of the preeminence of Christ. He will never believe you. He will never believe you, because you have shown him, on that occasion, that he, as a visiting cousin, is more important to you than the eternal Son of the living God. That, in every single area of your life, in every single area of my life, He might have the preeminence, that He might be number one.

Let's pray. Thank you, Father, for your goodness. We thank you for the word. We thank you for the directness of it. We thank you for the simplicity of it. We thank you for the realization that choices have to be made. We can't have it all. And so, we have to come down on one side or the other, and we have to do so again and again and again and again, to reflect the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is preeminent in all things. Help us to demonstrate reality. It is true, whether we acknowledge it or not. It is true, whether we act like it or not. So, for the benefit of others, and for our own benefit, and to be true to truth, help us to be consistent in living our lives in such a way that we show that

Jesus Christ is preeminent. Bless to that end, and we will thank and praise you, in Jesus' name. Amen. Would you please stand, take a hymnal, turn to hymn number 592. Brother Eisenberg is going to come and lead us in singing a verse of congregational singing.