

"The Mystery of the Ages!"

Colossians 1:15-29

INTRO: There were false teachers at Colossae who could never give Jesus Christ the place of preeminence; for, according to their philosophy, Jesus Christ was only one of many "emanations" from God. He was not the only way to God; rather, He was but one rung on the ladder! It has been said, "If Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, He cannot be Lord at all." One commentator writes, "Paul will make clear the supremacy of Christ over all. He will hold his readers to his thesis—Christ—not with mere attack, but with persuasive arguments . . . Here is the battleground of New Testament theology: the person, position, power, preeminence, and purpose of Christ."

D) JESUS IS LIFE! (v15-20)

(v15a) JESUS is "the IMAGE of the invisible God" (the person of Christ) - The Greek word for "image" is *eikōn*, we get our English word "icon." It means, "copy" or "likeness;" Jesus Christ is the perfect image—the exact likeness—of God and is in the very form of God (**John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Philipians 2:6 - who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. Paul is emphasizing that Jesus is both the representation and manifestation of God. (John 1:1; 8:58; 10:30; John 14:1-11)***

(v15b) JESUS is the FIRSTBORN over all CREATION! (the position of Christ) - According to Dr. Kenneth Wuest, a Greek scholar, he writes, "The word *firstborn* is *prootokos*. The Greek word implied two things, priority to all creation and sovereignty over all creation. In the first meaning we see the absolute pre-existence of the Logos. Since our Lord existed before all created things, He must be uncreated. Since He is uncreated, He is eternal. Since He is eternal, He is God. Since He is God, He cannot be one of the emanations from deity of which the Gnostic speaks, even though He proceeds from God the Father as the Son." The literal Greek translation of verse 15 reads as follows, *Who is a derived reproduction and manifestation of the Deity, the invisible One, the One who has priority to and sovereignty over all creation*. Ellicott says, "The Son is the Father's image in all things save only in being the Father."

(v15c-17) CREATED all things! (the power of Christ) In regards to heretical teachings the Cult Reference Bible by Dr. Walter Martin declares that the Jehovah's Witnesses say - "This proves that Jesus was the first one to be created by Jehovah God. *Firstborn* means first created." The Latter Day Saints (Mormons) say "Firstborn" means that Jesus was the first one born of Father and Mother God in heaven. Then he was later born on earth by a sexual union of the Father with Mary." Walter Martin responds to these falsities rather masterfully, he says "In verse 16 we read that by Christ all things were created. Therefore, Christ Himself cannot be a created thing. The meaning of the title "*firstborn*" is made clear when we understand its use in Hebrew culture. Because the firstborn son was customarily the heir, the term *firstborn* became associated with the meaning of heir, or the one with the right to rule (the preeminent one), even when the one who was the heir was not the one who was born first (see Gen. 41:1 cf. Jer. 31:9; Deut. 21:15-17). Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is the heir of all creation, and thus goes on to say that all things were created for Him (Col. 1:16 cf. Heb. 3:4).

Why is "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers" spoken of? Vincent another Greek scholar explains Paul's reasoning, "The words, *thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers* refer to both holy and fallen angels, to demons and man. This passage is aimed at the angel-worship of the Colossians; showing that while they have been discussing the various grades of angels which fill the space between God and men, and depending on them as media of communion with God, they have degraded Christ who is above them all, and is the sole mediator." (Hebrews 1:1-6 - **Jesus is not an angel.**) In Him all things CONSIST! (Jesus keeps it all together!)

(v18-19) He is the HEAD of the CHURCH! (the preeminence of Christ) - The word *Head* speaks of "source, origin, leader, ruler." The firstborn from the dead - Jesus was the first chronologically to be resurrected, never to die again. Verse 19 is powerful, unveiling the absolute holiness of Christ's life; this passage literally reads, "Because in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell." In Colossians 2:9 we read, "For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Thus the Father would say, "This my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17; 17:5)

(v20-23) Christ's RECONCILIATION (the purpose of Christ) - C.I. Scofield describes two distinct reconciliations: (1) The reconciliation accomplished at Calvary—*"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"* (2 Cor. 5:19). Here God was not changed, for He had always loved the world; nor was the world changed, for it continued in sinful rebellion against God. But by the death of Christ the

relationship between God and the world was changed: the barrier because of sin being taken away judicially, enabling God to show mercy where judgment was deserved. This reconciliation was the work of God alone, in which man had no part. And (2) **there is a reconciliation wrought by God in the sinner himself, whereby he becomes changed in his rebellious attitude toward God, so that he is persuaded to receive the reconciliation already accomplished through Christ at the cross** (Rom. 5:11). In this ministry of reconciling the sinner, Christians have a part, being ambassadors for Christ bearing the “word of reconciliation” committed to them (2Cor. 5:19) and pleading with men: “**Be reconciled to God**” (2Cor. 5:20). (2Corin. 5:18-21 - *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*)

II) JESUS IS HOPE!

(v24-25) First, observe the **perseverance** of Paul in regards to the mystery: (1) He rejoiced in the midst of his sufferings for Christ, Paul was in a Roman prison for preaching the gospel; (2) He was a **minister** (*diakonos*, a servant) and a **steward** of the word of God, preaching and teaching according to sound doctrine. We have the same responsibility.

(v26-27) A “mystery” in Scripture is a previously hidden truth now divinely revealed. **To whom is the mystery unveiled? To the SAINTS, Christians! What is the mystery? “CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY!”**

How is “The Mystery of Christ in You” revealed?

#1- By the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT! – John 14:15-26

(The Holy Spirit will *teach us all things* (v26); and will *testify* of Christ in us (15:26-27).)

#2- By bearing the FRUIT of CHRIST! – John 15:1-17

(The fruit may be *converts* (Rom. 1:13); *Christian character* (Gal. 5:22-23); and *conduct*—the fruits of righteousness (Rom. 6:21-22; Phil. 1:11).

#3- By the UNITY and LOVE of the believers! – John 17:20-26

#4- The old life dies and NEW LIFE LIVES! – Galatians 2:20

(Embrace the last line with all your heart, *who loved me and gave himself for me.*)

#5- PRAY for the fullness of the indwelling Christ! – Ephesians 3:14-21

#6- Through OBEDIENCE – 1 John 3:22-24

#7- By TELLING the world that this mystery is available to all! – Revelation 3:20

(v28-29) We **PREACH HIM!** Jesus who is the Christ, the hope of glory! We are to warn every man! We are to teach every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man **PERFECT** (Greek *teleios* - *spiritually mature, complete*) in Christ Jesus; **striving** speaks of the physical exercise and discipline of an athlete in order to compete and win their event. Notice that Christ works in him **mightily**; meaning this work is Christ based, Christ motivated, Christ empowered, and Christ will complete the work! Trust Him for this work in your life!

What about the “HOPE OF GLORY?” (Col. 1:27) - Christians are being transformed into the glorious image of God according to **2 Cor 3:18** - *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.* Believers will be fully glorified in God's heavenly presence (Rom 5:2; Col 3:4); and the glory of God will be seen everywhere (Rev 21:23)!