

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

SEPTEMBER 7 - 11, 2020

Above All

8.30 - 11.22

BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



MONDAY

Colossians 1:15-24; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:13-16 1:12

Paul's letter to the Colossians addressed heresy that was creeping into this young church. "[The Colossian heresy] denied that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily *in Christ* ... [also rejecting] that the Christian was *complete in Christ* ... [This heresy] tried to supplement the freedom in Christ by introducing ways of heightening Christian spirituality ... [e.g.,] circumcision ... [Jewish dietary laws and other traditions] ... and ascetic restrictions." (Grace Communion International)

Paul deals with the problem at Colossae head-on in Colossians 1:15-24, emphasizing the deity, preeminence and sufficiency of Jesus, and His atoning sacrifice. We'll develop this throughout the week, but let's consider how the Colossians—and even contemporary people—could wrongly view the Savior.

The Colossian heresy, like Gnosticism, emphasized Jesus' deity at the expense of His humanity. It saw Christ as so beyond us in our corrupt fleshliness that intermediaries—angels—became stand-in worship objects rather than God Himself. The Bible warned about this in Colossians 2:18, etc.—we are to worship the Creator, not creation. A problematic byproduct: the “angels” worshiped may be fallen (demonic), awaiting such openings—perhaps a cult or two started like this. At least one Christian denomination still applies this principle in emphasizing saint-directed prayer.

There are two other common, continuing corruptions of theology. The first is the cults' route: Jesus was created, thus less than God or a "lesser god"—more on this tomorrow. The other, sometimes prevalent view even among evangelical Christians: Jesus is the "nice, helpful, accessible God," not "stern and vengeful" like the Father, that "the God of the Old Testament" differs from "the God of the New Testament." This contradicts Scripture, including Jesus' own statements: "*I and the Father are One*" (John 10:30) and "*... the Son can do ... only what he sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does*" (John 5:19), etc.

Avoid the pitfalls of corrupt theology suggesting that "Jesus was not a Man" or, conversely, "less than God," and/or that "the Father and Son have different agendas." Responsible, Bible-based theology helps us better appreciate God and all that He does: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son ...*" (John 3:16).

REFLECTION

What were some of the elements of "the Colossian heresy" that Paul addressed? What corruptions of biblical theology plague even contemporary people?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

Christians in Iran are facing increased persecution. The government recently passed a law allowing it to charge Christians as "acting against nationalist security by promoting Zionist Christianity," characterized as "deviant psychological manipulation" or "propaganda contrary to Islam." Punishment includes imprisonment, flogging, fines, or even the death penalty. Pray for softening of hearts.

TUESDAY

Colossians 1:15-19; Philippians 2:5-11; John 20:26-29

Cults self-identifying as “Christian” use today’s Colossians text to support their theology of Jesus as a created being, not eternally divine. They highlight “*the firstborn of all creation*” (Colossians 1:15) and “*firstborn*” in 1:18 and Revelation 1:5 as “evidence.” Other cult-favored proof texts pronounce Jesus *begotten* (John 3:16, Psalm 2:7) and “*the beginning of God’s creation*” (Revelation 3:14).

Jesus’ own, selected statements fuel this fire: “*My Father is greater than I*” (John 14:28); “*My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me*” (John 7:16); etc. Yet the Savior also declared His eternal deity: “*... I am the first and the last*” (Revelation 1:17), “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30) and “*... before Abraham was, I am*” (John 8:58). How do we reconcile all of this, particularly given the cults’ rejection of Christ’s deity?

“The word ‘first-born’ (Greek word ‘*prototokos*’) signifies priority ... not necessarily the oldest child (among ancient Jews). First-born referred not to birth order but to rank ... [the one who] possessed the inheritance and leadership.” (GotQuestions.org) Psalm 89:27 applies this: “*I will make Him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*” Revelation 1:5 calls Him “*the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.*” Elsewhere Paul names Jesus “*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Corinthians 15:20) and “*firstborn among many brothers*” (Romans 8:29).

Paul interpreted Psalm 2:7, “*You are my Son; today I have begotten You,*” as alluding to Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 13:32-34), the Lord thereby “*the firstborn of the dead*” (Revelation 1:5). I wouldn’t challenge Paul, but I see Psalm 2:7 synchronizing with Isaiah 9:6-7: “*Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given ...*” Jesus of Nazareth was begotten of Mary by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), commencing His first coming mission. However, our Savior preexisted as the eternal *Word of God* (John 1:1).

It’s OK to wrestle with this—God’s ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9). Search the Scriptures and seek the Spirit’s guidance. Don’t let others’ agenda confound you via proof texts pushing flawed theology. “*Be ready in season and out of season*” (2 Timothy 4:2).

QUESTIONS

What theological issue is at the core of cults’ corrupt doctrine?
How can you reconcile that Jesus was begotten and born of Mary with His deity?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

In response to large student protests against lack of freedom and increased economic hardships, the government has imposed further controls to ensure its longevity and retention of power. On June 30 underground house churches were raided. Upwards of 50 Christian believers were arrested. Pray for continued strong faith during adversity.

WEDNESDAY

Colossians 1:15-18; John 1:1-3, 10; Matthew 17:1-6

Ever pondered that Jesus is the eternal Creator of all created things? The One born to an unwed, impoverished teenaged girl—a penniless laborer and drifter eventually brutally executed, who also spoke the universe into existence! Today’s featured passages declare: “*by Him all things were created*” (Colossians 1:16); “*all things were created through Him and for Him ... and in Him all things hold together*” (1:16-17); “*in everything He [is] preeminent*” (1:18); and “*the world was made through Him*” (John 1:10).

Jesus is the uncaused Cause, the Sustainer and Purpose of creation, “*the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*” (Revelation 22:13). If you were the Creator, having suffered the most excruciating, humiliating execution possible to forgive and redeem the very types murdering you, how would you feel if some then deemed you something less than you are? This is just what the cults do, per this week’s earlier devos.

Even Peter unwittingly diminished Jesus on the Mount of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6), suggesting booth-building for Elijah, Moses and Jesus as if they were peers. The Father Himself rebuked the misguided apostle, thundering from heaven, “*This is My beloved Son ... listen to Him!*” (John 17:5).

Ever heard “tolerant” or “spiritual” people say things like, “Jesus was admirable, a great moral example.” C.S. Lewis dismantled such pa-

tronizing fluff: “[Jesus] told people that their sins were forgiven. ... This makes sense only if He really [is] God ... [nullifying] the really foolish [statement] ... ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but [not] His claim to be God.’ ... A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic ... or else He would be the Devil of Hell. ... [Forget this] nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.”

He is Immanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), not a mere receptacle for God’s glory nor One to be dismissively commended! *“Every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:10-11).

QUESTIONS

What are some of the problems with seeing Jesus as “less than God”? Why is it biblically misguided to settle for Jesus merely as a “great moral teacher”?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

Many of the Christians in Iran who were arrested were sternly warned, then released. Others were held longer, then released on bail of \$20-\$30,000. One Pars student had bail set at \$150,000. His family has submitted cash and property deeds worth \$125,000. A judge will determine if this is sufficient. Pray for the strength and safety of Iranian Christians.

THURSDAY

Colossians 1:20-22; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Romans 5:12-19

We've focused upon Christ's deity this week. "Why the fuss?" one might ask. If Jesus is not God, there are staggering implications. What would it say about the Father if He created a Being to be brutalized as Jesus was? God is not cruel and cowardly—He suffered this personally, not creating another to endure this. Moreover, God alone possesses the infinite capacity and perfect purity to absorb all of humankind's past, present and future sins.

When pre-Christian I wondered, "Why did Jesus have to die—why couldn't God simply forgive us? And, even if He had to die, why so brutally?" The latter's answer remains mysterious. However, it seems none can thereby rightly complain, "No one's ever had it as bad as me!" or "God doesn't care!" given what Jesus endured. So, why did Jesus have to die?

We grossly underestimate sin's destruction and offensiveness to God. Romans 6:23 declares, "... *the wages of sin is death*"—this transcends "God really hates sin." Sin literally kills us, both spiritually and physically. God could have left us spiritually dead and eternally separated from Him... or Another had to pay the price in dying. Pre-Christ this was handled via animal sacrifice. Via God's provision and mercy, however, Jesus was the Sacrifice, "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). The Savior paid the price finally and fully, thus His final declaration from the cross, "*Tetelestai*" (John 19:30)—"*It is finished*" or "Paid in full."

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul calls Jesus “*the last Adam*” (15:45) and “*the second Man*” (15:47). The original Adam (meaning “man”)—our natural ancestor—rebelled against God in Eden and invoked the curse of fallenness upon all creation, alienating us from God and transmitting the sin nature. It took “*the Son of Man*” (Mark 8:31) to undo what a man (Adam) had done previously.

“The ancient Greek word translated *alienated* (Colossians 1:21) ... is literally ‘transferred to another owner’ ... In Jesus, we are *no longer alienated* from God. The difference between a believer and a non-believer isn’t merely forgiveness; there is a complete change of status ... [from] *alienation* [to] *reconciliation*.” (David Guzik)

QUESTIONS

What would it say about the Father if Jesus was a created being? What does “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23) mean and what are its implications? Why must Jesus be “fully God and fully Man” in order to save us?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

The last few months have been a season of stillness, reflection, lament, repentance, discovery, adaptation, change and movement—all at once. A time of holding on and letting go. Pars has sought to go forward with even more momentum with the work that the Lord has set before them. Pray for clear vision.

FRIDAY

Colossians 1:18-24; Revelation 19:6-10; Psalm 8:3-4

Years ago I was watching *The West Wing*. President Jed Bartlet, a faithful Catholic, queried a foreign defector seeking religious asylum in America. Bartlet asked, “Who’s the head of your church?” I leaned forward to catch the response—the asylum-seeker rightly and impressively answered, “Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.” Bartlet emphatically agreed, as would the Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:18).

The Church’s head is not a charismatic pastor, pope, faith-healer or gifted author—we follow Christ, not Paul, Calvin or any mere person. It is biblical to pray for our pastors and leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2). As well, pastors need our sincere encouragement—they face intense spiritual warfare and challenges. But a righteous Christian leader would be the first to tell you, “Don’t worship me; praise God and worship Him!” (Revelation 19:10).

One of the Apostle Paul’s favorite expressions—employed throughout his epistles—is “*in Christ*” (Romans 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:2; etc.) Today’s Colossians passage develops this. Paul calls Jesus “*the Head of the Body, the Church*” (Colossians 1:18), but later reminds us that the Church is “*His Body*” (1:22, 24). These images, like “*in Christ*,” reinforce the intimacy God desires with His own.

“*In Christ*” we are part of His Body—a living and organic, relational entity. Only “*in Christ*” is the life of Christ—and peace in reconciliation with God—available to us. You can seek a legal relationship with God—based

upon “following rules” and religiously striving for “holiness”—but it won’t end well. Jesus already handled the legalities at the crucifixion. Perhaps this is one reason why He appealed with such formality from the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46), just hours after intimately petitioning, “Abba (Daddy), Father” (Mark 14:36). Salvation comes in accepting the legal transaction between Father and Son that is already finished, not in facing God’s impending judgment alone.

Consider this: Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head, seeks such closeness that He considers believers part of His Body as well as His Bride. “In Christ” reinforces that right relationship with God is personal and intimate. Whom do you know who is not yet “in Christ”?

QUESTIONS

What “legal transaction” took place between the Father and Son on Calvary’s cross? What does the expression “in Christ” mean and what are its implications?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

Pars had to cancel six Formation Conferences since March; all its other ministries have continued: Course Development for Bachelor of Theology and Leadership, Online Classes and Tutoring, Mentoring, Counseling, TV Broadcasting, Publications, The Disciple Website, and Accreditation (final step). Give praises for those partnering with Pars. Pray for Pars’ continued growth and success.

Sources:

- Grace Communion International's quote can be found at <https://www.gci.org/articles/the-colossian-heresy/>
- GotQuestions.org's quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-first-born.html>
- C.S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *Mere Christianity*. Publisher Geoffrey Bles (UK), Macmillan Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers (US), 1952.
- David Guzik's quote is from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/colossians-1/>

