

The supremacy of Christ

Pastor Tim Melton

The Supremacy of Christ is an over-arching theme in scripture. The word “Supremacy” in the Oxford Dictionary is defined as “The state or condition of being superior to all others in authority, power, or status.” Put simply, none can compare. Jesus Christ is supreme over all things and all persons in both the earthly and heavenly realms. In reality, He is God and He is like no other. This truth is essential as one seeks to understand the truths of the Bible.

The Bible is a story of how mankind sinned and broke its relationship with God. How when mankind had no hope for restoration, God reconciled mankind to Himself through Jesus Christ. Because of this, the central point of the scripture is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All of the Old Testament points towards Christ, and all of the New Testament points back to Christ. Because of the centrality of Christ in scripture and salvation, the identity and character of Jesus Christ is the goal of Satan’s greatest deceptions. Satan tries to convince us that materialism is of utmost importance. Satan may seek to twist the definition of gender, erase the fact of creation, undo the sanctity of life, but he saves his greatest efforts for the deception that Jesus of Nazareth was not God, was not the Christ, was not resurrected and is not sufficient to save.

We see that priority in even the title “antiChrist.” Not anti-Spirit or even anti-God, but the word antichrist has been used in scripture to recognize many false teachers by their denial of Christ.

1 John 4:1-3 *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”*

1 John 2:22 *“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.”*

2 John 1:7 *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.”*

We must be aware of this strategy and be on guard against any teaching that limits Jesus Christ to only a man, an angel, a created one, just a good teacher, or anything less than God in the flesh. When seeking to discern a religious group's relationship to the teachings of scripture it is a good practice to first evaluate what they believe about Jesus Christ. One must remember that the truths of Christ are what Satan most desires to conceal, taint, or twist.

For example, Muslims teach that Jesus was a man, a prophet, a wise teacher, a miracle worker and a messenger of Allah, but he was not God. In Judaism they teach that Jesus was a real man, Mary's son, a rabbi and a popular teacher, but not the Messiah, not resurrected and definitely not God. The Baha'i faith claims that all religious history has been revealed through a series of messengers sent by God. They see Jesus as one of these messengers of God. For those in the Baha'i faith Jesus is placed alongside Abraham, Muhammed, the Buddha and Krishna. In Buddhism it is taught that Jesus was an enlightened man, a wise teacher and a holy man, but nothing more than a man. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was created by God and is Michael the Archangel.

Mormons believe that Jesus is the brother of Satan, and that these two are sons of God and are spirit brothers. They believe that Jesus was created, and they believe that like all humans they were spirit before being born into the flesh. Mormons believe that Jesus and Satan were given free will to choose to be evil or good, and that the earthly life was a testing ground to see if they would qualify to be God or not.

Even a religion that seeks to resemble and even call themselves Christian must first be considered at this point. A religion's view of Christ is key to discerning if it is truly Biblical Christianity or not.

The apostles knew the supremacy of Christ firsthand. They had seen Him turn the water to wine. Heal the sick. Give sight to the blind. Forgive sin. Calm the storms. Rebuke the religious leaders. Walk on the water. Teach with authority. Raise the dead to life again, and yet never sin. But even with their firsthand knowledge of Christ, it was at times difficult for the early New Testament authors as they sought to share this supremacy of Jesus Christ with people from diverse cultures.

In the beginning of the book of John the author is faced with a difficult situation. The story of Jesus was wrapped in the history of the Jews. This included Abraham, the laws of Israel, the prophets, a promised Messiah and the sacrificial system. The book of John was written late in the first century. By this time most of the Christians were of Greek descent, not Jewish. They didn't understand the Jewish history and religion. John desired to share the gospel with the Greeks, and to do that he would need to change the presentation of the Gospel without changing the Gospel. At the same time, he wanted his writings to benefit the Jews as well.

God led John to use the idea of the “Word” of God. The Jews were familiar with this term. God had “spoken” the world into being. The commands or Word of God had been given to the prophets and to the Jewish people. The “Word of God” had burned within Jeremiah to the point he could not keep it to

himself. The phrase “Word of God” had even been used interchangeably with “God” in the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament during the first century.

The Greeks also had an understanding of the “Word of God”. It was the mind of God. It was the force and presence that was in everything. It controlled the tides, the seasons, the heavens, and kept everything working as it should. The “Word of God” was also responsible for man’s sense of right and wrong.

When John began teaching about “the Word”, both Jews and Greeks would have been nodding their heads in agreement and leaning forward to hear what he was saying. It is in John 1:14 that they would have been shocked. John wrote, ***“The Word became flesh.”*** The mind of God, the power of God, this presence of God known as the Word did not just exist, but He had come to earth, and John and many others had seen Him. Wow! God had come to be among us. The Word in flesh did not just pass by or watch us from a distance. The Word came to dwell with us, among us, and ultimately in us. This is the essence of the incarnation of Christ.

The apostle John was proclaiming to both Jews and Greeks a Supreme, Divine Savior and Messiah. We see this idea of the supremacy of Christ continued in these next two passages of scripture.

In Hebrews 1 it says this:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs . . . ⁸ But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom . . .’ ¹⁰ And, ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands . . .’”

One of the main themes of the book of Hebrews is explaining the work of Jesus Christ in regards to Old Testament thought and practice. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament traditions, types and shadows. This means that Jesus’ life, teachings and works were not just an application of Old Testament truth, but He was the climax and fulfillment for which everything the Old Testament was preparing. Jesus Christ was supreme over the Old Testament traditions and rules because He was their fulfillment. For example, we are told that ***“because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them”*** (Hebrews 7:24–25).

The author of Hebrews declares Jesus as the heir of all things whom created the world. Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s nature. Jesus upholds the universe by the word of His power. In verse 8 Jesus is addressed as God and that He even laid the foundations of the world. Jesus Christ is supreme over all things. As Jesus responded when asked by his disciples to show them the Father, ***“If you have seen Me you have seen the Father”*** (John 14:9). Surely Jesus is God.

In Colossians 1:15-20 the Apostle Paul writes:

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Paul starts out these verses with a similar idea as John 1. Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God”. The *Word* has become flesh. Paul then goes on to say that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. This does not mean that Jesus was created or born first. The word for “firstborn” was the Greek word *prototokos*. It had two meanings. One meant that it was first in regards to time, like a firstborn child. The other meaning was that of preeminent, unsurpassed, or higher in importance, as we see the word describing King David in Psalm 89:27: “*I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.*” King David was the last born in his family, not the firstborn. He was not even the first King of Israel, but amongst the kings of the earth God will appoint him “My firstborn”.

The only way one can know which meaning is intended is by looking at the immediate context and also its context within the “full counsel of scripture.” In Colossians 1:15 the phrase “*firstborn of all creation*” is immediately followed by, “*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*” This tells us that Jesus’ being “firstborn” was meant to communicate preeminence and higher in authority and importance, not literally born or created first as some, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses have chosen to believe. Scripture teaches that He was not created. He was the Creator.

Christ is the head of the church, God’s children. Christ is even the “*firstborn of the dead*”. He is the first who was resurrected, never to die again, and has now conquered even death. “*So that in everything he might be preeminent.*” Jesus Christ is Lord over the heavens and the earth, over the church, over death and over everything.

Finally we arrive at verse 19. “*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.*” In Colossians 2:9 Paul again states this truth with these words, “*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*” Essentially, Jesus is God.

Because Jesus is God, He was able to reconcile to Himself all things by making peace by the blood of his cross.

Because our sin was against an infinite God, our sin against Him is an infinite offense. For this infinite offense to be made right, the payment or sacrifice had to be infinite. It is not possible that we trust our salvation to another created being who is bound by time and space. As said in Hebrews 10:4, “*It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*” Because of our infinite offense it is also impossible for us to be good enough to earn God’s favor, to pay for our own sin and to save ourselves.

To not believe in the supremacy and divinity of Christ leaves us hopelessly lost. *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

In John 14:6 Jesus declares, *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Only Jesus Christ is sufficient to reconcile us to God. We are not here to prove that we have a monopoly on God and that all others are wrong. We are not here to be religious bigots or religious elites. We are only here as forgiven sinners who are crying out to a lost and dying world to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, for it is written, *“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is the “Alpha and Omega”, The Author and Perfecter of Our faith, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, our Great High Priest, Immanuel “God With Us, King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lamb of God, the Light of the World, the Lord of All, the Messiah, Our Rock, Our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.”

That is why we are commanded to have no other gods before Him. God is just protecting us from ourselves and driving us towards the only One who is truly worthy of our allegiance and our worship. Christ is more precious than football, than power over others, than people’s approval, than pleasure, than the newest technology, than your career plans, than money, than great vacations, than an easy retirement on the beach, than your search for a mate, than having 1,000 friends on Facebook, or anything else that our hearts can desire.

May we each meditate on Philippians 2:5-11 and let God minister to us in regards to the Supremacy of Christ and its implications in our lives.

“⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”