The Vastness of Christ (and His Supremacy and Sufficiency)
By Jay Wegter

If we don’t exalt Christ as unifier and goal of all reality, we sentence ourselves to a fragmented worldview wherein we are obsessed with particulars (which leave our lives fragmented by an inordinate concern with temporal things). Our great need as believers is to have our thoughts, affections, and lives aligned with God’s great purpose that Christ should have first place in everything. We must by Scripture meditation and proclamation regularly ‘part the heavens’ to behold Him who is the Lord of glory. We must feed our faith on Christ’s preeminence and supremacy if we are to keep this focus. For the world today appears to be spiraling out of control with evil, filth, oppression and cruel lies. Thus it takes a vigorous faith to ‘see’ Jesus enthroned above all authority and power—to see Christ as Logos, Cosmic King of the universe, ruling now from glory.

The church, assaulted by the world’s philosophies of materialism and postmodernism (which hammer away at every transcendent reference point), is starving (hungering) for views of her heavenly King and husband.

DUALISM: today’s students are taught philosophic naturalism (namely the idea that scientific objectivity begins with the assumption that matter is ultimate). And with this materialistic view of the universe comes the assumption of mechanistic determinism: that primeval matter sat there pulsating, filled with self determination to show what it could do and be if given a chance. For, they are taught (as science) that matter wanted to become highly organized star systems, it wanted to express itself in the formation of whales; coral reefs; water falls; wildflowers; mangoes; and people.

For the better part of a century, secularism has been shameless—making modern science (Darwinism, which is a religious philosophy) its apprentice. Biblical worldview is so needed because we live in an age in which culture denies God’s work in creation and providence. The secularists have said in effect: “We will tell you what reality is—what the universe is—you Christians will yield the floor to us—because science is the only reliable way to explain the universe. You keep your beliefs to yourselves (private, inward) out of the public arena; out of government and education. Sadly, for the most part, the church has knuckled under (allowing itself to be intimidated by the academy).

The secularists have promoted a worldview which says that the universe is CLOSED. That means they regard the universe to be self-originating; self-contained; self-sustaining; and self-interpreting (no God needed). We read our Bibles and discover that the exact opposite is true: the universe is not closed; but OPEN: because God is at work in it. The transcendent God of the universe is its: Creator; Upholder; Owner; Ruler; Definer; and Interpreter.

Says Christian sociologist, Ken Myers, church leaders, in an effort to remain relevant, and worried about losing their market share, began to reframe traditional Christian teaching in terms that fit the times. The church pushed its message through the grid of science. In essence, “[t]he belief became common that only science could make the world intelligible. . .”1 (Ken Myers, Contextualization).

What was the net effect, in the minds of most, of replacing biblical cosmology with philosophic naturalism (the worldview of Carl Sagan)? In the minds of most, God as personal, transcendent, involved with creation was eclipsed and demoted.2 God’s direct involvement in the lives of His creatures was increasingly ruled out. God was no longer linked to all the details of reality. God had been marginalized—retired to a private or sub-cultural role (God had been eradicated as a shared basis of thought and experience). The bulk of modern thought simply dispensed with God. In contemporary culture God has been marginalized as a figure doing nothing of real significance.
Though evangelicals stressed personal faith and piety, evangelicals also began to divide (bifurcate) God’s role—they saw Him as active in redemption; but allowed science to define the creation. And we all accept this as benign as long as we have Jesus in our hearts. But the fallout is deadly serious.

When one allows the Bible to describe salvation and science to comprehensively describe the creation; it produces a tear, or rend, in our thinking. The reason why is the salvation-science dichotomy pictures God as having two radically different faces—the side of God that dealt with creation was far less personal than the side of God that dealt with salvation. As a consequence, the Jesus of salvation became very other worldly and sentimental.

“Believing students on university campuses are able offer Jesus as ‘friend’ but have no clue how to proclaim Him as Lord of the cosmos.” This prevalent dualism welcomes Jesus as ‘mascot’ but cannot conceive of Him, or proclaim Him, as majestic Lord of the universe. This is the dilemma our Christian students face today on the secular university campus. The loss of biblical cosmology forces them to live with an immense ‘disconnect’ between faith and life.

Modern culture has encouraged and deepened this dualism. The yawning chasm which has divided creation from redemption has separated the physical from the spiritual in the minds of many believers. Through popular culture our youth are bombarded with this dualism. The wonder of creation as the revelation of God’s majesty has been erased, and with it God’s rule and reign. Reality is nothing more than what you make it—the creation is raw material by which we construct the self.

The electronic media is dead set on having us forget our Christian worldview. Nearly every television program operates with an agenda of displacing Christian worldview. The net effect is a palpable separation of our everyday life from our spiritual life. Spiritual truths are regarded as only abstract expressions of our inner life. They are divorced from the objective reality of everyday life.

A divided view of reality produces a gash or a tear between redemption and creation. A neo-Gnostic metaphysic views spirit and matter as antithetical. The effect upon Christianity is to produce a divided reality in which a fact-value split places the claims of Christianity in an upper story of subjectivism (divorced from objective reality).

Postmodern popular culture is relentless in its attempt to erode every transcendent reference point. In so doing postmodernity leaves nothing but the self as the only reliable, trustworthy, quantifiable locus (everything else is pushed through the grid of self). Our rising generation sees reality as whatever you make it. The creation is but raw material—one may shape it according to one’s will to meet the perceived needs of self. Thus, with the transcendent pushed squarely into the upper story of subjectivism, a divided reality stands ready to take its toll—absolute truth becomes unattainable, and thus divorced from everyday life. Spirituality degrades into crass pragmatism—as whatever appears to meet the inner yearning to connect with the divine. Having drunk deeply from the well of postmodernity, Christendom finds itself afflicted with myopia, a radical loss of the knowledge of the vastness of Christ. He alone can heal a divided view of reality.

How does this dualism manifest itself in evangelicalism? Redemption tends to be viewed as a private, subjective, personal, preference without an objective basis. Salvation exists in the mind and the heart—as if concrete reality is the physical universe and salvation belongs to the private and the subjective (salvation is less real than the physical elements of the universe). Evangelicalism’s accommodation to the modern, or dualistic view, has pushed redemption further into the ‘upper story.’ Christians are living in a state of détente with the open ‘gash’ of dualism. Consequently the majority of professing Christians have lost the cosmological foundation for redemption. The resultant attitude in much of evangelicalism could be stated as follows: “Facts in the created realm shouldn’t get in the way of bringing people to Jesus.”
Christian students often live with an immense ‘disconnect’ between their professed beliefs and their life experiences. “At one Christian high school, a theology teacher . . . drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other. The two are as divided as the two sides of the blackboard, he told the class: the heart is what we use for religion, while the brain is what we use for science.”

This dualism leaves knowledge utterly fragmented—spirituality is partitioned off from the remainder of life. The secular/sacred dichotomy tends to restrict Christianity to the realm of religious truth—this creates double minds and fragmented lives.

(Example from Pastor Jim Newheiser: “It took two weeks of counseling before one young man was able to see that pornography was a worldview totally hostile to the knowledge of God: a huge disconnect exists between their ethical life and their professed belief—truth and everyday life are ripped apart.” The ‘gash’ is deepened through the message of popular culture. This is a deadly symptom of a worldview that separates the physical creation from redemption. ) (A divided Christ is Friend, not Creator, Ruler, Lawgiver and Judge.)

The Word of God overturns the two level view of truth. There is no dualism between creation and redemption in the Scriptures. Christians for the most part have allowed themselves to be intimidated by the agenda of the secularists—as if Christian truth is an inward matter severed from objective fact. We will not be able to prepare the next generation to define the faith and defend the faith if they have no response to the secularist argument that the creation is nothing more than matter and motion, and natural laws and processes.

Pressure is put on Christians to view Christ as a religious category and not as the source and upholder of the rationality and order of the universe. (A fragmented worldview produces fragmented lives.) We have an immense job at The Master’s College trying to undo the prevailing errors of popular culture—we’re always trying to rejoin truth and life in the minds of our students (we have conferences by that name).

The world’s philosophies of secularism are relentless in their efforts to drive a wedge between truth and life. As believers we know that truth and life are forever joined in the Person of Christ. We need to thunder again from our pulpits what has been in the Word all along—namely that Christ unifies all reality. Only when we grasp His preeminence and the Father’s determination to give Him first place in everything will we find the cure for our fragmented lives. Feeding minds and hearts on His majesty is key to living under His eye, for His approval, and with a view to His coming Kingdom.

When we operate out of life compartments that are not subjected to the lordship of Christ; we find ourselves driven; fearful; anxious; prone to covetousness and jealousy. We are tempted to lash out at our circumstances; but how many believers would place the diagnosis (the problem) upon the fact that they are living with an anemic view of the majesty of God in Christ? Not very many would place the diagnosis of their problem there.

THE NEW SPIRITUALITY: “The Vastness of Christ” overturns the new spirituality. By referring to Christ as ‘vast’ we mean His preeminence, supremacy, and majesty. As the object of our faith, Christ is not merely a magnificent category; He is the Upholder of all reality. He is the ‘continent of rock’ that supports and sustains the life of the believer. Every true believer is complete in Him. All reality: temporal and eternal, visible and invisible is unified in Him (Heb 1:1-4).

The present religious and philosophical landscape in our culture makes the Western world ripe for a spiritual holocaust. The religious/philosophical “soil” of our culture is perfectly prepared for the germination of an explosive growth of apostasy. But why you ask? It is because, among a host of factors, there are three pervasive elements that have been shaping metaphysics:
1.) A divided view of reality (a dualism that severs creation from redemption)
2.) A deluded spirituality (a movement toward Eros spirituality away from Agape)
3.) A domesticated Jesus (a denial of the cosmic lordship of Christ)

In this religious/philosophic climate faith is dislocated from its object (God’s self-revelation in Christ in the Holy Scriptures). Faith is redefined and distorted to fit the Gnostic concept of faith. In the second and third century A.D. Gnostic “faith” was but an avenue, or pathway, to gnosis—and gnosis is where discovery, blessing and initiation take place.

Thus in our present postmodern culture, faith and spirituality are rapidly being redefined along the lines of ancient Gnosticism. The word “Jesus” is being torn from the infallible Word of God and being redefined as a religious buzz word to describe one’s spiritual journey. (Francis Schaeffer was wont to say, “The word I am most afraid to hear today is ‘Jesus.’”) Schaeffer saw the beginnings of this downgrade, and now we are witnessing the phenomenon of a ‘Christianized’ spiritual journey (‘baptized’ in Christian terminology) yet terminating upon the self, not upon the Lord of Glory.

**The new spirituality is a disjunctive spirituality that operates by inversion.** Eros spirituality is man climbing the mountain to find the divine his way. But, since Eros spirituality is self-occupied—filled with narcissistic self desire; it is blind to its own self-deception. Eros spirituality promises connection with the divine—but what the pilgrim finds, upon ascending the summit, is the devil at the top and not the divine (2 Cor 11:14). Why? Because Eros spirituality is concerned with desire—it is blind to man’s sin and God’s holiness; therefore it is not concerned with the true knowledge of God.

Only agape brings knowledge of God to man. Only the Word of God reveals something which is invisible to man’s base spiritual instincts: namely that there is an impenetrable insurmountable barrier that separates man from God. Man’s ignorance, spiritual deadness, sin and rebellion form a barrier that can only be penetrated from God’s side—by His agape love in Christ.

Apart from the Word and the Spirit, mankind is bound to do the best he knows how—he has an incurable inclination to ‘will worship’ that is to move toward pagan spirituality which flows from desire (Eros). His self-generated spirituality flatters him by telling him that he may successfully connect with the divine by means of his own style of religious exertion. Eros spirituality is accompanied by an optimism which assumes that there is no barrier to the divine that so formidable that man cannot pass through it to God. No one ever comes to terms with this sin barrier but by submission to God’s testimony in Scripture. To “see” the sin barrier as it really is; as an impassable wall of granite, is to see one’s need for Christ.

In deconstructing Gnostic assumptions, Paul proclaims Christ as the:

- Fullness of Deity in bodily form
- Head over all rule and authority
- Conqueror of malevolent spirits
- Repository of all divine wisdom and knowledge
- Epistemic Lord of all
- Completeness of every believer
- Locus of all of God’s purposes
- Reconciler of mankind and creation

*Therefore it is irrational to attempt through any form of spiritual practice to experience God; join oneself to the divine; know God; come to God; or please God—except through Christ.*

According to Colossians 1-2, the only all-sufficient bridge between self-existent holy God and the finite polluted creature is Christ.
Christ is the “bridge” whom God has given to span the infinite gulf to helpless man. Christ alone penetrates the sin barrier. Paul’s ‘Christ hymn’ of Colossians one is death to the “isms” for every “ism” is tantamount to a human attempt to bridge the barrier between God and man. Gnosticism, mysticism, asceticism, experimentalism, paganism, legalism, antinomianism all die in the presence of Christ, Lord of the cosmos and redeemer of the helpless sinner. God’s *agape* bridge to man reaches all the way down to the spiritually dead sinner (Col 2). Man’s imagined spiritual sovereignty (*Eros*) is slain by the Gospel of sovereign *agape* grace in Christ.

**A DOMESTICATED JESUS:** or, a divided Christ. Today’s domesticated Jesus of progressive Christianity is not preeminent, but helpful. He is not cosmic Lord, but inspirational friend. He is not majestic Lord, but mascot. Thus, He is not a source of reverence and awe. The net effect is a divided Christ whose offices are separated (He is Priest but not King; Protector but not authoritative Prophet—the result is a divided Christ and a divided reality. Only when Christ is exalted in His preeminence; cosmic Lordship; majesty; and supremacy will we recover exoteric spirituality. True spirituality does not come from within man (esoteric). Biblical spirituality has but one source—a sovereign act of God Almighty which unites the helpless sinner to Christ.

As believers who serve Christ and who want to answer the call to be salt and light in a darkened and perishing world, we must apply ourselves to the truth of Christ’s vastness. We must understand how Christ, in His own Person, answers pantheistic spirituality. As we proclaim the vastness of His Person and the complete sufficiency of His work, all pseudo spiritualities are exposed as enemies and as impostors which advocate the esoteric, but have only self, the earth and Satan as gods.

**COLOSSIAN ERROR:** when Christ’s supremacy is preached; it beats down man-made religion into the rubbish heaps where it belongs. But the moment Christ’s centrality and supremacy are out of view; the human heart goes about trying to supply beams for a bridge to God. If sinful man lays even one plank in the bridge to God; it will not bear your weight. As creatures made in God’s image—only Christ the perfect image of God can conduct you safely into the presence of Him who is thrice holy.

*Your task as pastors is to proclaim Christ in His centrality and preeminence—for only then will ruined sinners trust Him as all-sufficient to save. And only then do sinners understand that salvation has been taken out of man’s hands and into God’s own hands.* Paul has written Colossians to combat the errors that are troubling the churches of the Lycus valley in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). The false teachers had introduced doctrines and practices that proved to be an indirect attack upon the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ. (The Colossians were attracted to the Greco-Roman dualism taught by the philosophers of the day. Dualism taught that spirit was good and matter was evil, therefore they reasoned that God must have utilized a host of intermediaries (angels) to do His bidding (including creation) so that God would not be “contaminated” by coming in contact with corrupt physical matter. Mixed with the error of dualism was a legalistic, perhaps Essene version of Judaism that thought highly of asceticism (severe treatment of the body in order to promote spirituality). Both dualism and legalistic Judaism had an almost worshipful admiration for angelic beings or intermediaries.)

The Colossians were in desperate need of instruction regarding the Person and work of Christ. Human “wisdom” was corrupting their understanding of Christ and the Gospel. So also in first century in the region of Colossae, incipient Gnosticism was harassing the churches seeking for a stranglehold. Paul exposed the false premises of his opponents: *Christ completely fills the entire gap between holy God and sinful man! He is all and all. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. The believer is complete in Him!* Everything in relation to God needed by the believer is to be found in Christ. In Christ the believer finds acceptance, favor, sonship, status, right standing, power, purpose, destiny, bold access, wisdom and knowledge. Our entire life is upheld and provided by Christ – none of our spiritual needs are provided by us. This is *death to the “isms!”*
**We study Christ’s supremacy to learn more of His sufficiency.** He is Creator and Redeemer. Christ the Agent of creation, the Origin and source of creation, the Upholder of creation, the Goal of creation. He is the Head of the new creation. He has first place in everything; He is cosmic King. He is supreme and preeminent over all creation. He is the consummation of all things—every knee will bow to Him acknowledging His rightful sovereign rule over all. Christ has unshared authority in every sphere. “Every act and suffering of that glorious Person confronts the case of every sinner. If I see Him who is the atonement to be God-man, then I see an offering so vast, and so extensive in its applications, that every crevice of the conscience must be reached” (A. A. Bonar, The Person of Christ).

**The perfect sufficiency of Christ (2:8-10) -- V.8** -- Paul exhorts the Colossians to stay anchored in the bedrock of Christ—for His is a ‘continent’ of rock; our stronghold and fortress. Stay firmly anchored in Him because false teachers are seeking to carry off many ‘captives.’ You must understand that the conventional religious wisdom of this world wants to make a captive out of you. But this spurious wisdom is exposed by the Word of Christ, the Word of God, the Word of the Cross. The supremacy of Christ exposes false doctrine—because false doctrine inevitably proves to be an attempt to partially or completely bridge the gap between God and man.

**V. 14 – The uniqueness of Christ’s all-sufficiency was a central issue for Paul. Any theological error that undermines the all-sufficiency of Christ instantly jeopardizes redemption in Him. To lessen Christ and His power is to lessen His role in salvation.**

**COLOSSIANS EXEGESIS: in the book of Colossians, the Apostle Paul drives a stake through the heart of incipient Gnosticism by declaring Christ to be the image of God—Creator of all physical and immaterial existence.** The invisible God of the universe has taken the form of a man (a scandalous thought to the Platonists). Not only has Christ created all things; but all things are created for Him. Then, if any doubt remains that all reality is unified in Christ, Paul thunders that Christ not only redeems individual sinners, but He also redeems the cosmos itself. In Christ, the Lord of the cosmos, the concept of a divided reality dies—creation and redemption are united in one reality.

**CHRIST AND CREATION -- V. 15** – Christ is the eikon of God – meaning not only likeness; but includes the ideas of representation and manifestation. This echoes Christ’s words in John 14:9, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” See also Hebrews 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; and Phil 2:6. As the “image of God” Christ is the great and final theophany, or literal manifestation of God. He is the projection of God onto the canvas of our humanity and the embodiment of the divine in the world of men. “First-born” suggests supremacy, not temporality. Israel was designated as God’s firstborn (Ex 4:22) – even though many nations existed prior to Israel. She was chosen to be supreme over the nations – “I will make him My first-born the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps 89:27). Christ as First born is is the Heir and Ruler over all. (See also Heb 1:6 – Christ as the protokos.)

**V. 16** – This verse unfolds the meaning of Christ in creation. All things created in Him means that creation not only finds its origin in Christ; but it is centered in Christ. Christ is the embodiment of reality (whether of creation; or the redemption of mankind). Christ was the location from whom all came into being and in whom all creation is contained. (This idea is also suggested in verse 18, “He is the beginning.”) (See worldview notes on Christ as the LOGOS – the rationality of the universe.)

**All laws and purposes which guide creation and govern the universe (to the furthest galaxy) reside in Him. Christ’s creative work is all-encompassing, for it includes all created things “in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.” He is not in all things (pantheism), but all things are in Him. His majesty and might and transcendence uphold the universe, all things find their source, sustenance, purpose, destiny, and order in Him. All things are created for Him—they abide forever to**
that end. Christ is preeminent above all creation; above every creature. Christ is the point of reference of all things and all creatures. The Son is the goal of the existence of all things. The region they occupy makes no difference—it is still true! Whether in heaven or on earth, even angels have no power apart from Christ. Paul boldly affirmed that everything—physical and spiritual (visible and invisible) is part of the creation that is in Christ—contained in Him and by Him. (Thus nothing in creation is worthy of worship—Christ having created angels, makes angel worship heretical—2:18.)

The vastness of Christ—in order to be in awe of Christ’s vastness and immensity; His majesty and supremacy, you must know these treasures Paul is expounding—you must know Christ’s relation to all creation. “In the beginning was logic and rationality—and all things came into being by Him. He who is the Word knew all things and then by His Word spoke them into existence. And the Logic and Rationality of the universe (God very God) became a man.” The majesty of Jesus exposes the pathetic smallness of pagan spirituality. For the very spirits created by Christ owe the very ground of their being to Christ, the Father’s Agent of created reality.

The supremacy of Christ in both arenas of reality (heavenly/invisible and earthly/visible—stands in direct contrast to every false teaching (all glory belongs to Christ alone). The phrase all things created for Him means every aspect of creation exists for Him. Everything has its being for His sake. He shall realize every purpose of His heart—He is the Ruler of creation and the goal of creation.

All creation is unstoppably moving toward this goal. Someday the world will fully recognize the preeminence and sovereignty of Christ (1 Cor 15:25; Phil 2:10-11; Rev 19:16). And the very public revelation of His preeminence in judgment and restoration will in itself consummate the ages—everything will be summed up in Him (every created thing, every virtue and every transgression) will be evaluated by means of the relation it bears to Christ (Eph 1:10).

Every knee will bow to Christ. He will pronounce the eternal destiny of every rational creature. Every enemy will be judged and made a footstool (1 Cor 15:23-28). Christ is Logos, Lawgiver, Lamb, and Lion—all of God’s purposes are in Him.

V. 17 – He is before all things; there never was a time when He did not exist. All things are held together in Him. All is unified by Him. All coheres by Him; stands together by Him, stand in relation to Him. All things are defined in relation to Him. The Creator of all things maintains all things—the unity in nature, the order of all things, and the flow of history—is all traced to Christ—Creator, Sustainer, Upholder. Paul ‘unpacks the significance of the vastness of Christ.

The reason the world is a cosmos and not a chaos is because of Him. This world is a system with a plan because of Him. From the smallest living cell to the blue whale the monarch butterfly—each creature occupies its appointed ecological niche due to God’s guiding hand in Christ. Christ is the cause of creation and He upholds creation—being the very bond that holds creation together (His power is exerted in doing so—Heb 1:3). What an encouragement for Christians since, “He is not their Cause only, in an initial sense, He forever their Bond, their Order, their Law, the ultimate secret which makes the whole universe, seen and unseen, a cosmos, not a chaos.”

CHRIST IN REDEMPTION -- V. 18 – Christ is first in all things material and spiritual. All religious philosophies that depart from the Gospel are ultimately hostile to Christ preeminent. How we need to constantly consider the dignity of the Person who took our iniquities and infirmities upon Himself. Christ is Firstborn, Point of reference, Agent of creation, Goal of creation, Forerunner, Governor, Head of the Body, the Beginning of the creation of God, Firstborn from the dead, first in the realm of the visible and the invisible—He had the right to the title preeminent. His divine sovereignty is over all things. (Firstborn meaning that He is heir of all—that He has the right to rule the family—and to possess and own all that exists—for He made it.)
He is the “beginning” the origin of creation; and also by His death on the cross He established a new beginning – the beginning of redemption for mankind. His death and resurrection signaled the dawning of an age in which individuals would enjoy a closer more personal relationship to Him than ever before. As first-born from the dead, He possesses authority and dominion over yet another aspect of this world. As the “first-born over all creation” (v. 15), He is supreme over the created world, and as “first-born from the dead,” He is supreme over death. Having conquered death by His resurrection, He now holds “the keys of death” (Rev 1:18).

Paul pointed out the purpose of all of this—that “Christ would have first place in everything” (v. 18). In the church, in creation, in salvation, and even in death, Christ holds the title and privileges of the Firstborn. He is preeminent over all.

V. 19 – “For” – God the Father’s design is that He should reveal himself in Christ. And that He would reveal Himself in Christ by executing all of His purposes by Him. In Christ is the fullness of saving grace and power reside (the totality of divine attributes and might. This is by divine design—every aspect of Christ’s suitability to be our perfect Savior has been thought through by the Godhead. Through Him and for Him—He is the end or goal of the creation—all the universe and all the angels exist for Jesus Christ. God’s purpose is that Christ have first place in all things: first place in creation (as maker, owner, upholder, goal of the universe), first place in the realm of spirits for by Him and for Him they exist, first place in the realm of the redeemed for He is the firstborn from the dead—the first human to be raised from the dead to eternal glory. All the fullness of salvation dwells in Christ. “For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” The Father was pleased to have all redemptive power dwell in Christ who is the Agent for and goal for reconciliation (v. 20).

V. 20 – To reconcile (apokatallacia) – means to exchange hostility for friendship. The prefix conveys the idea of complete reconciliation. God’s reconciling of man to Himself is necessary because of the enmity of sinners toward God in their natural mind (Rom 5:8-11; 8:5-7). Man’s corruption is an effrontery to God; the fact and existence of corruption requires reconciliation before relations can be restored. In what sense does Christ reconcile all things to Himself? (All things reconciled by His blood cannot mean universal salvation.) The reconciliation in this verse points to the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the millennium when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil 2:10; Rom 14:11).

“Having made peace.” The participle is inserted to indicate the reconciliation is not a cosmic miracle in which the universe is changed outside of man. BUT that reconciliation is primarily concerned with relationships that are restored. Peace here is not primarily defined in the negative—that is by erasing or canceling out hostilities—but reconciliation points to positive content with positive blessings—spiritual blessings impacting the prosperity of the whole man.

At present, heaven and earth are not now united. Kingdoms are in conflict; sin brought the universe into a state of corruption; decay; deterioration. Sin destroyed harmony (see Romans 8; the ‘groaning’ creation, and also the four separations caused by sin). It is staggering to our intellects that God should reconcile the cosmos through the murder of the Son of man on a wooden cross (beams of wood from the cedar tree He Himself had created). Through the blood of His cross the sin principle is conquered—the curse is borne; the law satisfied; peace is made and restored. (The God-man who dies is maker, upholder, owner, ruler, and goal of the universe. This rocks us as well as ravishes us. Oh the immensity, the vastness, the dignity and majesty of the One who took our place.) Through Christ and His cross the universe is brought back to its proper relation to God. Jesus is first, and Founder, of a new humanity. By His God-ordained supremacy He rules. He is Lord not only of creation but Lord of a new creation. As a just reward for His obedience; Christ is exalted to God’s right hand—from this position of exaltation, glory, and power—He rules the universe.
What He accomplished at the cross, He will consummate at the second advent when He formally and militantly takes back the title deed to the earth. Through Christ; all intelligent beings—both obedient and disobedient, and both human and angelic will acknowledge the sovereignty of God manifest in the Lordship of Christ who is over all. The vastness of Christ’s Person is seen in His cosmic Kingship. Thus His cross affects not only mankind; but the entire cosmos. Also a distinction needs to be made between reconciliation and salvation. The scope of Christ’s redemptive work is cosmic. It reaches to the physical creation and to the innumerable hosts of fallen angels. Christ has gained their ultimate surrender. He has disarmed and conquered them by His cross—He has de-fanged the demons (Col 2:15).

Reconciliation removes the barrier between God and man and opens the potential for a new type of relationship between the two. But the barrier removed does not mean that reconciliation has been appropriated. The act of reconciliation in Christ’s death does not itself immediately effect reconciliation for the individual—people by nature do not desire to take advantage of this situation of their own accord. This does not detract from the reconciling work of the Father—for it had to take place for salvation to be in accord with God’s nature.

All the redeemed and unredeemed will acknowledge His sovereignty, AND in that sense there will be reconciliation. But this does NOT mean the unredeemed will be given salvation. Christ’s vicarious death on the cross paid the price necessary to make possible this peace.) God, in reconciling all things, has given Christ the power administration, to make every enemy His “footstool”—to subject all things to Himself (1 Cor 15:24-28). When Christ is inaugurated as the cosmic Potentate at the beginning of the eternal state, the earth will have its day of reckoning and redemption, and will be transformed (2 Pet 3:10; Rev 21:1). This is all traceable to Christ’s conquering work of redemption.

Present spiritual warfare in this life takes place between the believer and satanic powers (Eph 6:10-18). But Christ at the right hand of the Father possesses authority over the angelic realm, though at the present time that realm has not come under final judgment. In spite of their present limited power; the angelic realm will be subject to God’s work of reconciliation. Christ will be exalted and every knee will bow (Phil 2:10). Paul highlights all the aspects of the believer’s former alienation in the bulk of Eph 2.

Now the believer’s present condition as reconciled (Col 1:22) emphasizes life; and blamelessness free of reproach. The purpose of the reconciliation is to present each believer before Him holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. The intended goal of reconciliation is reached BECAUSE Christ’s incarnation allowed Him to die a real death in our place. Without committing sin, the Lord of Glory had to identify with His bride while she lay in her sinful condition.

In order to raise His spiritually dead bride to glory, the Lord of glory was born of a woman; born under the law. He was made flesh. He obeyed to the point of being a servant, a slave to God. And His obedience took Him to that lonely cruel hills where crucifixions were carried out; that unclean place outside the city walls. He was obedient unto death—expiring on the most shameful instrument and implement of all—the bloody cross. He bore the curse of sin under which His precious bride had perished. Think of it. The Lord of glory had to become a human corpse in a stone tomb in order to resurrect His dead bride, the church. And in order to raise her spotless and blameless and bring her to eternal bliss and glory.

The prepositions Paul uses to support our being in Christ. By identification, believers are positionally holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. And they are to manifest these qualities in the Christian walk. Never do divinity and humanity come closer than in the Person of Christ—the theanthropic Person—the God-man. In order to reconcile God to man, he is both God and man—the
perfect Mediator. Two natures in one Person speak of the coming goal of all history—namely that in Christ there should be a new humanity that will be as close to God as a creature could possibly be; as much like God as a creature could possibly be—in order to please God perfectly, enjoy God absolutely, worship God perfectly.

We marvel that God’s eternal plan should be to bring a portion of humanity into His eternal dwelling forever. The new humanity fitted by Christ for our heavenly existence by conforming us to His image and likeness. The Redeemer repairs the ruin we inherited in Adam. He restores us to the perfect image of God. He recalibrates polluted rebels back to a restored image of God. He realizes the dream or mystery of God—namely that God should make an eternal temple for His Spirit out of people instead of stones. And that God should choose a bride for His Son so that Christ would be the firstborn of many brethren and His bride should be flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone.

To the degree that these realities thrill our souls we will make God’s purposes our purposes. All of these purposes are being accomplished through the Son of God. We are to fix our eyes on Him; beholding, following Him—running the race set before us with endurance with our eyes on the prize.

The “Christ hymn” of 1:15-20 is a powerful statement about the Person of Christ and His work. Christ’s supremacy is seen at every turn. The first portion focuses on His preeminent role in creation, while the second emphasizes His work as Redeemer. For any who are confused or fuzzy about Christ’s role in the world—these six verses testify to Christ’s absolute authority—not shared with any angel, person, or demon. Christ’s authority in every sphere is UNSHARED! Christ’s lordship is over persons, over angels, over the entire creation. Thus His lordship is also consummative.

The vastness of His Person gives us insight into the marvelous dimensions of His work—we gaze in awe at His supremacy to learn more of the sufficiency of His redemptive work. The lowly salamander, the mushroom, the angel, the earthly head of state, the mountain peak, the storm cloud, the bridesmaid—all created reality exists to exalt Christ. His glory is creation’s goal. The vastness of His Person dignifies the all-sufficiency and efficacy of His work. Because of the immensity of His Person; the souls of believers are supported by an immeasurable continent of rock.

The sufficiency of Christ refutes the Colossian heresy as well as all false religion: Paul thunders out three pervasive realities which overturn the doctrinal heresies that were plaguing Colossae:

- All the fullness of deity dwells in Christ
- Believers are complete in Christ
- Christ is the authority over all creation including angels

Paul’s affirmation that the believer is complete in Christ (2:10-14) is significant in light of the Colossian error that identification with Christ is not sufficient for the Christian life. The Colossians had no need to bow and scrape before spirit forces; for Christ reverses the trajectory of the pagan myth of gnosis and the veneration of angels. No, God entered humanity and became accessible to us in Christ.11 God in all His divine power is resident in Jesus.

REDEMPTION: You can’t understand the cross until you know the One who died upon it. He who is transcendent to creation condescended to become one of us—the Great Insider—to live the life of a creature in order to bring us to God. No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ but by (apart from) the Holy Spirit. Even Peter’s confession, “Thou are the Christ the Son of the living God” requires the revelation of God to our minds. The concept Son of God and Son of man to burst upon our understanding so that we fall at His feet as our Savior and Lord requires a regenerating work of the Spirit.

So strong are our natural carnal ideas about religion that the barrier between God and man can only be ascertained by studying the Word of God. We cannot pass through the barrier from our side. Man in his ignorance imagines he can. But God’s testimony of man’s condition reveals that spiritual
darkness, deadness and depravity separates us from God and that they cannot be penetrated from man’s side. This is radically humbling to the man in his imagined autonomy and spirituality.

Man intuitively imagines that God is immediately knowable and that the search for the sacred does not require the mediation of incarnate Christ and the Word of God.  

“Do you know Christ by revelation?” was a theme of divines in a previous generation (Gal 1; 2 Cor 4:4-6; 1 Cor 12; Matt 16). They understood that to be a saved person is to have ‘seen’ by faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jehovah of the O.T. And that to bow before Him as Lord (Rom 10:9-10) is to repent of sin and self, and to turn to Him as rightful owner of one’s life. That man or woman who has seen Christ as He is (by grace-granted faith) is willingly subdued by Christ to live a life possessed by God under His rule—subdued by Him and ruled by His infallible Word.

Now each of us is born a rebel, an outlaw, a fugitive running from God’s moral government. We refuse to recognize the claims upon us of the One who created, owns, upholds, and rules the universe. Our hidden, inner disposition is described in Psalm 2—we will not have this man rule over us!! (Ps 2:3). But to face the Son in judgment will be unbearable (Rev 6:15-17) to the impenitent. The Son of God is the truth incarnate—He upholds all reality—He is the very ground of our being. All ideas of autonomy will evaporate the moment He appears.

Saving faith unites a man to Christ—to Him who is supreme and preeminent—who is Alpha and Omega—who has the keys of death and hell—who has all authority and power—who is above every name that is named. We have salvation only because we have Christ and are joined to Him. Thus, to be united to Christ is to be joined to Him who fills all in all—and by this union, all the benefits of His Person are communicated to you (from His life, death, resurrection, priesthood, advocacy).

The world is blind to Christ’s identity; God is made known by the revelation of Jesus Christ to the sinner. God’s wisdom and power are resident in Christ and made known in the cross. How God saves is the greatest revelation of who God is. How God saves—by the cross of Christ is contrary to human pride and wisdom. But the wisdom of God in the cross is exposing all natural wisdom as foolishness. God will judge all carnal wisdom and display it on the gallows forever as folly, shame, vanity, and wickedness. The darkened, rebellious intellect of man peers at the cross and puzzles for but a moment. Though God is accessible by the cross—His mercy and righteousness revealed—the sinner is offended that only sovereign pity can save him. He is insulted that the only possible remedy for his ruin is the death of his Creator in his place.

Therefore the unbelieving sinner chooses to remain an enemy of God and the cross. But God is penetrating this thick darkness of heart. He is making friends out of enemies. He is conquering sinners by His love. He is blasting into their bondage, ignorance, and pollution—to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

It is salvation by revelation. It is God’s glory reflected in the Savior’s passion. It is God’s Spirit showing the sinner that the cruel implement of execution is a work of substitution. It is God in our nature—His divinity hidden—His glory obscured—drinking the cup of wrath meant for us. It is Jesus draining the cup—it is dying love that can conquer the most stubborn transgressor.

Apart from the Spirit’s penetrating light—no sinner can say ‘Jesus is Lord’. No sinner really understands that the One who hung on the cross on that darkened day in Judea is the Holy Creator of the universe—who left His throne and the worship of angels to taste death and wrath for guilty rebels.

When by the Spirit the quickened sinner comes to understand his own desperate condition—his ruin—his ill desert—and the wrath of Almighty God whom he has offended—the Spirit at that time brings several insights together. For the Gospel reveals the Character of God; the character of the sinner; and only then the perfect suitability of the Savior.
Now to see Him in His majesty—as supreme—as Lord of all requires the gift of saving faith. To see by faith the Risen Lord is the result of a gift of faith bestowed by God’s grace. The last view the world had of Christ was a hideous scene of abject weakness; victimization, shame and ignominy—flies, dust, spittle—hollow eyes, complete isolation. Christ’s supremacy and centrality were completely hidden in His atoning death. When Christ arose—He subsequently only appeared to believers.

**Because Christ is central and preeminent—His work on behalf of sinners is all sufficient.** If His sufficiency were had not been attacked so soon after His ascension; many of the N.T. epistles would not have been written. But praise God they were written. Let this be a lesson to us—in every age of church history there is a tendency to lose sight of the majesty of Christ. So infinite is the gap between Holy God and sinful man (that defiled creature of clay) that only Christ the God-man in His supremacy can bring us all the way to God. He is Lord of All, cosmic King; preeminent in all things is perfectly fit to reconcile us to God and to bring us from dust to glory. This is the great theme of Colossians.

**CONCLUSION:** As Lord of creation and Lord of redemption (holding both together) we’ve seen that Christ **repairs** a divided view of reality. **He rejects** every private sacred space that He does not sovereignly create and fill. **He renounces** the ‘different Jesus’ of the new spirituality (who is not lord of all, but made in our own image).

We’ve seen that the value of His work flows from the vastness of His Person (this is the great mystery hidden in the bosom of the Father from all eternity—but now has been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit—Eph 3:5).

What are we to do with what we have heard? We must strive to see Jesus better and better each day (as He is revealed in Scripture)—until you are staggered at His majesty and supremacy—until you are lost in awe at Who God is toward you in Christ.

To see in this manner is better than being the richest man in the world. To have this kind of sight makes you a steward of what you see (you can’t keep it to yourself). Like Moses with an eagle eye able to see all the Promised Land from the summit of Nebo—you have wealth, you have milk and honey to speak of concerning the Savior (but you’ve got to gather this manna before you share it—craving souls will thank you).

Endnotes:

3. Ibid.
8. Ibid, p. 25.
9. Jim Newheiser, Pastor, Grace Bible Church, Escondido, CA.
11. Ibid.
Colossians: The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ. Series: Colossians: The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ. Messages. June 16th, 2019. 31. Col 1:21-23 Summary The SUPREMACY & SUFFICIENCY of CHRIST 22 BUT NOW he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—OUR PRESENT RECONCILIATION God’s Plan Christ’s Payment Man’s Pardon. 32. Col 1:21-23 Summary The SUPREMACY & SUFFICIENCY of CHRIST 23 IF YOU CONTINUE in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a serv