

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

C. Nurture In Noting Christ's All-Sufficient Deity Amid Christological Heresy (Colossians 1:15-20)

I. Introduction

- A. When the Apostle Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. As a heresy that undermined Christ's deity afflicted the Colossian Church in his absence (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 668), Paul provided nurturing facts about Christ's deity to counter that heresy in Colossians 1:15-20, the greatest single description of His deity in all of Scripture (Ibid., p. 672), and we view it for our edification:

II. Nurture In Noting Christ's All-Sufficient Deity Amid Christological Heresy, Colossians 1:15-20:

- A. Christ is "the perfect resemblance and representation of God" the Father, Ibid.; Colossians 1:15a:
 1. Paul wrote that Christ is the *eikon* of the invisible God, a word meaning "image", Ibid.; Colossians 1:15a.
 2. This word does not always mean a perfect image (1 Cor. 11:7), but in this context where Paul describes Christ as perfectly representing the Father (Col. 1:19), it means "the perfect visible representation and manifestation of that God," Ibid. Indeed, passages like Colossians 2:9 and John 14:9 confirm this fact.
- B. Christ preceded and is sovereign over all creation, Ibid., p. 672-673; Colossians 1:15b:
 1. One can grammatically render Colossians 1:15b to read Christ is the "Firstborn *in* Creation," meaning the first entity created (like the Jehovah's Witnesses do in their New World Translation), but Colossians 1:16-17 shows this rendering is illogical since Christ is there presented as having created all things, and one cannot logically be said to create himself, Ibid., p. 672. (cf. John 1:3)
 2. The word "firstborn" is *prototokos*, **not** *protoktisis* that would be rendered "first-created," and the "Firstborn" indicates (a) Jesus preceded the whole Creation, and is Sovereign over it all, Ibid., p. 673.
 3. Thus, Jesus is the "Firstborn *of* Creation," preceding it in time and ruling sovereignly over it all, Ibid.
- C. Christ created all things, they were created for Him, and in Him they hold together, Ibid., p. 673; Col. 1:16-17: all things were made by Christ ("*di' autou*, instrumental Cause)," for Him ("*eis auton*, final Cause)" and in Him ("*en aoutou*") they hold together "(. . . the constituting or conserving Cause)," Ibid.; Col. 1:16-17.
- D. Christ is the Head of the body, the Church, Ibid.; Colossians 1:18a: the term "body" here refers to the Universal Body of the Church begun at the Day of Pentecost and functioning in every local church on earth and of deceased Christians in heaven, Ibid.; Hebrews 12:22-23.
- E. Christ is the first to rise in an immortal body and thus heads a new order as its Sovereign, Ibid.; Col. 1:18b:
 1. Jesus Christ is the first (*arche*) to rise in a glorified, immortal body (1 Cor. 15:20), and is the "Firstborn" (*prototokos*, cf. Col. 1:15b) from among the dead, Colossians 1:18b; Ibid.
 2. Accordingly, He being the first to rise thus heads a new order of resurrected, glorified saints that in everything He might have the supremacy over all, Ibid.
- F. Christ has all the fullness of complete deity dwelling within Him, Ibid., p. 673-674; Colossians 1:19:
 1. The Greek word "fullness" (*pleroma*) means "completeness," so in the Colossians 1:19 statement it means that Jesus Christ has the "full and complete Deity" residing within Him, Ibid.
 2. With Paul's clarification in Colossians 2:9, we know this means Jesus is fully, completely Deity!
- G. Christ is the Reconciler of all good angels and redeemed people, Ibid., p. 674; Colossians 1:20:
 1. What Jesus is said to reconcile are all things on earth and in heaven, **not under** the earth in a reference to evil demons or the lost, meaning He reconciles all good angels and the redeemed in Himself, Ibid., p. 674.
 2. Thus, all believers of all the dispensations, all the good angels and all the creation to which believers in eternity will be exposed (Romans 8:19-21) will be reconciled together and to God in Jesus Christ.

Lesson: *In countering a denial of Christ's deity while in prison, Paul nurtured his readers, explaining Christ's perfect resemblance and representation of the Father, His preceding and sovereignty over all creation, His creatorship and sustenance of all creation, His Headship over the Church, His supremacy over the new order of glorified men, His fullness of complete deity and office as Reconciler of all good angels, saved people and creation.*

Application: *(1) May we TRUST the complete, full deity and sovereignty of Jesus Christ amid heretical denials of His deity, and may we (2) REST in this truth for security and stability in an unstable, insecure world.*