



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Colossians 1:15-20

"Christ the Lord in Creation and Redemption"

TRANSCRIPT

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things hold together." (or consist) "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

[Message] One might ask the question, having finished the 20th verse, why do things in heaven need reconciliation as well? Well, that's one of the points that we hope to elucidate a bit in the message that follows in a few minutes. May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and Father we are indeed grateful today that we are able to gather

with an open Bible, the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, giving us the mind of our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we are thankful of the Holy Spirit who enlightens us as we read and ponder the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the church of Jesus Christ of which we have just been reading, and we praise Thee for all of the members of that body, the objects of divine sovereign love from the ages of eternity past.

And we thank Thee for the evidence of Thy sovereign power of bringing each of them into the fold as sheep of the shepherd, as children of the living God. We praise Thee. We thank Thee. We are grateful to Thee, Lord, for all of the blessings that are ours through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that he is the one mediator between God and men, and that it is through him that one may obtain the gift of eternal life. We are so grateful for that Lord because we recognize that, so far as we are concerned, we are sinners, we are lost and under divine condemnation. And we thank Thee that Thou hast, through the Lord Jesus Christ, reached out to us, given us insight into our true condition before Thee, and then, through the Holy Spirit, effectually worked in our hearts to turn to Thee.

As we sing in a moment, we thank Thee, Lord, for effectual grace. We thank Thee, too, for the blessings of life, the Holy Spirit to guide us day by day, the word of God to give us instruction, the experiences of our lives to conform us to the likeness to Jesus Christ, which is the ultimate goal of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We thank Thee for this country in which we live and for our President and those who are associated with him in government. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon the United States of America in a spiritual way. Deliver us from the characteristic signs of our times, the materialism, the interest in entertainment and amusement, rather than in the things of God, and all of the other things that characterize the world about us. If it should please Thee Lord, we pray that throughout this land there may be a return to emphasis upon the holy Scriptures, upon the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel, the saving work of Christ and his death on the cross, and other things that characterize the Christian faith.

We give Thee thanks for the church in all of its manifestations, not simply in the chapel, but wherever members of that body may be, Lord, today, bless them, edify them and enlarge the body if it should please Thee.

We pray for those whose names are listed in our calendar of concern, and we ask especially that through the ministry of the word of God and through the comfort and witness of friends and loved ones that there may be comfort and consolation that comes from Thee and answers to prayers concerning concerns represented there. We bring all of those things before Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon each one of them.

And upon the chapel itself, we ask, Lord, that Thou would bless our elders, give them wisdom and guidance, our deacons, minister to us through them. All of the members, we pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon each one of them in all of their activities in their businesses, in their home lives, in their Christian testimony, may we have the sense of Thy blessing upon us.

And Lord, we especially pray for our visitors and friends who are with us today. May this be a service in which they are strengthened and encouraged through the word of God. Bless, as we sing, and then as we listen to Thy word. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] As you can see from the bulletin, our subject for today and the exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians is, "Christ the Lord in Creation and Redemption." "One evening near the Sea of Galilee Jesus spoke to His disciples after a very busy day of ministry and said, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' When the multitude of people was dismissed, the disciples took their weary Leader into a boat and began to make their way across the lake. But there arose a lashing storm which churned the little sea into wet fury, and soon the boat and its occupants were in danger of being swamped. Anxiously and somewhat peevishly those who were in the boat with our Lord Jesus went to him, asleep in the stern of the boat and brusquely aroused Him, and said to him, 'Master, Master, carest thou not that we perish?' being quite unaware of the fact that

there is no sinking with the Lord Jesus on board. The text of Scripture says that Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Hush! Be muzzled!' Using a little verb that suggests the muzzling of an animal, like a dog. And amazingly, one might think, the wind died, and a dead calm ensued. After He had rebuked them for their fear and faithlessness, they, awestruck by what had happened, murmured to one another, 'What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"

Well if the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had been in that little boat, and if he had known at that time what he knew later and wrote in his epistle, he would have replied confidently, "Why he is the effulgence of the glory of God and the stamp of God's very being and sustains the universe by the word of his power. It's no wonder that when Jesus speaks to the wind and the waves that they obey him." And if Paul had been in that little boat, and if he had known what he knew when he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians, he would have said something very similar. He would have said, "Why Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of the whole creation, it's no wonder that when he speaks to that which he had made that they obey him."

Well, this line from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of the whole creation," introduces the section that scholars call, "The Great Christology," the source of a great deal of learned investigation. Reading in a scholarly commentary this past week, a more recent commentary, the author listed a whole page or so of special articles on this particular passage in addition to all of the commentaries that had been written to the Epistle to the Colossians. So, this is one of the passages in the Pauline writings that has been the subject of a great deal of research and study by men who spend their whole time doing just that. Paul's defense of the Christian faith, in the light of the Colossian heresy of Gnostic Judaism, is a tremendous presentation of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, or put in the terms of our sermon title today, "The Lordship of Jesus Christ," over the universe by virtue of the fact that he is the creator and over the church by virtue of what he has done for the church in his

redeeming activity. Later the apostle will say in chapter 3 and verse 11 of Colossians that, "Christ is all and in all." And this is part of the reason why he is able to say that. We're going to look at this passage in this way. We're going to look at the Lord of the first creation in verse 15 through verse 17, and then the Lord of the new creation in verse 18, and then in verses 19 and 20, we want to look at the ground of the preeminence of the Lord in his redeeming work.

First, then the Lord of the first creation, many feel that this section that I have read to you really is part of an early hymn, whether written by Paul, or by someone else, or composed perhaps by more than one person in the early church. If it is a hymn, it certainly, of course, is written in such a fashion as to lead people to think that. If it is a hymn, the hymn of the beloved Son begins in verse 15 with a statement concerning the essential basis of his Lordship, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every", or of the whole, "creation."

Now that statement, "The image of the invisible God," might create in our minds something a bit different from its meaning when Paul wrote this. What Paul meant by it was that the Lord Jesus was the unique perfect likeness and manifestation of God. In other words, he is the great and final theophany. This word that is used here, the word translated, "image," is a word that suggests that he possesses the divine attributes. There is a related word to it formed of the same root entirely, absolutely, I should say, which was used of a photograph, and further, there is a word very closely related to it, one is *eikon*, and the other is *eikonian*, a diminutive of it, a little eikon which was used when individuals signed a contract in legal terms guaranteeing certain things to others. For example, in an IOU, it was customary for when the contract was drawn up for an eikonian to be drawn up as well.

And what that meant was certain sentences which would describe the individuals who entered into the contract were set in the contract in order that there might be evidence of precisely who entered into the contract, so that there would be no

misunderstanding. That was called an *eikon*, that is, a description of the individuals involved. That is suggested by this word when we read here, "Who is the image of the invisible God," then that is suggested by it that we have here a description of the God whom we cannot see in the Lord Jesus Christ. As you well know the New Testament is full of teaching along this line, the Lord Jesus being responsible for a great deal of it himself. For example, in John chapter 8 and verse 19 we read, "Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

And then in the upper room discourse, in John chapter 14, the Lord Jesus had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," saying that he is the exclusive way to God. And he adds, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." Well that's a little too much for Philip because he doesn't realize that he knows the Father, and so he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." And Jesus replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" So when we read here in Colossians 1 verse 15, "Who is the image of the invisible God," Paul is simply saying if you want to know who God is and what God is like, then take a good look at Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ is God like, or put the other way around, God is Christ like. He is the image of the invisible God.

Now having spoken of the essential basis of his Lordship, he speaks in the last clause of verse 15 of the economic basis of his Lordship. He says he's "the firstborn of the whole creation." Now that expression might suggest that the Lord Jesus Christ had a beginning, that's not surprising because the word first is involved in it, and first may suggest first in time, or it may suggest first by way of evaluation. So firstborn may suggest that there was a time when the Lord Jesus Christ was not. Not surprisingly, in the Arian controversy in the early church they laid a great deal of stress upon this particular

passage, "The Lord Jesus as the firstborn of the creation." Arius said there was a time when he was not denying his eternal Sonship.

And so you can understand why from this working itself, the Arians might seem to have some ground for what they were saying that there was a time when the Son was not. He's the firstborn of the whole creation. The great opponent of Arius was ultimately Athanasius. Athanasius, an Alexandrian believing church official drew attention to this particular text and said this, "If all the creatures were created in him as it says in verse 16, he is no one of the creatures, because if all the creatures were created by him, he's not one of them. He's not a creature. He's the creator of the creatures." And Athanasius convinced the early church, properly so, that the Lord Jesus may be called firstborn of the whole creation, but not in the sense that there was a time when he entered into existence, so far as his person was concerned. In fact, the Lord Jesus is the eternal Son, and he is the creator of the creatures. In him the whole created universe came into its existence. So the term firstborn then takes on the meaning that it had in other passages in the Bible of sovereignty over.

In fact, it goes back to the Old Testament and the use of the comparable Hebrew term in passages like Psalm 89 and verse 27 where in the Psalm concerning the Davidic covenant, the Psalmist says, concerning the Davidic King to come, "And I will make him my firstborn," and then he defines it by the next clause, "Higher than the kings of the earth." So to be firstborn suggests preeminence over, higher than the kings of the earth. Therefore, when the Apostle Paul says, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of the whole creation?" He's not saying that the Lord Jesus entered into existence at a particular time, of course, so far as his human nature is concerned that would be true, but so far as his divine personality is concerned, he is the eternal Son. What this clause emphasizes is his sovereignty over creation, the fact that he is, prior to and supreme, over it. And as a matter of fact this very word, *prototokos*, which is used here for firstborn, is a term that has that significance as we see. It is used in the rendering of

that passage in Psalm 89 and verse 27. Furthermore, in the early church, and in Greek of that time, there was another word that meant first created, *protoktisis*. That word is never used of the Lord Jesus by the orthodox. They never say that he was first created, though the word was available to them. So the Father's, the church, the apostles, the Scripture as a whole, when they say that he's the first born of the whole creation, they mean that he's sovereign over it.

Now if we just reflected on the context here and read what follows we would know that's true because in verse 17 it says he's before all things, and furthermore, if he is the redeemer of men, as he is set forth here, he must be the divine Son, for only a divine Son could save sinners such as you and I are. So he's the image of the invisible God. He's the firstborn of the whole creation. And now if you want explicit proof of why he is supreme over the creation, verse 16 gives it. "For in him," now I'm translating that "In him" for the reason that the preposition here is the preposition "in," most commonly rendered that way, but it could be rendered by him. However at the conclusion of verse 16, we read, "All things were created by him," or through him, "And for him," and since that's stated at the end of the verse, it seems, to me, more likely that we have the sense of "in him" at the beginning. So we have three prepositional phrases. "All things were created in him." "All things were created by him." "All things were created for him."

Now what is meant by this? Obviously, the fact that he is creator is set forth, but is there something a bit more than that? Well I suggest this to you, not with any sense of dogmatism, that is my customary dogmatism, but realizing that I may when I get to heaven be a little bit off on this point, but I suggest to you that when the apostle says, "In him were all things created," that he is suggesting what other scholars have suggested that all of the eternal ideas resided in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that in the sense of our language, he is the architect of the universe. "In him," that is, to put it in our language, it's something like this that the plans of the universe were drawn up in the mind of the eternal Son. Now if that is so then we have in the second clause that which would go

with it. "All things were created through him." He's the builder of the universe, and "All things are created for him," in the sense that the universe is designed, ultimately, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the eternal trinity.

One may illustrate it by a simple construction of a building, such as this building. In nineteen hundred and sixty-nine, or so, the elders secured the services of an architect to draw the plans of the building. We let him know the kind of building we wanted, but we left with him the task of drawing the plans, and so he drew the plans. And then, after the plans were reviewed by the elders and accepted, then, the elders secured the builder to construct the building according to the plans. And then when the building was finished, the building is used for the purposes for which it is built.

Now in the case of the creation, if that is an analogy that is acceptable, the Lord Jesus Christ is responsible for this universe, as the one who has drawn the plans. Further, he was the builder, all things have been made through him, John says, in John chapter 1. And furthermore this whole creation, not only here what we see about us, the earth and the heavens that we see, but his whole universe is designed to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the missing ingredient in all of the discussion about space in the space age. That's the missing ingredient in all that we hear from NASA, or from any other of our scientists. It is that this universe has been constructed through the divine trinity for the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of the Christian triune God. So before the indescribable majesty of the eternal Christ, as we reflect upon this, we constrained to respond, as we often sing, "Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art." The scientists dabble in the little things that we know about the universe through the practice of the scientific method.

But here is the one who knows it all. So interesting to listen to scientists who talk about the things that they are looking for with the use of their telescopes, and how they make out some clues from how this universe came into existence. Well that's one way in

which we should study the universe. We should study it scientifically. We should investigate it as much as possible. That's part of the calling that is given to us in Genesis chapter 1, but at the same time, we reflect that the one who stands above it, and is responsible for it all, is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now he goes on to say, not simply that he's the architect and the builder and the one for whom the creation has been constructed, but he sustains it. Notice the 17th verse, "And he is before all things, and by him," or in him, "all things consist." So he continues his sovereignty over the universe that he has constructed and over all of the cosmic powers, by his mighty power that resides in him, as the eternal God. The Lord Jesus said, when he was here, "Before Abraham came to be I am." He has been sustaining the universe down through the centuries. I like this word, "By him all things consist." This verb is a verb that means something like, "hold together," stand together," "By him all things stand together," "hold together," consist, as we say. It means that he is responsible for everything at all times. Were the mind of the Son of God to relax his sustaining power for one second, this universe would fly into total confusion and chaos.

We have an expression, we don't use it so much now, but about fifteen or twenty years ago, we used it quite often, we can speak of things that are unglued. I grew up in Charleston with a lot of antique furniture in our home, and all of us who were children were warned constantly, don't rush in and sit down in the chair without realizing that it is an antique, maybe a couple of hundred years old. Well we would forget, I can remember rushing into the dinner table one time late, and my father was not very happy when I was late at the dinner table, and I sat down in a hurry and heard the tell, tell crack of some of the furniture. And it was customary for us, occasionally, if it was not a serious break to glue it. The furniture could become unglued. So we speak of furniture coming unglued, dolls becoming unglued, and then I say, fifteen years or so ago, we used to talk about people coming unglued in certain contexts.

Well we needn't worry about the universe coming unglued for it all holds together in him. There is no need to push the panic button, and as the apostles learned when they were in the boat with the Lord Jesus, the sleeping Savior, there is no possibility of them drowning if the Lord Jesus Christ is on board. I like Daniel's expression. Daniel speaks about the God in whose hand Thy breath is. Think of it, the one in whose hand your very breathe is. Do you know I'm indebted to one of my students who many years ago was preaching in chapel in theological seminary who said, "Do you know that you can only be sure of the breath that you are drawing right now?" He is the God in whose hand our breath is. It's true. We can only be sure of that one. There may not be another one, but if we have the God in whose hand Thy breath is, well, then, we can turn over all of those things to him.

Some years ago, I was doing some studying with reference to the Epistle to the Colossians when I used to teach this epistle in Greek exegesis, and one of the commentators, I really am not sure at the moment who is responsible for this, but he went on to say in this connection, I think it was John Eddie from Scotland, he went on to say that the God of Genesis 1 is the babe of Matthew 1. He said, the one of whom the Old Testament says, 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?' is the one of whom Paul spoke when he said, 'For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' And Mr. Eddie, if that's who the author was, went on to say, "But the Lord is the true God. He is the living God and an everlasting king," and the one who wrote that, Jeremiah the Prophet, was writing about the same one of whom we read in the New Testament, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," "Jesus wept," "After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

And the one who wrote in the Old Testament, and wrote these words, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it," was writing about the same one of whom John writes when he says, "But one of the soldiers But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." He who wrote in ancient times, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb," says at length, through the Holy Spirit to his own, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see." Oh, the amazing wonder of the incarnation of the second person of the trinity. The one of whom these magnificent things are said is the one of whom we read in the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth. How marvelous, how wonderful, what a marvelous thing it is to be a Christian and to know him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, he's the Lord, then of the first creation, but he's also Lord of the new creation. Notice the 18th verse of Colossians chapter 1. After having said that he's the Lord of the first creation, Paul says, "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence," he and no other. So, in a sense, the apostle moves from that which is cosmological, having to do with the cosmos about us, to that which is soteriological, or that which has to do with our personal salvation. He's head of the body.

Now that asserts his inseparability from the church for our heads are attached to our bodies, and it's a good thing they are. I'd hate to try to live with my head somewhere else. Some people give you the impression that they are living with their head somewhere else, [laughter] but actually physically, their heads are attached to their bodies. So when it is stated that he is the head of the body, the inseparability of the Lord Jesus and the church is set forth, but that excludes his identity with the body. He's the head of the body. The head and the body are not the same. The church incidentally, is called the

body of Christ. It's not called the body of Christians. And the reason for that is very simple because the church is his. Ownership is expressed by that. Authority is suggested by head. Control is suggested by head. He's the head of the body. He's the head of the church.

And consequently he controls the church. He owns the church. He has authority over the church. The head of the body of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a most practical doctrine. Do not think for one moment that we're simply talking about something that is only a theological truth. It is of the greatest practical importance. The head of the church is not in Rome. The head of the church is not in Montreat. The head of the church is not in Nashville. The head of the church is not in any denominational headquarters of any church upon this earth. The head of the church is in heaven, and consequently, we are responsible to heaven directly.

Now of course, that has great practical significance so far as our personal life is concerned too. We are related to the head who is in heaven. And if we are to live a life that is acceptable to the Lord God, we must be submissive to the head, the Lord Jesus in a personal sense. And as a body of believers who are under shepherds, elders, it's most important for them and for us to be under him and to look to him for control and guidance and authority in the things that we do. That is why the elders desire that the ministry of the word of God be stressed in Believers Chapel because that is the emphasis of the word of God, in their opinion, in mine as well. So he's the head of the body the church. He's the first who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.

These words, incidentally, following, "He is the head of the body, the church," are designed to express why he is the head of the body, the church, and why he's the head and not Giovanni Battista Montini, or Karol Wojtyla or any other human being, name him whoever you may name him, Baptist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, or whatever. He's the head of the body, the church, and he's the head of the body, the church for this reason, that he is the beginning and he's the first born from the dead. We were not

redeemed by any mere man. We were not redeemed by any mere church official. We are redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the beginning. He's the firstborn from the dead, and because he's the first and only one of himself to break the power of death, he is head of the church, supreme and sovereign over it. We acknowledge him as our head, because he's our redeemer and the only one who at this point has been resurrected. He's the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep and only the Lord Jesus at this moment has been resurrected.

For those of you who haven't heard me say this through the years, we repeat again, others have been restored to life, but only he, given a resurrection body. So at this point, there is one resurrected man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He, therefore, is head and sovereign over the new creation, as well as the old. In order that, as Paul says at the end of verse 18, "He might become preeminent in all things." In other words, he's head over the first creation because he created it. He's head over the new creation of the church because he's the first born from the dead, and he's redeemed the church in order that he might be preeminent in all things. And by what he did on the cross, he has become preeminent in both the old and the new creation.

The Bible, and a proper attitude to him, in my opinion, lays great stress upon the fact that the Father is jealous of the glory of the Son of God. One can see this in the great experience on the Mount of Transfiguration when finally the voice from heaven in effect says to Peter whose thinking about building tabernacles for him and for others there and for our Lord, finally the voice from heaven comes, it doesn't say it exactly in this sense, but you can catch the force of it, while Peter was still speaking, there came a voice out of heaven and said hush, be still, be muzzled, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." Peter's mouth was just running off. In fact other passages say that. He was still talking. He had some other things to say, tabernacles for Moses and Elijah, for the Lord, and of course, one or two for us who are up here on the mountain with the Lord. But Peter, shut up.

"This is my beloved Son, hear him." He's supreme, preeminent, sovereign, should be in all of our lives.

There's a marvelous passage in Joshua, I think, which illustrates the point, we don't have time to expound it. You remember that when Joshua was getting ready to attempt to carry out the command of the Lord and take the city of Jericho, he was out recon ordering one day, and as he was walking along, he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went over to him, and he said, "Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?" Now you don't answer an either, or question as this man answered it. For the man said, "No." "Are you for us, or are you for our adversaries?" "No, General." For he was the Captain of the Lord's hosts at that time, he was General Joshua to lead the people of God into the Promised Land.

But, there was something about this man that was different, and when this individual said, "No, but as Captain of the Lord hosts, I have come." General Joshua knew he was now Lieutenant General Joshua, and he fell on his face to the earth, and did worship and said unto him, "What sayeth my Lord unto his servant?" And so the man, so the text says, is now Joshua's Lord, it was one of the theophanies of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of course, illustrates the fact that he will be sovereign in his creation. Now Joshua learned a simple lesson that to be prepared for the work of the Lord is not enough, to even be ordained to be the successor to Moses is not enough, submission to the Captain of the Lord's hosts is necessary for fruitfulness in life and work for him.

Finally in verses 19 and 20, notice the 19th verse begins with the simple little connective conjunction, "For." He's preeminent in all things now "for" and I think, this relates primarily, of course, to the last part of verse 18 which has to do with his saving work as head of the church, firstborn from the dead. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Now for the sake of time, I'm not going to argue the point. I'm just going to say that I don't think that the apostle, when he says, "All fullness," here is

referring simply to our Lord's deity. That doesn't make sense in the context, that is, that he should have the preeminence because he's firstborn from the dead because he's God. That is not really the point, it seems to me, of this context. It should relate to his saving work by which he became firstborn from the dead. So I suggest to you, and next Sunday, the Lord willing, if we're still breathing, then, we will discuss in a little more detail what I mean by "all fullness," here. But I think, that what he means is, in this context, all saving fullness, all saving power, in grace, because he's the covenantal head of the people of God. So he says, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all," saving, "fullness dwell; And, to reconcile all things unto himself; by making peace through the blood of the cross."

Now that would have special reference to the situation in Colosse because one of the views, it seems, of the Colossian heretics, with their Gnostic Judaism, or some form of something like that was, that God is so holy that he doesn't create directly, but there emanate from him a series of eons or angelic like beings, and the Lord Jesus is one of them, if perhaps the head of them, but he's not a divine being. And therefore the mediators between God and men are secondary beings, eons, angelic beings. But Paul is not saying that. He's denying that. He's saying, "It pleased the Father," that all saving power in grace should reside in him. He's the covenantal head, and therefore having all saving power, appointed Lord, other statements in the New Testament set forth, he is able to truly redeem. So there is not hierarchy of mediators between God and men as the heretics were saying. But by the fact that he is raised from the dead, there is evidence that he is the one and only saving mediator between God and men. Or as Paul puts it elsewhere, there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. So he's the one saving mediator and further he says, that he has reconciled, "All things unto himself; whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Amazing, that things in heaven should need reconciliation, but now, there are things in Scripture that suggest that. Remember when Adam sinned in the Garden of

Eden, the whole creation fell under the curse, thorns and thistles are evidences of it, which we can see with our eyes. But this creation is all together one, and it is designed to be under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the people of God. And the Book of Revelation tells the story of how the Lord Jesus shall regain his headship over the whole of this created universe, of which we only have a slight knowledge, even in nineteen eighty-six. In the Old Testament in the book of Job, it is said that, "The heavens are not clean in Thy sight." "The stars are not pure." Those are interesting expressions. I wish I knew more about them.

But it evidences the fact that there is, in this universe, a disturbance, and the disturbance evidently related to the fall that occurred in the Garden of Eden but through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ the disturbance that exists in this universe. The chaos, to some extent in it, will ultimately be returned to its divinely created and determined order under the head of this universe, the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 8:20 through 22 speaks along the same lines. So that through the cross, not only are men saved, but the universe also will be brought back to the order divinely intended by the Lord from the beginning. Not surprisingly we read in the last book of the Bible of the new heavens and the new earth.

So then to sum up for our time is over, Paul unites with Peter and others affirming that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. We say and we sing, "Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all. May God help us to do that. But one urgent question before I stop, will the new creation respond to its head as the old did to its creator? When Jesus spoke to the winds and waves, they obeyed him. But when he speaks to you, what kind of response do you give him? In the Heidelberg catechism, in the 59th question, there are these words, "But what doth it help thee now that thou believest all this?" What a marvelous way to put it, "What doth it help thee now that thou believest all this?" Now that you know all of this great doctrine concerning the preeminent Lord, what does it help you? How does it help you that you know this? May the Lord God in his marvelous

grace and power through the Son of God, the reconciler of the universe, so work in your heart that you surrender and allow him to be what he is, the creator, the sustainer, the Lord of this universe.

If you're here today and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you of the cross upon which he shed his blood, that sinners might be saved. Come to Christ, believe in him. I cannot do it for you. Your father, your mother cannot do it for you. Your children cannot do it for you. It's something you must do. May God, in his grace, so work in your heart that you come, believing in him unto eternal life, forgiveness of sins, given through grace, receive it. For Christ's sake. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these magnificent words the apostle has penned. We know we have only haltingly expounded them. The Son of God is greater even than we could imagine, we know. But may something of the glory and something of the grandeur of his person and work move our hearts to respond to him. If there are some, who have never believed, may, at this very moment, they flee to Thee for the forgiveness of sins through Christ. And for those of us who do believe but who have wandered so often, Lord, enable us, in Thy grace, to cleave unto him who loved us and loosed us from our sins, in his own precious blood and is the sovereign creator and Lord of the universe. Go with us now as we part. For Jesus' sake. Amen.