

5. Reconciled in Christ

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Years ago in a city, a husband and wife became estranged and finally divorced. They left the city and resided in different parts of the country.

The husband one day had a chance to return to this city on a business trip. He went out to the cemetery to the grave of their only son. He was standing by the grave in fond memory of his son when he heard a step behind him. Turning, he saw his divorced wife. The first inclination of both was to turn away. But they had a common, binding interest in that grave; and instead of turning away they clasped hands over that grave of their son, and were reconciled one to another.

It took nothing less than death to reconcile them. It takes nothing less than death, the precious blood of Christ, to reconcile mankind to God. The pronouncement, the proclamation, of that is the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

This morning, we are going to have a close look at the reconciliation of Jesus between mankind and God. We couldn't do it because we could not come to God in our sinfulness, so our God sent His only begotten Son to reconcile the impossible situation.

A. HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.

V18 is the main theme of the letter to the Colossians.

No denomination or local church can claim that they are the only "body of Christ." Because the body of Christ is composed of all true believers. Each Christian is a member of this spiritual body, and Jesus Christ is the Head. In Greek usage, the word 'head' meant "source" and "origin" as well as "leader, ruler." Jesus Christ is the Source of the church, His body and He is the Leader. Paul called Him "the Beginning" which tells us that Jesus Christ has priority in time as far as His church is concerned. The term "beginning" can be translated as "originator."

No believer on earth, including the pope, is the head of the church. This position is reserved exclusively for Jesus Christ. Various religious leaders may have founded churches or denominations, but only Jesus Christ is the Founder of the church that is His body. This church is composed of all true believers, and it was born at Pentecost according to Acts chapter 2. It was then that the Holy Spirit came and baptized the believers into one spiritual body.

It seems strange that Paul used the word "born" in connection with "death," because the two concepts seem opposed to each other. But the tomb was a womb from which Christ came forth in victory because death could not hold Him. Jesus was begotten in resurrection glory.

Some of you might be thinking, "Jesus was not the first One to come back alive from death." You're right. There were several who came back to life in the Old Testaments. Such as the son of a widow in Zarephath, a pagan city, and the son of a Shunammite woman. How about this? In the Book of Ezekiel chapter 37, the

valley were filled with the dry human bones. The prophet Ezekiel was told to prophesy by the Lord to the bunch of dry bones in the midst of the valley in Ezekiel 37. The dry bones started to rattle and came to their places, organs, muscles, tendons, blood vessels, and skins were added. With the breath from the Lord, they came to life. I bet that it was an awesome sight. I know some Bible students insist that it is a vision of the prophet, not real. I think that it was real. If so, many former dead bodies came back to life. However, none of these people were resurrected, rather they were resuscitated, not resurrected. Jesus was the first for now.

This brings us to the theme of this entire section: *"That in all things he might have the preeminence"*. This was God's purpose in making His Son the Savior, Creator, and Head of the church. The word translated "preeminence" is used nowhere else in the New Testament. It is related to the word translated "firstborn," and it magnifies the unique position of Jesus Christ.

B. IN HIM ALL THE FULLNESS SHOULD DWELL

Colossians 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,

Again we come to the very verse that shows the identity of Jesus as God the Son, not just a son of God like the Jehovah's Witnesses would love to proclaim.

The 'fullness' is the "pleroma" in Greek. That is one of the most important words in this epistle. That is, it emphasized that Christ emptied Himself and became a servant. He emptied Himself of the glory that He had with the Father. He didn't empty Himself of His deity – He was God when He came to this earth. The 'pleroma', the fullness of God, dwells in Him.

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Jehovah's Witnesses would like to argue with you with Philippians 2:5-6 as their base for no equality between Jesus and God the Father. But they are not taking everything in context. They forget that Jesus would be called 'Immanuel' and the qualification as the Atoning Sacrifice.

God the Father would not permanently give His pleroma to some created being. The fact that it *"pleased the Father"* to have His fullness in Christ is a proof that Jesus Christ is God.

Because Jesus Christ is God, He is able to do what no mere man could ever do: reconcile lost sinners to a holy God. When the first man and woman sinned, mankind declared war on God, but God did not declare war on them. Instead, God sought Adam and Eve, and He provided a covering for their sins.

The natural mind of the unsaved sinner is at war with God. The sinner may be sincere, religious, and even moral but he is still at war with God. How can a holy God ever be reconciled with sinful humanity? Can God lower His standards, close His

eyes to sin, and compromise with mankind? If He did, the universe would fall to pieces. God must be consistent with Himself and maintain His own holy law.

C. RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF

Colossians 1:20-23 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight- 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

When the apostle Paul went to Athens and preached the Gospel, he walked around the city and saw that it was completely given over to idolatry. Athens was known for its cultural learning. It was known for its incredible architectural works. And it was also known for spirituality.

The people of Athens were very religious. They worshiped many gods. It was said in that time that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. Idols were erected for every conceivable deity imaginable, including one with an inscription that read, "To the Unknown God" according to Acts 17.

Historians tell us there was a great cloud of hopelessness covering the ancient world. Their philosophies were empty. Their religion was a vain attempt to reach God by their own human efforts, and it was powerless to impact them in this life or to prepare them for the life to come.

In spite of their numerous gods, they did not have a relationship with the one true God.

Is that not a picture, in many ways, of our culture today? We have made incredible advances in technology. But I think more and more Americans are asking big questions such as: Why am I here? What is the meaning of life?

Unfortunately, many are looking for truth in all of the wrong, wrong places. We want the benefits of faith, but we don't want the restrictions of it. The Bible says this will be a sign of the last days.

2 Timothy 3:5a having a form of godliness but denying its power.

If there is to be reconciliation between man and God, the initiative and action must come from God. Because we couldn't come to Holy God with our sinful nature. At the same time, Holy God couldn't lower His standard for us either. It is in Christ that God was reconciled to man. But it was not the birth of Christ that accomplished this reconciliation, nor was it His example as He lived among men. It was through His death that peace was made between God and man. He "*made peace through the blood of His cross.*"

Of course, the false teachers offered a kind of reconciliation between man and God. However, the reconciliation they offered was not complete or final. But the reconciliation we have in Jesus Christ is perfect, complete, and final. More than that, the reconciliation in Christ involves the whole universe. He reconciles "*all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*"

However, we must not conclude wrongly that universal reconciliation is the same as "Universal Salvation" or "Universalism". "Universalism" is the teaching that all beings, including those who have rejected Jesus Christ, will one day be saved. The theology of Universalism is from the pit of hell. Hogwash!

God's answer to the problem of alienation is reconciliation, initiated by His work on the cross. In the work of reconciliation, God didn't meet us halfway. God meets us all the way and invites us to accept it.

The idea of presenting us holy and blameless before God may recall the terminology used when priests inspected potential sacrifices. We are presented to God as a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

If Jesus Christ is only a man or only an abstract concept from God, He cannot reconcile God and man. The only arbitrator who can bring God and man together is One who is both God and Man Himself. Contrary to what the gnostics taught, Jesus Christ was a true human being with a real body. He was God in human flesh. When He died on the cross, He met the just demands of the law because He paid the penalty for man's sins. Reconciliation was completed on the cross.

1 Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

D. THE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1) Jesus Christ has taken care of all things.

All things were created by Him and for Him. He existed before all things, and He holds all things together. He has reconciled all things through His own crucifixion. No wonder Paul declared that "*in all things He might have the preeminence*".

2) All that we need is Jesus Christ.

We have all of God's fullness in Him, and we are "filled full" in Him. There is no need to add anything to the person or work of Jesus Christ. To add anything is to take away from His glory. To give Him prominence instead of preeminence is to attempt to dethrone Him.

3) God is pleased when His Son, Jesus Christ, is honored and given preeminence.

E. APPLICATION

Jesus must be the top priority and preeminence in our lives.

No human desire can be placed in the spot of Jesus in our hearts.