

The Preeminence of Christ

A Brief Study Guide to Colossians

by Bryan Gibson

Here's a chapter by chapter breakdown of Colossians, all gathered around this one key phrase: "that in all things He [Christ] may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Chapter One: The Preeminence of Christ Himself. His preeminence can be seen in the fact that "He is before all things" (v. 17), King of all (vv. 13, 16), redeemer and forgiver (v. 14), the image of the invisible God (v. 15), the firstborn over all creation (v. 15), the creator and sustainer of the universe (vv. 16-17), the Head of the church (v. 18), the beginning, the firstborn from the dead (v. 18), the fullness of all things (v. 19), and the one who reconciles all things to God (v. 20).

Chapter Two: The Preeminence of Christ in Doctrine. That Christ is preeminent in doctrine can be seen in the fact that in Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (v. 3), that we are therefore "complete in Him" (v. 10). We must beware, then, of any religious teaching that is "not according to Christ" (v. 8)—any teaching or practice that is "according to the commandments and doctrines of men" (v. 22), any teaching that is "self-imposed" (v. 23). Even Old Testament regulations, as valuable as they may be for our learning (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11), cannot be bound today, because they're merely a shadow of Christ (vv. 16-17). The message here is very simple: Christ is preeminent, and therefore the one and only source of religious doctrine and practice.

Chapter Three: The Preeminence of Christ in our Daily Lives—and that includes our thoughts, our goals, our speech, our relationships, all of which are covered in this chapter. Notice how often the instructions in this chapter point back to Christ: "seek those things...where **Christ** is" (v. 2); "you died, and your life is hidden with **Christ**" (v. 3); "put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of **Him**" [Christ] (v. 10); "**Christ** is all and in all" (v. 11); "as **Christ** forgave you, so you must also do" (v. 13); "do all in the name of the **Lord Jesus**" (v. 17); "as is fitting in the **Lord**" (v. 18); "this is well-pleasing to the **Lord**" (v. 20); "as to the **Lord** and not to men" (v. 23); "knowing that from the **Lord** you will receive the reward" (v. 24); "for you serve the **Lord Christ**" (v. 25). To give Him preeminence, then, in our daily lives, we live because of Him; we live for Him; we live like Him; and we look forward to being with Him.

Chapter Four: The Preeminence of Christ, and His Work. "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it'" (v. 17). Archippus may have been singled out, but the same could be said to his "fellow-workers for the kingdom of God" (v. 11), people like Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, and Nymphas (vv. 7, 9, 10-15). If Christ is preeminent, then so is His work, and so is His kingdom. So no matter what task we've been given in the kingdom; it's our obligation to "fulfill it", and to do so with "great zeal" (v. 13).