

JESUS IS LORD AND THE FULLNESS OF GOD

We have many adages or sayings we take for granted. Many times when we use an expression such as, "we have a government of the people, by the people and for the people," we don't really consider the full implication of what it means. Most of us think of such an assertion in terms of our right to vote and that we have a representative form of government. Such a statement might also imply the source, basis or world view of our society. Unless the concept "of, by, and for the people" is balanced with a strong underlying foundation of a Creator God to Whom we are ultimately responsible, then this idea will evolve into secular humanism.

In the area of our Christianity we have many sayings that define our beliefs and principles by which we operate. We talk about being "saved" and yet many would have trouble giving a good definition of what "salvation" is all about. We speak of saints and think of people pictured in stained glass windows. We talk about being "under grace" and "not under the law" and think that it means the Ten Commandments no longer have to be observed. We say that "Jesus is Lord" and think that it simply means that He is Deity. We want to take a closer look at this statement regarding Jesus to see what it really does mean to say that Jesus is Lord. In many of Paul's letters the term "Lord Jesus Christ" is used and implies the recognition of the Lordship of Jesus.

Two main themes evident in the writings of Paul are related to *theology* and *practical living*. If we understand the theology correctly, then we will have better chance to be correct in the way we express practical living aspects in our daily lives. Without knowing the nature and character of God, we will have little idea of the target toward which we must direct our lives. The ultimate goal to which we must project is to be transformed into the image of Jesus. (See also, Ephesian 4:13 and Romans 8:29.)

One might ask, "Why Jesus?" Why is He the One to be the target of any transformation that may occur in our lives? Paul addressed this very issue in his writings regarding who Jesus is and what has He done.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13, 14, NIV)

We recognize Jesus as Lord because He has redeemed (bought) us by His blood. In His death, He took our sins upon Himself and gain for us "righteousness" before God. In this act of His substitutionary death, the power of Satan was broken so that we can leave the Kingdom of Darkness and come into the Kingdom of Light. We do this in our identification with Christ in His death on the Cross. When He died, we died with Him.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:13, 14, NIV)

Jesus is the perfect picture of God Whom we cannot otherwise see. God is Spirit and His physical appearance is immaterial (no pun intended). The real issue is *what is His nature and character?* These are what Jesus showed us by His life. In John's gospel, Jesus is called the Word of God, which could be thought of as God communicating Himself to us.

Paul addressed the deity of Jesus in term of the creation. Jesus is referred to as the "firstborn over all creation." The Greek word for firstborn is *prototokos* from which we derive our word prototype or model. This position of firstborn also speaks of privilege and rank over everything created. Why does He have this position? Because He created everything. "For by Him (Jesus, God the Son) all things were created." When it says, **all things** it means physical and spiritual, visible and invisible. Not only were all things created **by** Him, all things were created **for** Him. We might say

that we have a universe of God, by God and for God. Even more amazing, we find that all things continue in the state of "being" because of his creative power.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Colossians 1:18)

Some groups believe and argue Christ was a created being. How can this be if He is before all things? Being "before all things" means that He is pre-existent before creation.

In a parallel way, Paul presents Christ as the firstborn from the dead and therefore the first (or type) of the new creation of the human race -- those who have been born again. In this way, He is head of the church or the new creation. Therefore, not only is Christ the Creator and Head of the universe (the original creation), He is also the Head of the New Creation (the Church).

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20)

Some groups in Paul's day taught that Jesus Christ was a lesser God than God the Father. Paul's answer to them is that the fullness of the Godhead is in Christ Jesus and that there is no conflict with God the Father and God the Son.

When sin entered the world, it caused all of the creation to be separated from God. In the beginning, God put the dominion of all the earth under the care of man. When man stopped serving God and started serving Satan, then the dominion of the earth was acquired by Satan. In His death on the Cross, Jesus regained the authority over all of heaven and earth and established His church to be about the business of bringing about a reconciliation of all things to Himself *in deed*.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 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--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 servant. (Colossians 1:21-23)

Just as we were separated from God and did not have peace, even so the world without Jesus is separated from God and lacks peace. Jesus brought about this reconciliation by his death in which He took our sins upon Himself. He died to bear the penalty of sin (the wages of sin is death) so that we could be as righteous as He is -- holy and blameless in His sight. We participated in this blessing by faith and we will continue therein by faith. Our faith is not in our own righteousness nor works but in the completed work of Jesus by which we are qualified to look forward in hope of spending eternity united with Christ Jesus our Lord. If we haven't acknowledged Him as Lord in this life, how can He be our Savior now and in eternity?

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness--the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:24-27)

Jesus suffered on the cross and we are called to suffer or put to death the sin nature. Paul knew he still lacked having accomplished the full job of putting the flesh to death in his own life. It is only in putting the flesh "off" that the influence of Christ can do its work in us. He, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, takes us from being justified by his work on the cross through the process of sanctification and will ultimately bring us to the point of glorification with and in Him.