

Colossians

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[0 : 0 0] 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 consist The text gives rise to the two considerations in the mind which I will mention as I commence this morning and one is how important it is that we should have that our minds should be instructed in all things pertaining to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we may have right thoughts of him

The other is that our hearts should be so impressed with these things concerning Jesus Christ and all things that are written in this chapter concerning him that we should not only have right thoughts about him but right feelings towards his blessed and his holy name To have right thoughts about Jesus Christ and right feelings towards him that is all important and if we are real Christians if he has indeed saved us by his precious blood from all that otherwise we should have sunk into we ought to be thankful to know more about Jesus Christ

His own question comes into the mind What think ye of Christ? Permit me to urge it on you this morning Now What think ye of Christ?

I speak to some who I verily believe have been in the way of truth for many years might I say to you now What think ye of Christ after all these years?

That you have heard his word called upon his name and been under the guidance and teaching of his truth Now what think ye of Christ?

[3 : 1 7] Have we learnt anything more about him in a spiritual way? Are our views of his person his wonderful person any clearer any deeper have they become enlarged through these years?

Has there been any growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ? Young men and women what think you in your early years of Jesus Christ?

What think ye of this blessed person? Have you account of him? Have you any views in your minds of Jesus Christ?

Have you any feelings in your heart may I ask towards Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is the very centre the central person and the centre in all real spiritual religion and the apostle's mind as I have pointed out before in this part of the chapter is to instruct us in this knowledge of Jesus Christ that we should have right thoughts of him that our faith in him should not be a kind of a blind credence but the spiritually intelligent understanding faith and that we should honour and prize such a person as this

Jesus Christ is who is the image of the invisible God who is the firstborn of every creature who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear son in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sin and if it should be my privilege if the Holy Spirit should use my mind and my heart and my lips to convey this instruction to you well I would be thankful indeed I hope that you appreciate this my friends and especially those of you who are younger in life you will never know the reality of real religion unless you know

[6 : 22] Jesus Christ theorizing won't get you very far and I may add this with all affection although it doesn't just come into my text but it comes into my heart and that is if Jesus Christ does not come into your heart and into your lives you've got an empty life in front of you and a worse than empty eternity after it Jesus Christ can bring present life and peace into your soul he can fill every desire that his grace caused you to feel and he can fill eternity with endless love and joy and peace and there's no one and there's nothing can do it except

Jesus Christ there's an empty life in front of you if he doesn't come into it and there's an empty eternity afterwards if he doesn't come into it for Jesus Christ is all and in all and to suppose that life can be filled such a being as ours is with other things is a sad mistake and that it is so is evident by the frustration and trouble and the light that we see on every hand now I will not pursue that line of thought and feeling anymore but I felt I must say that because it's been very much on my mind to say it to you lately now we come this morning then to this consideration of

Jesus Christ and in this particular what a blessing the epistles are because in them we have that teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ that does not appear very clearly in his own personal life as we have it recorded in the gospel I know that the apostle John in the opening of his gospel goes into this immediately this point but taking it all through if we know nothing more of Jesus Christ when we read of him in the gospels her very deficient her understanding would be of the wonderful person that he really is and it was as I have mentioned before the special purpose of the coming of the

Holy Spirit after Jesus Christ himself had ascended into heaven to guide the apostles into a deeper and a clearer understanding of the person of Jesus Christ now there are some considerations in this text of course that will guide us into our meditation on the person of Jesus Christ this morning and I must say that as I have pondered over this word I felt well really here is something more for contemplation than exposition for I will say at once that it's very difficult for me to explain everything in this text this morning but there are some points in it very clear but even those I feel are more for pondering and contemplating than explaining and understanding and that exercise of mind by the way is very profitable spiritually it's very well to have things explained but we need to contemplate to ponder over spiritual and heavenly things as well as have them explained to us sometimes a few words especially the few words of this 17th verse seem to me to affect one's mind more in a way of contemplation than exposition and he is before all things and by him all things consist now

I will take this line as I may be able this morning the first thing for me to set before you for consideration is the eternity of Jesus Christ himself he is before all things and the very way in which it is expressed shows what depth of meaning there is even in the tenses of the scripture it doesn't say he was before all things as referring to something that was past only but he is he is now he is before all things you will say well what is the difference the difference is this that if it was expressed to us that he was before all things it would put him in relation to other things themselves that he is before them you see but being put like this he is before all things it puts him above them as though he is not at all affected by the passing of all other things he is as though all other things were not he is what all other things are and he is when all other things are gone you see he's above them he's not affected at all by the continual passing of ages and generations he is and

[13 : 54] Jesus himself gave expression to that same sublime thought and meaning when he said before Abraham was I was no before Abraham was I am the same thing I am now how are we to understand the eternity of Jesus Christ well first of all we must understand it of the eternity of his divine nature for God is it isn't that God was he is and Jesus Christ is really and essentially divine he is before all things exactly as the apostles as the as John the evangelist

John puts it in the really magnificent and yet simple opening of his gospel in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God the same was in the beginning with God and by him were all things made that are made he was in the beginning yea he was not only in the beginning of the whole creation but he was before all creation began in the beginning before all things had a beginning in the beginning before the scripture opened in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth he was there in the beginning and before all time began and time began of course when existences began that are measurable by time time

I don't read that God created time but when things began time began but before time began when there was nothing to be measured by period even in that past eternity when neither were angels made nor men and nor exist but God than he is now that is one point of truth of the greatest importance to understand and to believe that all that God is Jesus Christ is because he is God himself and there is a distinction in this matter that

John points out which Paul does not in this passage but which is of the greatest importance to understand and that is the distinction between the Father and the Son for John says he was God yet he adds he was in the beginning with God unless there should be a misunderstanding as though in some sense that made him less than divine John adds it again to clear the point beyond all question that he was God now we understand it in this way that he was God in his divine nature that he was with

God as the Son of God in his distinct personality in the glorious Trinity for the Trinity my brethren is a blessed and a glorious truth there is one God not three gods one God one infinite and glorious and eternal being but there are three persons three spiritual persons in that one God head equal in eternity in love in holiness in power in wisdom in everything that pertains to the divine nature equal the Son not less than the Father the

[19 : 30] Holy Spirit not less than the Son but three equal persons in one undivided God head now in that mystery too mysterious for us to fathom and understand in that mystery he was and he is before all things he had no beginning as God as man he had there was a time when Jesus Christ was born into this world a real man by a real birth though by a supernatural conception conception a real birth but a supernatural conception and before he was born at Bethlehem he did not exist as a man

I know there were occasions when he appeared in the form of a man in fact I feel that every appearance of God in any way before Jesus Christ appeared in this world as a man was in the person of his son there's a very interesting and instructive and impressive view of this in one of the visions of Ezekiel where he saw the glory of God above the throne and he said and I saw the likeness of a man upon the throne the likeness of a man not a man because Jesus Christ was not then born but I saw the likeness of a man upon it but

Jesus Christ in due time in due time was born into this world and although I know it is said in the epistle to the Romans that he came in the likeness of sinful flesh but that means not that it was only the likeness of a body but he appeared like everyone else everyone else is sinful and he appeared in just the same body as everyone else that is sinful has but it was not sinful flesh it was only the likeness of it because there was no sin in his pure human nature these are deep things I know but I want to set these instructive points before your minds this morning well he is before all things in the glory of his infinite divinity but there is another way now I must come to in setting before you this truth that he is before all things and that will lead me back to an expression in the 15th verse which

I did not attempt to expound at all last Lord's day who is the image of the invisible God the firstborn of every creature now he is before all things as the firstborn of every creature now this cannot mean of course that he was the firstborn of every creature with regard to his humanity he was not for innumerable people were born before Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem I know that the expression sometimes the firstborn is intended to imply one who has an eminence over all the others but that doesn't fit here he is the firstborn of every creature now there are some who have always denied the divinity of

Jesus Christ that I have been setting before you this morning they used to be called Sossinians well long before that soon after the apostles days were over there arose a leader a teacher called Arius who taught that Jesus Christ was no more than a man in these days that teaching forms part of the teaching of what are called Unitarians who believe that there is one God only and not three persons so they carry the name of Unitarians well now all who have advocated this error with regard to the person of Jesus Christ always appeals to this scripture he is the first born of every creature all they say the first born of every creature is a creature well now if the apostles had left it at that there might have been some color to have usage of this expression the first born of every creature but what follows he is before all things before all things and by him were all things created now the creator cannot be a creature the creator cannot be a creature he who creates must be above and beyond all that he creates isn't it remarkable how the holy spirit has caused these scriptures so to be written that any misunderstanding with regard to any one scripture is soon contradicted by another now Jesus Christ is before all things as the creator before I come to that I must add a word with regard to this other expression the first born of every creature now by all sound teachers it is agreed and I feel that it is a perfectly true way of putting it it means he was born before every creature was made he was born before every creature was made ah but then here is another profound matter in what sense was he born can God be born now we cannot understand that God can be born as God but Jesus Christ was the eternal eternally begotten son of God as the son as the son so that we come to a truth that although I cannot pretend and I don't think anyone can explain it how that Jesus Christ is the eternally begotten son of the eternal father in other words you have in it that the truth that caused so much contention over a hundred years ago in our denomination the

[28 : 20] eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ the doctrine is he was eternally the son of God he became the son of man by being born into this world but he was a son of God before all things were created the eternal son of the everlasting time and this is that point concerning which I meant when I began it's a matter more for contemplation than exposition that God the God sent his only begotten son into the world that we should live through him and this scripture that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son well by his giving his only begotten son we understand his giving him to come into this world to be born into our nature that he might redeem us by his precious blood now he must have been the only begotten son before he was sent

God did not send one to become his only begotten son he sent him who was before he sent him his only begotten son now that is the truth then that is the doctrine as simply and as scripturally as I can put it to you this morning that Jesus Christ was before all things as the only begotten of the father that word of the apostle in the Hebrews is to this point and I've mentioned it before I quite expect where he puts it thus who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person when he had by himself purged our sins sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high that word the brightness of his glory means the bright shining forth the effulgence naturally the allusion is clear it's a metaphor the apostle alludes to the shining forth of the sun the beams of the sun now it has been said well if Jesus Christ was the son of God in his divine nature the father must have been before the sun but then you see we can't reason like that because that's carrying the idea of human generation into a divine sphere where it has no place at all but the apostle puts it like this as the son of God he is like the bright shining forth of the beams of the sun now it's quite reasonable for us to believe and to feel that the sun and the beams that shine forth from it coexisted from the very beginning that the sun never was without the beams shining forth from it and the beams shining forth from the sun never were before the sun itself the sun and its beams coexisted and as far as anything any natural metaphor can express this divine mystery the Lord Jesus Christ was like the bright shining forth in his person as the son of God of the glory of the father and they co-existed the father and the son from all eternity well that is all I can say on that point this morning he is before all things in those two ways in his eternal existence as God and in his eternal sonship as the only begotten son of the father well now with just a minute to less is all I have left this morning

I'll come to the next point which rather than more fills the subject and yet I feel is not so important for me to have set before you as what I have set before you this morning for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth visible and invisible whether they be thrones or dominion or principalities or powers all things were created by him and for him now don't look to me to explain all this it means simply that all things that exist whether we can see them or not were created by Jesus Christ I know that sometimes creation is ascribed to God the Father sometimes it is ascribed to God the Holy Ghost the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the earth when it was without form and void and formed it into its present appearance but then it is quite usual in the scripture to ascribe the same things sometimes to the Father and sometimes to the Son and sometimes to the Holy Spirit because they are so essentially one that what one divine person does all divine persons do but now the Lord

Jesus Christ is set before us in this scripture as the great creator of all things creation falls into two spheres visible and invisible now here let me say that I know there are difficulties in the minds of some especially of course younger people they used to be in mine with regard to the creation because of the opposing theory of evolution now there is no place for me in the pulpit and this is not the time for me to attempt to enter into this complicated matter but I will say this that there can only be two possible explanations of the existence of things at all they must either have been created or they must either have been formed out of something that preexisted but now you young people think where this is going to lead you you say well things were formed out of something that preexisted well then what was that preexistent something formed out of and so you might go on mind you and you'll still come to the end of it somewhere some when nothing existed if it did what was it formed out of now if you take a scripture to guide you in this matter you'll have no such difficulty in the beginning when nothing existed

God created all existing things and I know that there are difficulties with regard to understanding this truth about the creation and even those who are fair enough to acknowledge the truth will say that there's equal difficulties about the other fields equal if not greater in fact not so very long ago I read from some eminent scientist who didn't hold the doctrine of creation as we have it in the scriptures he said well there were many many difficulties he admitted with regard to the other theory but he said it's the only alternative to creation and that obviously is an impossibility you see if the only alternative that can't be proved he was honest enough to say that it can't be proved that it's the only alternative but why should creation by the hand and power of

[38 : 48] God be an impossibility if God is almighty and if there is a God he is almighty why should there be any impossibility and look there are all sorts of things that at one time would have been scorned as an impossibility and folly but have not been proved to be impossible at all now you young people think suppose we will say 200 or 300 years ago someone said it was possible to speak in England and be heard in Australia now what now what contempt would have been poured upon such a thing as that that anyone could speak in England and be heard in Australia it's impossible of course it's impossible it's foolish but you see it's come to pass for all that and who is there to say that there are not many more possibilities that to us seem impossible and that being so it's folly to my mind to suggest that it's impossible

God could have created the world but I've come through all such difficulties and my mind has come to rest in the scripture and the more I ponder over the scripture and pray over it the more it satisfied my mind that in the scripture we have all the instructions we need to have with regard to the origin of things that God should create the world with all its immensity and the universe with all its vast immensity and every living thing upon it in all the innumerable species of it seems to me a far more reasonable thing than supposed it all came into existence of itself we have a sure word in the scripture about this by him were all things created visible and invisible by now

I've quite run my time out this morning and I must leave the matter where it is and may the Lord guide our minds aright into these things Amen