

7/7/20

The section of Colossians we will be looking at tonight is 1:15 through the first part of vs. 19;

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things 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 may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell. . .”

Christ has ascended, in victory, to heaven and has drawn us to Himself there. We are His spiritual body in union with Him at the right hand of God; far above all principalities and powers.

The implications of that reality were meant to be registered in the church and through the church on this lower creation.

The full impact of who we are in Christ, and who Christ is in us, will not happen until we return with Him and crush Satan under our feet. But prior to the rapture, the overcoming remnant, like the church of Acts (only global this time), will be living in the good of what Christ has accomplished for us and has brought to us by the indwelling Spirit.

The passage we just read in Colossians begins by establishing the fact of Christ’s deity; “by Him all things were created . . .”; it also establishes the Son of God’s position over His creation as the “firstborn”.

“Firstborn” refers to a position of authority, not a chronological status. For example, in Exodus 4:22-23 we read this:

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is My son, My firstborn. So, I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me.”’

Israel was not the first nation on this planet, not even close. But they were placed in what was called “firstborn” to secure them in the position of privilege and authority that God had predetermined for them.

Psalm 89:27 is even clearer on this: the psalmist is prophesying the role of the Messiah:

“I will make Him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”

Christ is the “firstborn” over all creation. It’s His creation, and He will reign as King of Kings over all He has made. There is a resurrected Man on the throne of eternity; the firstborn of a new creation of humanity.

When Paul says that Christ is the image of the invisible God, he’s saying that in Him the nature and being of God have been perfectly revealed. That which was invisible (because God is Spirit) has been made visible in Christ.

We can see this in John 1:18 also,

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him.”

Then in the next two verses the church is brought in:

“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 preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell. . .”

All the fullness of God is in His Son and all the fullness of the Son is to be displayed in His corporate body of which He is the Head. In Eph. 3:14-19 Paul explains this;

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*”

This “fullness” of God is His glory in full manifestation.

And here’s where, for us, everything becomes something that is far beyond our present comprehension; we can only stand in awe of what God intends for us.

Listen to what our Lord says in John 17:22;

“The glory which You gave Me, I have given them . . .”

And in Eph. 3:20-21,

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think (*in other words, beyond our ability to comprehend*), according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.”

The glory of the invisible, triune Godhead found its full revelation in Christ and has now been expanded to include His body, the church.

This simply means that all that God is in His invisible nature and moral character is to be expressed in and through Christ and His body, perfectly expressing the glory, wisdom and authority of the Son of God as firstborn over the works of His hands. This is the destiny of the church in union with Christ.

So, don’t let this earth drag you down into what is less than your heavenly calling and destiny in Christ.

As this author puts it;

“We said that you must individually and personally recognize that you were foreknown before the foundation of this world, and chosen in Christ then, and foreordained, that God knew you then and had His eye upon you, and called you in relation to this purpose of eternity, though you be in your own eyes very weak and poor and of no account, and although in the eyes of the world you may be utterly at a discount and a nothing . . . so, to be in a place of spiritual revelation is to be in a high place of power where we are not just giving out things we have read, studied, or worked up; not things which we have heard, but that which has been revealed to us by God Himself concerning His Son.” (TAS)

Again, God's goal for us in this world, in this life, is not just to impart information to us but to bring us into genuine spiritual life so that who we become, not just what we know, is an expression of the life of Christ in us.

Doctrine has to turn into personal revelation and revelation into character.

As Jesus said in John 6:63; "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life."

This is why suffering is connected to reigning in life, both now and in eternity (2 Tim. 2:12) "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him . . .". And in James 1:2-4;

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

The Lord is developing and shaping a new humanity in the likeness of Christ to reign with Him.

The gold is being refined in fire to burn off the impurities and reduce us to that which is a perfect moral expression of Christ in us.

If we can keep God's goal for us in mind (the invisible God made visible in fullness in the body of Christ), we can rejoice in the process that brings us there.

If we focus only on our tribulations rather than on the goal and purpose of those tribulations, we lose sight of the value of what the Lord is doing.

Throughout the scriptures we see over and over again the multitude of men and women willing to pay any price to glorify their God. This is the 'great cloud of witnesses' that surrounds us.

Listen carefully to this section of Heb. 12 in the light of what we've talked about:

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who

endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, or be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb. 12:1-10)

The “peaceful fruit of righteousness” is the fruit of the Spirit; it is Christ formed in us and this is done by what Hebrews calls “chastening”.

That’s the price we are asked to pay to have what we hate about who we are in the flesh removed and replaced by the new creation likeness of Christ in us.

Now, we’re going to shift gears and look at some other implications of being in union with Christ.

In previous studies we looked at some of the realities of living in the rapture generation; here are a few of them:

- 1) The heightened sense of urgency because our time is short.
- 2) The need to be firmly established in personally knowing our time in history – not just believing it’s possible because someone told us.

- 3) Being awake and understanding God's purpose for the church in our generation.
- 4) The reason for the rapture and the implications of this event on the prince of the power of the air.
- 5) Being grounded in the truth because of the intensified deception that is encompassing the world and the church.
- 6) And knowing what immediately follows the rapture, the judgement seat of Christ, in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb.

We've examined these things in past studies, but one of the things we haven't talked about yet is how this generation is the final preparation of the body of Christ for her *physical* ascension to the throne.

In many ways, this is probably the most important implication of all because it explains everything we are going through. The Lord is purifying us to bring about the decrease of the rule of the flesh and increase of the measure of Christ in us.

There is a direct tie-in between this final, *spiritual* ascendancy of the church and our *physical* ascendancy at the rapture. Listen to this author's take on this:

"We have seen the movements of God with His people in an upward direction spiritually and morally, which are to culminate in a literal, upward movement to join the Lord in the air and in glory. Now for a little while we shall be covering things which have been said in relation to that final movement of the Lord's people from these passages, specifically in Thessalonians in the clause "shall be caught up." That is the Lord's side of this thing. We have been dealing very much with our side of it: going up, upward exercise, the Lord calling us to higher spiritual position. This is the Lord's act, but it is the Lord's culminating act. It is, as it were, the Lord's counterpart of that in which we have been spiritually engaged and exercised. It is as though we had been spiritually moving upwards until we reached a certain place and then the Lord suddenly finished the movement and took hold and gave a literal expression to what had been spiritual and we are caught up to His side. There is a condition for being caught up. We cannot too often point out the fact that there will be no catching up on the Lord's part unless there is a going up on our part." (TAS)

It makes total sense that since the Lord's goal for us is spiritual ascendancy, the last generation would be God's final, consummate achievement in bringing many sons to glory.

And when that goal is reached, what has become a *spiritual* reality in us will issue in a *physical* catching up to meet the Lord in the air.

This is why there are so many passages exhorting us to "press on" to keep moving forward to actually "hasten the coming of the Lord".

There is a heightened sense of urgency in all the passages related to the end of this age to leave all lower ground; to turn away from the things of this world (religious or otherwise) and to forcibly and consistently "seek those things which are above. . . " Colossians 3:1-4;

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him *in glory*."

This appeal which Paul gives us should make more sense now, in light of what we've seen of our death to the old creation and to this world.

This is where our affections, our thoughts, our prayers should be focused.

We're praying that the Lord will take us to the mountain that is higher than us; to guard us against the pull of the world and of contemporary Christianity trying to rob us of our heavenly calling.

And when the souls of a global remnant are fully captured by eternity instead of time, Christ will "catch us up to meet the Lord in the air".

Those whose hearts are set on heaven are the only ones who are truly longing for His appearing.

A couple of passages to consider:

“Everyone who has this hope, purifies himself even as He is pure.” (1 Jn. 3:3)

“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (2 Pet. 3:11)

This is the time in history in which the church must move swiftly and determinately toward moral purity; speaking and living the truth regardless of the personal consequences.

It will be a people like this that will be alive at the rapture and will be taken up to the heaven they have embraced while on earth.

“. . . the dead in Christ shall rise first. After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we always be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:17)

This is how this passage would be if it was translated literally from the original,

“. . . the dead in Christ shall be raised first. Then those that are characterized as the living ones, namely, the surviving remnant, will be caught up by great force together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

Here’s an additional understanding of this by Sparks;

“Do we believe that all this conflict we are experiencing is an accident, or because things have gone wrong? Well, if you study it close enough, the closer you get the more you feel there is a plan about it, a divine purpose in it. It all has a meaning. The Lord does not deliver you out of conflict however much you cry to be delivered, but He teaches you how to go through in the power of a growing faith, and the church in the end is going to triumph by this faith in the Son of God. It is unto the coming of the Lord. What the Lord is doing is to develop in the midst of conflict in the church a faith that will overcome and break through and reach the Lord.”

Here’s another section of scripture in Romans 8 that should be more meaningful now;

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory which shall be revealed in us*. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption (the resurrection) of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not yet see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” (Rom. 8:18-25)

Suffering leads to glory revealed in us and to the deliverance of all creation from death and decay. We groan within ourselves anxiously waiting for, longing for, that resurrection.

We don't see it yet, but we know it's coming and we press forward to embrace the full reality of our calling.

For all of us, this is meant to be the life and inner nature of a Christian in the last generation.

Everything that's happening right now in this world, from the global crises that are intensifying to the apostasy of the church, points to that day when all of these spiritual realities will be consummated in the body of Christ in glory.

One of my goals in everything we study together is to consistently move us away from this world and set our minds and hearts on Christ, on heaven, on our home and our destiny.

It's our only safeguard in this generation from the pull of the earth.

And as we've seen before, the one thing that should affect everything we are, think and do is the fact that we only have a short time before we are gone.

What if a doctor told you that you only had between 6 and 18 months to live; maybe less? Would that change your thinking or actions in any way?

For all of us that's an absolute reality!

The bride is in the final stage of preparation for meeting the bridegroom.

The world is on the brink of the kingdom of Antichrist.

The reign of the Son of God for 1000 years of righteousness and justice with us by His side will begin at the destruction of the Antichrist's kingdom.

These are the things we should be living in, praying for, thinking about; the things that should saturate our worship - these thoughts should be flooding our hearts and minds.

This will all take place in our generation, and as we saw earlier,

“The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”

“Creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”

The “beginning of sorrows” has started; the birth pangs will increase with shorter gaps in between each increasingly severe contraction.

Every global crisis that pounds this earth will be followed by one that is more destructive and deceptive.

The war in heaven is intensifying and this world is reeling under the impact of those battles. We are seeing the foreshadowing of the final battle talked about in Rev. 12:7-12:

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their

lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Chaos in the spiritual and physical realms must become a universal reality to make way for the Antichrist to bring peace, safety and complete global deception to the world’s population.

All that we see is leading to this – from the suffering of the saints to purify them, to the exploding insanity of this world to prepare them for full surrender to the deception of the beast that rises out of the sea of fallen humanity.

These things will be brought to consummation in a matter of months.

Whatever you have to do through prayer and study, make sure your understanding is fully established in these truths and that you are living as those who know they are at the very end of this age.