

H Y M N S

Concerning Christ as God's Centrality and Universality

- 1 Christ is God's centrality
And His universality;
He is God's delight and joy
Throughout all eternity.
- 2 He's th' embodiment of God,
In Him all God's fulness dwells;
His unique supremacy
And His Godhead none excels.
- 3 All God's purpose is for Him,
That He might be all in all;
All the things in heav'n and earth
With Himself are made withal.
- 4 All creation is for Christ,
Everything was made by Him;
'Tis by Him all things subsist,
He's the hub and He's the rim.
- 5 In redemption He is all,
All through Him is reconciled;
By His blood all things with God
Now in peace are domiciled.
- 6 He the great beginning is,
And the Church's living Head;
He her life and content too,
And the firstborn from the dead.
- 7 In God's Kingdom He's the King,
All the pow'r to Him is giv'n;
In His glory He shall rule
Over all in earth and heav'n.
- 8 In new heaven and new earth
Center of all things He'll be,
For the Godhead and for man
Throughout all eternity.
- 9 God intends in everything
Christ should have preeminence,
And that such a Christ of all
We should now experience. (*Hymns*, #495)

Christ is the centrality and the universality of God. Christ is the center of everything that God has planned, purposed, and accomplished. He is the purpose of God in His eternal plan. He is the focus of God in creation. He is the implicit meaning of the magnificence of God's boundless creation, and He is the ultimate significance of its minutest details. Christ is also God's unique "delight and

joy." In the entire universe only Christ satisfies God. Christ is God's enjoyment. Christ is the wellspring of God's good pleasure. What delights God the most is His Son. When the Son came up out of the waters of the Jordan River following His baptism, the Father exclaimed from the heavens, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight" (Matt. 3:17).

This hymn is an anthem of praise extolling the universal grandeur and the unsurpassed preeminence of Jesus Christ before both God and man. After introducing Christ as both the centrality and universality of God and also as the delight and joy of God, the remaining stanzas expound various aspects in which He is the supreme and glorious centrality and universality of God's eternal economy.

In stanza 2, the man Jesus is first presented in His relationship to God; then His unique supremacy as God in the Godhead is reaffirmed. This points to Colossians 2:9, which declares that "in Him [as a man] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead [referring to His deity] bodily [pointing to His physical body in His humanity]." As a man, He is the embodiment of God. Before His incarnation, God, who ever exists as Spirit, could only express Himself in a mystical way to the spirit of man (John 4:24). But such a communication between God and man could not adequately reveal the fullness of God's person and attributes to men. Jesus Christ, as the embodiment of God, came to make God known to man. "No one has ever seen God," the apostle John wrote, "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (1:18). Jesus Himself declared, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (14:9). Then He urged His disciples to "believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (v. 11). The Son declares the Father, unveils the Father, expresses the Father, represents the Father, and even is the Father living out His life in the Son. He and the Father mutually indwell each other; He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. By this mutual indwelling, God is manifested in the flesh, in the very person of the Son. The eternal, infinite, invisible God is seen in a mortal, finite, and visible man. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). In our worship, love, and appreciation of our dear Lord Jesus, we must realize that He is sent from and with the Father to make the Father known without limitation, distortion, or interference by His humanity. Through Him the divine life and essence flowed in

purity without any resistance. Through God's embodiment in the Son we are able to know who God is, what pleases Him, what His heart's desire is, and how much He loves us. We meet God in a man.

The fact that He is a real and genuine man by no means limits His deity. Hence, stanza 2 continues by proclaiming both "His unique supremacy" and His unexcelled position in the Godhead. As God the Son, He is uniquely supreme in the universe; He is "the Head of all rule and authority" (v. 10). He is the One to whom the Father declared, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). As the divine Son, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him as the eternal Word before His incarnation. Now in His ascension, His humanity has fully been incorporated into the Godhead, which none can excel.

Stanzas 3 and 4 expound His centrality in God's creation: "All God's purpose is for Him, / That He might be all in all." The entire purpose of God is made with the Son, both as God and as man, fully in view. The Father is pleased that the Son would have the first place in everything (Col. 1:18). Christ was fully involved in creation as its creating power, active agent, and ultimate objective. Not only is Christ the very center and the expansiveness of God, the One who alone has preeminence in all God's purpose, but He is also the means by which God accomplishes His plan to reach His goal. Colossians 1:16 says, "Because in Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and unto Him." Here we have several key prepositions: *in*, *through*, and *unto*. *In* suggests that all things were created in the power of Christ's person, that is, in the power of what He is. *Through* indicates that Christ was the active instrument. *Unto* shows that the final and unique goal of all creation is Christ. Furthermore, "'Tis by Him all things subsist, / He's the hub and He's the rim." Christ is the holding center of the universe, the means and power by which all things subsist together. He is the One who is "upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3). The entire creation (both the old and the new) is like a huge wheel of which Christ is both the hub, the center, and the rim.

The poetry of stanza 5 stresses that Christ is the centrality of God in His desire to reconcile all things to Himself through the redemptive death of Christ. In redemption Christ tasted death on behalf of everything (2:9). Through Christ God achieved His determined objective of reconciliation: "And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens" (Col. 1:20). In both redemption and reconciliation, according to the Scripture, God's operation includes all things in the heavens and on earth. Even though redemption is not

received by all, Christ's blood has the power to effectively reconcile every item of God's creation to Himself. In all the Scriptures, there is abundant testimony that God's redemption is singularly through the shed blood of Christ, and that all things have been reconciled solely through and in the person of the unique Son of God.

Concerning the church life, which is to be lived out by all of God's redeemed and regenerated people, stanza 6 declares, "He the great beginning is, / And the Church's living Head; / He her life and content too, / And the firstborn from the dead." Christ is the church's exclusive initiation. He is also its distinct source of life, even its very life and its singular content. His unique qualification for the heading up of the church is His resurrection from the dead through which He also regenerated His believers (1 Pet. 1:3) and by virtue of which He now ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25). In the present age Christ is building up His church with His life and in His love (Matt. 16:18, cf. Eph. 4:15-16), and one day He will present it to Himself as a prepared bride, "glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish" (5:27). Then, as stanza 7 says, "In God's Kingdom He's the King, / All the pow'r to Him is giv'n; / In His glory He shall rule / Over all in earth and heav'n." At that time, the centrality of the Christ of God will be manifested for one thousand years as He reigns in His kingdom with His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and over-coming believers (Rev. 20:4, 6).

At the end of the millennial kingdom, Christ will bring in the new heaven and the new earth (21:1), and the New Jerusalem—the aggregate of all His chosen, transformed, and glorified people mingled with the Triune God—will come down from God as a bride prepared for her husband (v. 2). For eternity, Jesus will be seated as the Lamb with God on the throne (22:1), indicating that "in new heaven and new earth / Center of all things He'll be." As the One on the throne, He is the center of all things "for the Godhead." As the redeeming Lamb, He will be the center for man. Thus, Christ in His centrality will be "for the Godhead and for man / Throughout all eternity."

In the final stanza, there is the reiteration of the central desire of God's heart concerning His Son in His eternal purpose: "God intends in everything / Christ should have preeminence." And in the final lines we are counseled that we should experience "such a Christ of all." This hymn explores the unsearchable riches of the person of Jesus Christ in the eternal plan and purpose of God, but we should not simply receive these divine truths as doctrine or teaching. Rather, we should explore these rich attributes of Christ in fellowship, in prayer, in singing, and in psalming so that we would know and experience such an all-inclusive Christ.

by Gary Kaiser