

Christ, the Center of All Things in the Godhead and in Created Humanity

- 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 fullness 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)

The first stanza of the above hymn exalts Christ as the centrality and universality of God's New Testament economy. He is God's delight and joy for all eternity. Stanza 9 declares that this Christ, who is so much to God,

should also have all preeminence in created humanity—not only to be acclaimed and extolled by us objectively but also experienced and enjoyed by us subjectively. The seven stanzas between stanza 1 and stanza 9 show major aspects of the excelling riches of Christ as revealed in the Epistle to the Colossians. The focus of this hymn is upon the all-inclusive, comprehensive position and qualifications of our wonderful Christ as the God-man to be the Father's direct means of bringing forth, connecting to, and mingling with His created and regenerated people to carry out His eternal economy—the building up of a great corporate entity, the one new man—and to consummate the New Jerusalem.

The author of this hymn, Witness Lee, produced a comprehensive work, *Life-study of the Bible*, in which he completed a study and commentary on each book of the Bible from the viewpoint of God's dispensing His divine life into His believers. Lee's *Life-study of Colossians* points out that the apostle Paul focused his attention on the extraordinary characteristics of the indwelling Jesus Christ, which qualify Him to be the divine/human element whom God has appointed to be the life, the life supply, and everything within His chosen people so that He might become their all-inclusive constitution. Paul was concerned that God's people were being drawn away from the wonderful Christ to the distracting inferior items of philosophy and religion. He warned the Colossians: "Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ; for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you have been made full in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority" (Col. 2:8-10).

Lee greatly cherished and prized our dear Lord Jesus. And he was concerned that we, the redeemed ones, might neglect or altogether miss the significance of what it means to have this glorious Christ of God indwelling us. Lee summarized God's intention concerning the all-inclusive person of Christ who is indwelling us, giving clear insight into his aspiration in writing the above hymn. His pressing goal was to unveil God's manifest purpose of Christ being preeminent in the universe and becoming the desire, portion, and constituent of His chosen people.

God's economy is to work the living, all-inclusive person of Christ into us. According to the revelation in the book of Colossians, Christ is the portion of the saints, the Firstborn of all creation, the image of the invisible God, the Head of the Body, the Firstborn from among the dead, the One in whom all the fullness is pleased to dwell, the mystery of God's economy, the mystery of God, the reality of all positive things, and the constituent of the new man. Christ is everything: He is life, light, power, might, strength, righteousness, holiness, kindness, and every other divine attribute and human virtue. Because Christ is everything to us, He is all-inclusive. God's intention in His economy is to work this all-inclusive One into us. As the all-inclusive One, Christ has the highest attainments. He has ascended to the heavens and has been exalted to the highest place in the universe. He is now sitting at the right hand of God. Christ has been enthroned, and He has become the Lord and Head over all. Furthermore, He has obtained everything, for all things have become His. This person with all He has attained and obtained is the very One that God desires to work into our being. Do you truly believe that such an all-inclusive living person has been wrought into you? I doubt that very many Christians...actually believe this. (*Life-study* 330-331)

As we muse over this hymn, may we repetitively ask ourselves, "Do I really believe that such an all-inclusive person has been wrought into me? Do I have the experience and enjoyment of this indescribably rich person living in me? When the Bible tells me that the Christ in me is the hope of glory, do I realize what that means?" We may say to the Lord, "We have You as the glorious Christ dwelling in us. In what way must I cooperate with Your indwelling purpose? In what way am I resisting?" Perhaps we should pray after reading each stanza, "Lord, grant me a vision of You as the centrality and universality of God—God's delight and joy in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Lord, open my eyes so that I may see that God intends that in everything You would have the preeminence and that I should now experience You as the Christ of all."

Christ Being God's Centrality and Universality— Having the Preeminence in All Things

Stanza 1 boldly proclaims that the Lord Jesus Christ is the centrality and universality, the center and the circumference, of the eternal purpose of God. The Bible clearly reveals that the eternal purpose of God is to dispense Himself into humanity so that God will be expressed through and represented by redeemed and regenerated humanity in the realm of God's creation. God made humanity in His own image and likeness, and He charged humanity to be faithful in bearing responsibility on behalf of God over all His creation (Gen. 1:26-28). The first man, Adam, failed to carry out God's plan. The Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam

and the second man (1 Cor. 15:45-47), is the wonderful man who fulfills God's plan!

The Intrinsic Center of God's Purpose— Human and Divine

In His dual nature, being both divine and human, Christ is the intrinsic center of God's purpose for the expression of God; i.e., as a human, He fulfilled what God intended humans to be—a mingling of God and humanity. He is "the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). In His human nature He is the Firstborn of all creation, indicating that as a human, He is a creature, a part of the creation. At the same time, as the image of the invisible God, He Himself is the creative power bringing forth all creation. All creation was brought forth in Him, through Him, and unto Him (v. 16). And all creation subsists together in Him—"all things cohere in Him"—as the holding center (v. 17). By virtue of His being the Firstborn of all creation, all creation emanated out from Him; that is, all creation has Him as the means and the pattern of its intrinsic existence and energizing power. In His divine nature He is the image of the invisible God, the expression of God's intrinsic being in all His attributes and virtues (cf. Heb. 1:3). He is preeminent in all things.

The Extrinsic Completion of God's Plan

Christ is also the extrinsic completion of God's plan as the Head of the Body, the beginning, and the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18); Christ the firstborn Son is leading many sons, His duplicates, into glory (Heb. 2:10). In His resurrection the Lord Jesus is living out the very life of God as the resurrected and glorified pneumatic Christ—the life-giving Spirit—for the glorification of the Father in the Son, the Head, and in His Body, the church (cf. Eph. 3:20-21). Thus, He is completing God's purpose by producing a corporate God-man, the one new man (2:15), who was created in Him on the cross and is "being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:10).

[Romans] tells us that God's full salvation is to make sinners (3:23), even His enemies (5:10), the sons of God (8:14). Through resurrection God designated Christ, who became flesh to be the seed of David, as His Son, that His Son, who is the mingling of divinity and humanity, might be the base and pattern for His making sinners His many sons. It is in the resurrection of His Son, i.e., in the resurrected Son, that God is producing many sons (1 Pet. 1:3) as the many brothers of the Firstborn ([Rom.] 8:29), who was resurrected from the dead, and as the members of His Firstborn to constitute the Body of His Firstborn (12:5), which is His fullness (Eph. 1:23), His corporate expression. (*Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 1:4, note 2*)

Christ as the Son of Man Being God's Delight and Joy

Because He as a human is absolutely one with God for His eternal economy, this resplendent Christ is also the delight and joy of God. Anyone who has a little familiarity with the biblical record concerning God's pleasure and satisfaction with His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, may be reminded that as the Lord Jesus was being baptized to begin His ministry on earth, the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove and came upon Him: "Behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight" (Matt. 3:17). The Father again voiced His delight in the Son toward the end of the three and a half years of His ministry on the earth when He was transfigured before His disciples, John, James, and Peter. Matthew reports the scene that the three later described to the other disciples: "His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as the light"; then, as the disciples were marveling over what they had witnessed, "a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!" (17:1-5).

The second chapter of Hebrews indicates that at the time of the creation of humanity, God displayed His great purpose. Psalm 8 ponders over God's fascination with humanity, asking, "What is mortal man, that You remember him, / And the son of man, that You visit him? / You have made Him a little lower than angels / And have crowned Him with glory and honor. / For You have caused Him to rule over the works of Your hands; / You have put all things under His feet" (vv. 4-6). The writer of the book of Hebrews, referring to Psalm 8, comments,

But now we do not yet see all things subjected to Him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (2:8-10)

Jesus Christ is the absolute fulfillment of the Father's purpose in humanity. Therefore, the Father delights in Him.

The Revelation of the Extraordinary Attributes and Virtues of the Glorious All-inclusive Christ

After the declaration in stanza 1 concerning Christ as the

centrality and universality of God and His delight and joy, the stanzas following are full of the revelation of the extraordinary attributes and virtues of the glorious, all-inclusive Christ; most of these points are revealed in the book of Colossians. Briefly, these points include:

Stanza 2: He is the embodiment of the Godhead, the One in whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and His supremacy has been established as the One who has been inaugurated to be the Head of all rule and authority in the universe.

Stanza 3: In relation to God's purpose, He is all in all, filling all things in heaven and on earth.

Stanza 4: He is subjectively related to the creation; He is like the hub and the rim of a wheel, showing that all things were created in Him, through Him, and for Him and that all things subsist, that is, are held together, in Him.

"The process of creation was carried out in Him, through Him, and unto Him. He is the means, the instrument, through which and in which creation came into existence" (*Life-study* 86).

Stanza 5: He is central to the work of redemption, He reconciles all things to God, and through His blood

all things dwell peacefully in God.

Stanza 6: He is the "great beginning"; He was the beginning of the original creation, the Firstborn of all creation. But much more, as the Firstborn from the dead, He is the new beginning, the life and the content of the new creation, the church, "which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23).

Stanza 7: In God's kingdom today He is King—all authority in heaven and on the earth has been given to Him; in His pending glory in His millennial kingdom, He will be the undisputed Sovereign over all in earth and in heaven.

Stanza 8: His perpetual eminence in the new heaven and the new earth shall be established forever as the center of all things in the New Jerusalem, both in relation to God and in relation to humanity.

The Vision of the All-inclusive Christ Who Has Become Our Portion to Experience and Enjoy

The final stanza emphasizes our experience of this wonderful Christ. We need a vision of the all-inclusive, extensive

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Christ who has become our portion for us to experience and enjoy. We must see that God's economy is to reproduce the one unique God-man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose precious and splendid human virtues, filled with the divine attributes, make Him the delight of God and His eternal expression. As the incarnated Son of God, He was qualified to become a vicarious sacrifice on behalf of all humanity for the forgiveness of sins (1 John 2:2) and the gift of eternal life to whoever believes (John 3:16). But God's greater and fuller intent goes far beyond redemption; Christ, in His multifaceted reality as the eternal embodiment and expression of God, will subjectively and organically join Himself to us, His redeemed and regenerated ones, so that we together with Him might become a corporate one new man in our living and expression (Col. 3:1-4, 10-11). Lee observes,

In the book of Colossians a number of important phrases or expressions point to our experience of Christ. Some of these phrases are "Christ in you" (1:27), "full-grown in Christ" (1:28), "walk in Him" (2:6), "according to Christ" (2:8), "made alive together with Him" (2:13), "died with Christ" (2:20), "holding the Head" (2:19), "out from whom" (2:19), and "grows with the growth of God" (2:19). These nine expressions give us a complete picture of the proper experience of Christ. In this regard, we need to pay special attention to the prepositions *in*, *according to*, *with*, and *out from*. Furthermore, it would be a great help to pray-read all the verses related to these points. (*Life-study* 359)

The revelations in this hymn are based primarily on the Epistle to the Colossians, which shows the matchless Christ with all His divine and human qualifications; at the same time the Epistle exhorts us to cultivate our experiences of this wonderful Christ so that He becomes everything to us (cf. 3:1-4, 10-16). Similarly, this hymn, after unveiling multiple aspects of the preeminent Christ in its first eight stanzas, applies in its final stanza the theme of God's intention in His economy—that His firstborn Son be expanded and enlarged by means of the believers' growth and building up in Him through their experiences of Him in all His attributes and virtues.

The final stanza, therefore, emphasizes that, according to God's intention, in everything Christ would have the preeminence and that all that Christ is and does is now for our experience: "God intends in everything / Christ should have preeminence, / And that such a Christ of all / We should now experience." The word *now* is crucial here. Christ is not merely for our experience in some coming, glorious eschatological event. He is for us right now to enjoy daily, even moment by moment. Colossians is the inspiring source through which this hymn focuses on the positive exaltation of the glorious Christ and our experiences of Him. Because the Colossians were turning

away from Christ as the all-inclusive centrality and universality and were replacing Him with philosophy and religious practices, Paul wrote his excellent Epistle. The apostle gave the recipients several warnings urging them to not give credence to the distracting teachers who had come into the church in Colossae and were teaching the saints to substitute Greek philosophy and Jewish religious practices in place of Christ for their living, growing, and maturing in the divine life. Similarly, in this age of growing skepticism related to God, Christ, and the purpose of humanity, we must be exercised to beware that we are not drawn away from the centrality and universality of God. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. We must see Him and follow Him closely.

The Supreme Ruler of the Universe

Having, in Colossians 2:9, declared Christ to be the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, Paul completes his thought with the simple statement: "And you have been made full in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority" (v. 10). The hymn uses the biblical revelation to exalt Christ, declaring in stanza 2 that "in Him all God's fullness dwells." It then acknowledges Paul's word concerning Christ being the Head of all rule and authority with the words: "His unique supremacy / And His Godhead none excels." The wording of the hymn here is reminiscent of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which states that God raised Christ from the dead and seated Him "at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church" (1:20-22). Christ, in Himself in a bodily form, not only contains all that God is and all that God has, but He also has become the very Head over all rule and authority in the universe. God has assigned this position and authority to the God-man, Jesus, who is now supreme over all, unmatched, unbeatable, and incomparable in the entire universe. Because He is Lord of all, the apostle warns the Colossian believers: "Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize" (Col. 2:18). Our prize is our present experience of the Christ who is now the King, who will be the undisputed King in the millennial reign, and who will be the center of all things in the new heaven and new earth.

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