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A Bible Study

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The Real Christ of Christmas

BY RICHARD JORDAN

This declaration is the heart of a thrilling portion of Scripture in which Paul is pressing the practical nature of the believer's completeness in Christ. The context contains no less than three strong appeals in this regard: Let no man *spoil you* (v.8); Let not man *judge* you (v.16); Let no man *beguile* you (v.18). The text above is the basis for the first appeal:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Let's take that apart a little: "Beware lest any man *spoil* you." This, of course, does not refer to souring or decaying as a piece of fruit would, nor is it a reference to the way grandparents might spoil their little grandchild. Rather it is used in the sense of *making spoil of* as in the phrase, "To the victor belongs the spoils." It is a military term used to refer to capturing booty. In modern parlance, when referring to people, we might say, "A prisoner of war."

Paul is warning about someone trying to take believers captive, someone trying to take them out of the battle. And just how is this to be done? "*Through philosophy and vain deceit.*"

Philosophy is the love of wisdom; it is the working of the human mind. It is natural for the human mind to philosophize, to try to account for things, to enter into speculations; but Paul says such human viewpoint is merely "*vain deceit*" based on man's traditions and the world's standards-- "*not after Christ.*" Clearly, then, the believer should not go by what man thinks but *by what God says in His Word.*

Paul's appeal is clear: *Don't let anyone carry you away from Christ*--whether it is by philosophy, vain deceit, tradition or the principles of the world. If it isn't *centered in Christ*, be careful! "Don't let anyone" , says Paul, "carry you away from Christ because all you have and all you are, you are and have *in Him!*"

In Col. 1:19 he declares, "For it pleased the Father that *in [Christ] should all fullness dwell.*" In 2; 10 he says that the believer is made "*complete*"--made *full*--in Him. In 2:9 he explains the link that makes this possible:

"FOR IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY."

THE PARADOX

The simplicity of this statement almost belies the wonder and magnitude of the antinomy: Jesus Christ is the "enfleshing" of the Godhead. The Godhead in its fullness took up permanent residence in humanity, the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Christ is the embodiment of the Godhead and therefore God.

Perhaps the matter-of-factness in Paul's pronouncement arises from the fact that he had already developed this thought more fully in 1:15-19, where he sets forth the Savior's deity and Headship in no uncertain terms. There Paul demonstrated this by one argument after another as he declared Christ to be:

The very substance of the invisible God: "[Christ] is the image of the invisible God"(v.15; See John 1:18).

The Head of All Creation: "The firstborn (Firstborn: a *title* denoting Headship. See Gen. 49:3, Psa 89:27, Isa. 14:30, Jer. 31:9.) of every creature: For by Him were all things created. . .all things were created by Him, and for Him" (vs.15,16; See John 1:3,Eph. 3:9, Rev. 4:11).

The Head of All Eternity: "And He is before all things and by him all things con-sist" (v.17).

The Head of the Church, His Body: "And He is the head of the body, the church"(v.18).

The Head over Resurrection Life: "Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (v.18; See Rev. 1:18, Rom. 8:29).

The Head over All Things: "That in all things He might have the preeminence" (v.18, See Eph. 1:10, 21, 22, Col. 2:10).

Little wonder, then, that Paul should declare that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (v.19).

The Christ Paul preached is the Godman, the unique Person of all history: *God incarnate-the Godhead in human flesh...*

As "*the image of the invisible God,*" Jesus Christ is the manifest person of the Godhead. He is not simply a revelation of God, but rather He is *God revealed*. Thus He is expressly declared to be God:

"In the beginning was the Word, and THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD" (John 1:1).

He "*was with God*"--separate and distinct from the Father; He "*was God*"--*equal* with the Father. Thus Jesus is a *different* person from the Father--One Who is *co-equal* in essence and rank.

While Jesus Christ is true God, He is something other than God in that He is humanity:

"AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, (and we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John1:14).

The Lord Jesus Christ is total humanity and total deity! That is what we call the Hypostatic Union--the mystery of who Jesus Christ is. He is *Lord*-deity; He is *Jesus*-humanity; He is *Christ*--the "Anointed One," God and man in one person.

THE PERSON

Because of who He is, Jesus Christ is the celebrity of our hearts, yea of the universe. He is the Fount of every blessing, the Source of all supply. Indeed, *HE IS LORD*.

Believers find their all *in Him*. And how much God has for us there! How He would enrich our lives and make them worth-while. Christianity is *fullness* not emptiness.It

is blessedness, not sadness. It is the over-flow, not a giving up or taking away. Anything God takes out, He does so only that more of the fulness might come in. Christianity is Jesus Christ-His life, His fulness.

There is nothing worthwhile apart from Him. What do you need? Forgiveness of your sins? Justification? Peace with God? Peace of heart and mind? True joy? Assurance for the future? Heaven? The knowledge of the Word? You cannot have any of it until you have received Christ for yourself as your own personal Savior.

As the hymn says,

All that I need He will always be,

All that I need till His face I see;

All that I need through eternity,

Jesus is all I need.

My dear friend, we need *Him*-and, *He* is all we need. If you are unsaved, you need Christ. He is God, He is all that He claimed to be--and He gave Himself on Calvary's cross for you, paying for your every sin.

God does not say, "There is a Baptist, there is a Methodist, there is a Presbyterian." God say, "There are three sinners. My Son died for them, what are they doing *with Him*?" That is why we ask: Have you trusted Christ as your Savior? If not, we beg of you, do it now. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily and God is waiting to make you complete, to make you full in Him so that you might be blessed with all the fulness of God. Trust Him as Your Savior today!

And the Christian life is just the same, for its key is Christ. Notice the Apostle's words in Col. 2:6, 7:

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, SO WALK YE IN HIM:

"Rooted and built up IN HIM, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

The answer to our failings, to our low-living is not found by focusing on ourselves, our weaknesses, our inabilities, by imposing some performance measure to force the

desired results. Rather the answer lies *in Christ*-in His strength, His perfections, his abilities, by utilizing His provisions for us. God the Holy Spirit will work in us through His Word to conform us to *His* image as we walk *by faith in Him*.

It is because we are in Christ that God finds no fault with us. It is true that we often fail, but *in Christ* we are perfect and God, by grace, sees us ever in Him. "Oh," Paul says, "do not let anyone rob you of this complete, full salvation!" It all centers *in Christ*, in who *He* is, in *His* fulness. Only as we come to appreciate *Him* can we truly appreciate who we are in Him.

THE PROCLAMATION

One final point should be made concerning all this: The reason such fulness can be ours is that "the fulness of the Godhead" dwelt *bodily* in Christ. Thus it was that he became the "*one mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This, in a very real way, is the special focus of the message committed to the Apostle Paul:

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

"Who gave Himself a ransom for all, TO BE TESTIFIED IN DUE TIME.

"WHEREUNTO I AM ORDAINED A PREACHER, AND AN APOSTLE, (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not) a TEACHER OF THE GENTILES in faith and verity" (I Tim. 2:5-7).

Based on this "*due time*" revelation and ministry committed by our Lord to the Apostle Paul (Tit. 1: 2,3, II Tim. 1:9,10,11, Rom. 3:21-26, Eph. 3:1-9) we know the *fulness* of what He accomplished at Calvary. Today we know Him to be far more than simply Israel's Kinsman –Redeemer for the full light of revelation has been focused on the cross revealing that "He gave Himself a ransom *for all*." (Cf. Matt. 20:28 and 26:28's "*for many*," i.e., Israel (Matt. 1:21, John 10:11, 15, Heb.2:14-16).

"BUT NOW THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WITHOUT THE LAW IS MANIFESTED, being witnessed by the law and the prophets:

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is not difference:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

“WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, TO DECLARE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THE REMISSION OFSINS THAT ARE PAST, THROUGH THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD;

“TO DECLARE, I SAY AT THIS TIME HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-26).

No one can fully proclaim all that God has for us in Christ without recognizing the ministry and message committed to Paul. Thus our commitment to this wonderful message is in reality our commitment to Him. And He is ever able to do all He claims, "*For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*"
