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Christ

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Christ, Our Sacrificial Lamb

By: Amanda Stephanus

Have you ever heard something that caused you to take a moment and reflect on what was said? When Jesus approached John the Baptizer, John proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29-42). I imagine those listening to John may have been puzzled, trying to figure out what was meant by that statement.

John's primary audience were the Jews; thus, the concept of sacrifice should have been familiar to them. Their minds might have thought about the lambs offered on their behalf. What did John mean when he referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God? This designation was exclusive to the Christ for several reasons.

The lambs offered by Jews were required to be without blemish, spot, imperfections, etc. (Exodus 12:5). They were to be the best of the best, so to speak. As the Lamb of God, Jesus was and is the only man to have ever lived free from sin: "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Under the Old Law, the lamb being sacrificed belonged to the individual making the offering. If one could not afford a lamb, God made provisions in the Law for them to use turtledoves or pigeons (Leviticus 5:7).

God made an offering for us, giving His only-begotten, so that we might

have life (1 John 4:9). The lambs the Jews offered day by day were the substitutes for their sins. We have nothing to offer for our sins, and God showed His love for us by offering His son as a substitute (Romans 5:8).

When those under the Old Testament system offered sacrifices, it only temporarily covered their sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). However, John records (John 4:29) that Jesus was the lamb who would take away the sins of the world (cf. Hebrews 10:9-12). While we do not offer animal sacrifices today, John's words should cause us to stop and think about the significance of his statement. We have a sacrifice: a perfect, spotless sacrifice that God gave for us to save us from our sins. How are you responding to that information? Are you thankful for what has been done? Are you telling others about the Lamb of God that can take away their sins?



Christ, the Preeminent One
by Elizabeth Turner Beall

Preeminence means the greatest in importance, in degree, in significance, or in achievement. The Bible tells us that Jesus “is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent” (Colossians 1:18). Yes, Jesus the Christ is the preeminent One of all eternity. “Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and

bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus possesses a divine nature that has always been. He has no beginning and no end. Prior to His death, Jesus prayed, “Now, Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was” (John 17:5). On another occasion Jesus described Himself in the same way God had described His own existence: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:48), and Micah the prophet said in Micah 5:2, “His goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” John begins his Gospel of John with “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1-2).

The preeminence of Christ can be seen throughout the entire Bible. In the Old Testament, from Genesis 3:15 where Jesus is the promised seed of woman, to the last word in Malachi 4:6, where His forerunner is foretold, Jesus is preeminent. The Old Testament teaches that Christ, the Anointed One, is coming. Certainly, in the New Testament, Jesus is clearly preeminent because it tells us Christ has come, how He lived here on earth in human form, that He was crucified for our sins, was buried and rose, and that He has now returned to Heaven, waiting to come again to meet us in the clouds one day (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Jesus is preeminent in our salvation. “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God” (Romans 5:6, 8-10). The only way to salvation is by accepting God’s gift of grace, and that through the sacrifice of His perfect Son. No other sacrifice would have met the demands of God for our sins. Jesus is preeminent in our salvation.

Jesus is preeminent in the Body, the church. The term “ekklesia,” congregation, or called-out people is synonymous with “body.” As seen above in Colossians 1:18, Jesus is the head of the body. As with any body, the head (the brain) is the source of authority, telling the rest of the body what it must do. The body moves at the command of the head. So it is with the church, the body of Christ. All we do must be guided and directed by Jesus Christ. Why? Because it is God’s plan that we recognize Jesus as the Head in several ways:

- In our worship
- Praying in Jesus’ name
- Studying and teaching what He authorizes
- Remembering Him weekly in the Lord’s Supper
- Singing praises to His name
- Giving to advance His cause

Paul set an excellent example when he said, “Christ shall be magnified in my body” (Philippians 1:20), and “Let this mind be in you” (Philippians 2:5). Paul summarized what he had done prior to being confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus (Philippians 3:8-11). It changed him. He began his conversion giving preeminence to Jesus the Christ and continued that same attitude throughout his life—in thoughts, words, and deeds.

Like Paul, Jesus should be preeminent in every facet of our personal lives—at work, school, and play, with friends, family, and even with strangers. Only a life with Jesus as the center can be lived successfully. He is now at the right hand of God, glorified and exalted and has authority over everything—all principalities and powers, all angels and spiritual beings. But more importantly, He must be IN our lives. Where is He now in your life? Is He exalted in your heart?

Jesus is preeminent in eternity, preeminent in the Bible, preeminent in our salvation, preeminent in His Body, the called-out people, and Jesus must be preeminent in our individual life as well if we really are Christians. Jesus Christ

is superior and notable beyond all others. He is the greatest in importance, in degree, in significance, and achievement.



Most Important Verse
By Wilburta Arrowood

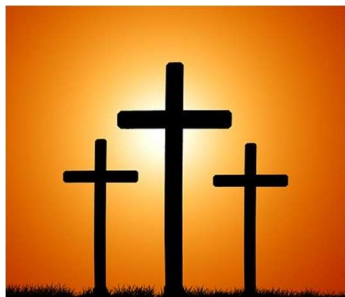
I believe I Timothy 6:15 to be the most important verse in the entire Bible. Don't get me wrong. I know the complete and total Bible is vital to our salvation, however, if we do not believe and respect the truth of I Timothy 6:15, none of the rest will be relevant to us. So, what does that verse say? Actually, we need to begin with verse thirteen to get the entire sentence. I Timothy 6:13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

The part I want to look at is King of kings and Lord of lords. Unfortunately, I think many of us as Americans fail to realize the full significance of those titles. We are a “free” nation and as such we fail to understand the absolute power of a king. In the time those words were written, a king—any king—held the power of life over death. A king had complete control of his subjects. The king made the laws that ruled the kingdom. A king

of kings made the rules and had complete and total control over all other kings on the earth. His rules applied to all living beings in that kingdom. When we understand that concept, we realize Jesus Christ has that sort of power over us.

What about Lord of lords? A lord was the person in charge of overseeing the running of the kingdom. His job was to see that the king's wishes were carried out. Jesus is the Lord over all God's kingdom. He was sent to make sure everyone knew the desires of his father. He made sure all mankind had access to the knowledge needed to please the master, his Father. In his word, He gave specific instructions for the elders, (those responsible for instilling God's will) as overseers of the church, his kingdom. Their duty is much like that of a landlord who is responsible for the care and upkeep of the house. In a sense, our elders are "lords" or overseers. They are not deity. They also are not bosses to order us around. They are to follow the instructions of Jesus, the Lord of lords and teach, guide, and oversee the spiritual health of their individual congregations. We are to respect their efforts to lead us into salvation, because of the authority given them by Jesus.

As Christians, we must understand and respect the authority given to the King of kings, Lord of lords, in order to be pleasing to God. Unless we do that, all other effort is wasted.



Questions for discussion and meditation:

1. Make a list of names describing Jesus in the New Testament. Discuss how each name applies to Him.
2. Discuss the Old Testament sacrifices. Compare the sacrifice of God's only/unique Son, Jesus, to those sacrifices. What make God's sacrifice better?
3. Define "preeminence" in your own words. How do you know if Christ has preeminence in your life?

Ideas for applying the topic:

1. Take time this week to read Isaiah 53 and think about the things Jesus endured on our behalf. Consider how that makes you feel knowing He endured such things for YOU? And would have done so even if you were the only sinful person ever in the world.
2. Underline or highlight "Behold the Lamb of God" in John 1:29 and John 1:36 to remind yourself of the significance of this statement.
3. Look inward and evaluate where God and Jesus are right now. Do they hold preeminence in your life? If not, why not? What can you do to put them there? Set goals to make necessary changes.

Prayer suggestions for this topic:

1. Pray that you will have the courage to make Christ preeminent in your life. We can all do better with this. For whatever level of preeminence He holds, pray that you will do better and always hold Him there.
2. Pray for your Christian sisters as well, and encourage them in this.
3. Pray for your church family as a group, that they be unified and make/keep Christ preeminent in all things.



Using words from our topic, note by each one how it applies to our topic, then find each word in the puzzle.

SON

HEAD

LAMB

LORD

BLOOD

RABBI

CHRIST

SERVANT

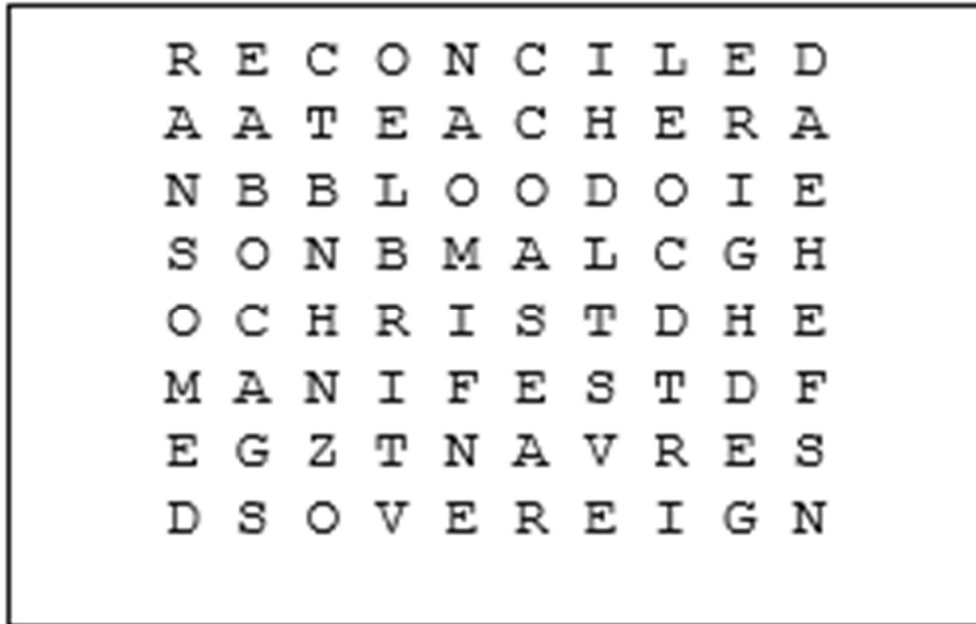
TEACHER

MANIFEST

RANSOMED

SOVEREIGN

RECONCILED



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