



THE PREPOSITIONS OF CHRIST

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Greetings and welcome to Let the Bible Speak. Thanks so much for joining me to look into the word of God for a few moments. There is no one we might talk about as wonderful as Jesus, the Christ, and we want to do that for a little while today. Jesus and His work in time and eternity is, of course, the principal theme of the bible. The scriptures declare that not only were all things created by Him but by Him all things are held together. What is your relationship to Him? The bible uses several words to describe states that people occupy in relation to Christ and the words that accurately describe your position relative to Christ also describe your spiritual and eternal state. Even the smallest words in the texts the apostles wrote matter and carry important meaning.

Today, we want to look at some of those words that may seem insignificant, but they are anything but that. I'm talking about several prepositions that are used in scripture along with the mention of Christ and His relationship to us. For example, Paul wrote in Colossians 1: 16-17, ***"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."*** Notice that Paul uses several prepositional phrases here such as "by Him; through Him; for Him, and in Him."

Prepositions are usually very small words, but they are powerful because they express relationships. They may not seem that important when describing everyday things, such as "my car is IN the garage, or I stepped OUTSIDE the house." But when the bible uses prepositions about Jesus Christ, they are packed with theological and eternal meaning and that's why we wish to take a closer look at them today. Abraham Lincoln is credited with coining the historic American phrase "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Its prepositions are as well-known as its propositions. We recognize that each preposition, "of", "by", and "for" indicates a unique relationship the United States government, by the framers' design, has to the American people. The same is true of the many prepositions in the New Testament (especially in Paul's letters) that are used regarding Christ. Each of

them represents some profound PrOpositions concerning who Christ is and the seriousness of where we stand in relation to Him. So, let's consider some of these profound little words and what they tell us about Him who is all is all, Jesus, the Christ.

First, there is the preposition "by" – "by Him" or by Christ. In Colossians 1:16 Paul eloquently writes: "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." The preposition "by" points to Christ's pre-existence and His preeminence. Though Christ at one time entered creation, becoming a man in the incarnation to carry out heaven's scheme of human redemption, He was before and is now outside of creation in the eternal, unseen domain. Jesus is not a created being, as some allege. He is eternal, dwelling with the Father and the Holy Spirit in eternity. In the prologue to his gospel, John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." (Listen now) "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Again, in Colossians 1:17, "All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

Now, consider that if Jesus were not eternal, just like God the Father and the Holy Spirit, but rather a created being, then ALL things would not be created though Him for He Himself would be created. Rather, He shares the eternal nature of all the Godhead. Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ is "the brightness of His (God's) glory and the express image of His person." Therefore, you see, if God is eternal than Christ must be eternal or else Christ is not the exact image or representation of God.

Now, some will point to the prior verse in Colossians 1, verse 15, where Paul said that Christ is "The firstborn of all creation..." But Paul isn't talking about Jesus being created first and then everything else being created. Rather, he is talking about Christ's preeminence over the creation. The word "firstborn" is used several times to refer to Christ in several passages in Colossians, Romans, Revelation, and Hebrews. The context shows us here that it is referring to first in rank. It simply means that Jesus is over and above all that has been created. Paul is actually countering the false doctrine in circulation at that time that Jesus was a created being and so it would not make sense for Paul to argue against something by affirming the very thing he is arguing against. Jesus is eternal. God the Son is co-eternal and co-existent with God the Father and God, the Holy Spirit. This makes our disposition and our relation to Christ of utmost importance. He is not PART of God's plan; He IS the plan. He co-authored the plan. The plan was to return all glory to God through Him and in the process, He is glorified!

Jesus said, in the familiar words of John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Christ is everything! If you don't have Jesus Christ, you don't have God, and it's as simple and as cut-and-dried as that. And there is not one single exception to that in all the world. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.", said the beloved apostle in 1 John 5:12-13.

But many in this world don't have Christ. They have never placed believing, trusting, obedient faith in Him and therefore Paul uses another preposition to describe them in Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2:12 says, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Please note how Paul describes those who are WITHOUT Christ Jesus. Other translations, such as the American Standard and the English Standard say you were separate or separated from Christ. This is the plight of all the lost

world. Here, Paul is specifically speaking of the Gentile nations that up until the New Covenant age were excluded from God's program. He says they were aliens. In other words, they did not belong to the people of God. They were outsiders and excluded. They were "strangers from the covenant of promise". They had no assurance from God and no promises of God on which to rest their souls and look forward to a better future. They were under God's judgment, not His promise of salvation. Therefore, since they, as Gentiles during the time of the law were without Christ, they had NO hope and were without God. That's as dark of a place as a person can be. That's as terrible of a condition as a person can be in. That's as hopeless of a state as any man or woman can be found in. And friend, that's the condition of any person who is outside of Christ today. You may say, "but I'm a good person." Not without Christ you're not – at least not in the eyes of God. You may say, "but look at all the good I have done" or "I don't harm other people" and on and on it goes. None of that matters in the eyes of a holy and righteous God for the person who does not have a saving relationship based on faith with Jesus Christ because Christ, the sin-bearer; Christ the sacrifice; Christ the intercessor; Christ the mediator is the only right of approach to the holy presence of God who is pure light and untouched and untainted by sin.

That's why, my friend, it is so important, yea necessary, that you instead, be sure you are IN Christ. This is the preposition that brings salvation from sin, freedom from guilt and bondage, deliverance from condemnation, refuge from judgment, and assurance in the place of doubt, peace instead of inner turmoil and dread. Notice how Paul continues in Ephesians 2:12-13, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." In Christ, we are brought into the presence and fellowship of God because Christ and only Christ can remove our sin which has separated us all from God. And when Christ brings us into union and fellowship with God through His redemptive work, then, as Paul said in the prior chapter, chapter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,".

There are several pictures provided all through the Old Testament of Christ's reconciling and saving work and many of those types or pictures are of Christ as a place of refuge and a place of safety. There was the house marked by the blood of the Passover lamb; or the six cities of refuge up and down the Jordan valley; or the strong and mighty tower, and we can go on and on. All of these portray the blessed and safe condition of the person who spiritually is found in Christ Jesus.

Now, the bible teaches that we enter this relationship by faith when we are baptized into Christ. Paul said in Galatians 3:27 "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Have you been immersed in water into a relationship with the saving Christ? Listen carefully friend, no matter what many try to lead you to believe, according to the bible, if you have not been baptized into Christ, you're not yet IN Christ. That's the only point the New Testament teaches that you enter Christ is when you are baptized into Christ. When you, by faith, leaving your past life behind in repentance, confessing your allegiance to Him as the Christ (anointed) of God, are then buried WITH Him by baptism, you enter a saving union with Him and thus with God. And you MUST be in Christ friend or else you are WITHOUT Christ and that is to be under God's judgment and an outsider to all the blessings God has appointed in His Son.

Being in Christ means salvation. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Romans 3:24) In Christ, there is restored fellowship with God. "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..." (2 Corinthians 5:19) Only in Christ there is spiritual life. "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans

6:11) Only in Christ is there freedom from the deathly curse of sin. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Only in Christ is there freedom from the bondage of sin. Paul, when he pictured himself trying to be justified on the basis of his own perfection in keeping the law, found himself a hopeless case sold out like a slave to sin but then said ““O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!... (Romans 7:24-25) Only in Christ is there freedom from the condemnation of sin. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1) Only in Christ is there membership in the church of Christ. “so we, being many, are one body in Christ...” (Romans 12:5) Friend, are you IN CHRIST?

Then, when you are IN Christ, then there is the condition of being WITH Christ. That’s another wonderful preposition that upholds a sublime proposition! When we are IN Christ we then share in the things OF Christ. We share, for example, in His present reign. We rule with Him as kings and priests in His blessed kingdom. The bible teaches that we are “joint heirs” with Christ. That means that we share in the inheritance that God the Father has granted to His Son. We share with Him in the glories and spiritual riches of His kingdom. And there’s so much to be said about that if time permitted. But listen to Paul in Colossians 3:3, “For you died, and your life is hidden WITH Christ in God.” We’re not only in fellowship with God, we enjoy an elevated position because of our relationship to His beloved Son, King Jesus, the heir of all things. We occupy that place WITH Christ in the kingdom of Christ NOW and one day we have the eager expectation of being WITH Him in His literal presence. Think of it! John said in 1 John 3:2, that when He is revealed and we are raised from the dead, we will be made to be LIKE Him, and we will spend eternity in His presence. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:14, “knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.” And in the next chapter, verse 8: “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body (*this corruptible body*) and to be present with the Lord.” But to be WITH Christ then, you must be WITH Him spiritually now, and you can only be WITH Him now by being IN Him in a saving relationship through a trusting and obedient faith.

Quickly, being IN Christ also means that there are things we are only able to do THROUGH Him. That’s another preposition Paul uses to express our position in relation to Christ. Philippians 4:13 says: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Paul wasn’t talking about kicking a football or bench pressing 300 pounds. He was talking contextually about having contentment with little and in the wider view, living for the Lord. We are able to live for God THROUGH Christ and only through Christ. Only this blessed estate of being IN CHRIST gives us the power and resources we need to live a righteous life and please God. If we rely upon the flesh and our own strength and power, we will fail. But a relationship with Christ through faith in His word plugs us into the receptacle of spiritual power and only then can the Spirit of God conform and shape and mold us to the image God wants us to be. You will never set out to live a good enough, clean enough, benevolent enough life to please God without the strength, power, knowledge, and help that comes from being in Christ Jesus. Even Paul, spiritual giant as he appears to us to be, said of himself “And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,” (2 Corinthians 3:4-5)

And finally, I want to think about one more preposition that sets before us a vital PROPOSITION and that is, again, the preposition “IN”. Yes, we have already stressed how Paul used this little word to express our being IN Christ, but he uses it in an equally important way: not just to show us that we need to be in Christ but also that Christ needs to be in US! He says in Colossians 1:27 “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” That’s the aim of the gospel – not merely to get us INTO Christ and saved but to get

Christ in US and conformed to His likeness. Paul urgently but patiently labored with the troubled Galatians toward this end in Galatians 4:19, “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,” The Spirit of God through the Word of God works in the children of God to make them like the Son of God.

Are you becoming more like Jesus each day? That’s the question! That’s the test! Knowing more each day is important. Doing more each day is wonderful. But when you look into the perfect mirror of God’s word, does each day bring a clearer image of Jesus Christ? That’s what it’s about. Paul challenges us in 2 Corinthians 13:5 “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you are disqualified.” Is that how Paul would see you and me? Which of these prepositions describes YOUR relationship to the Christ today?

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