

## 8. The Preeminence of Christ (1Q 2026 Christ in Philipians and Colossians)

**Biblical material:** Gen. 1:26, 27; Col. 1:15–20; John 1:1–3; Eph. 1:22; 1 Cor. 12:12–27; 1 Cor. 4:9; Rom. 6:3, 4.

### Quotes

- Do you want to know whether any church is Spirit-filled, whether any preaching is Spirit-filled, whether any music is Spirit-filled, whether your gift is operating? Ask, “Is it giving preeminence to Jesus Christ?” That’s it. *Adrian Rogers*
- He [Paul] began by exalting Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence in five areas: the gospel message, redemption, creation, the church, and Paul’s own ministry. *Warren W. Wiersbe*
- Pride is self contending with God for preeminence. *Stephen Charnock*
- Christ is not valued at all, unless he is valued above all. *Augustine*
- Christ is either Lord of all, or is not Lord at all. *James Hudson Taylor*
- Jesus is a bottomless well of sufficiency for every need you have — you will never exhaust His provision, you will never deplete His grace, you will never wear-out His love. *Dustin Benge*

### Questions

Why is the preeminence of Christ important? How do we best demonstrate this in our lives? In what way is Christ above all? Is this to do with power and might? In what ways do we fail to make Christ supreme? In terms of the great controversy, was the conflict between Lucifer and God over supremacy? How does God really win?

### Bible summary

Genesis 1:26, 27 tells us we were made in the image of God. Colossians 1:15–20 is an amazing description of the eternal Christ, who is above all things. John 1:1–3 is the prologue to John’s gospel that references the pre-existent Word. Everything is subject to Christ (see Ephesians 1:22). 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 states that we are the many parts that make up the body of Christ. We are a spectacle to the universe (1 Corinthians 4:9). We are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection (see Romans 6:3, 4).

### Comment

When it comes to the comic conflict, we may sometimes wonder why God did not act more “decisively”—take power and control, and dictate what should happen. But this is not the fundamental issue in the conflict. No one, not even the Devil, has disputed that God is all-powerful. In fact, that is one of the charges—that God is all-powerful and so he is a dictator, a tyrant, a despot who rules by force. So it is not a question of God unveiling his awesome power to enforce obedience to his autocratic will.

At times, God has used power, as the Bible records. Yet such actions do not achieve what God wants—agreement over truth and right, a relationship based not on fear but love. For when it comes to might and power, even the devils believe. But they tremble simply acknowledging God’s supremacy in power. God very clearly says that what he wants is not by might, nor by power, but by his spirit (see Zechariah 4:6)—the persuasion that comes from the third member of the Godhead that convicts and leads into all truth.

Ultimately God is acknowledged as supreme. Not primarily in power, but in terms of his character and actions, his virtues—most of all his self-sacrificing love.

Christ is preeminent because of who he is and what he has done. In this introduction to his letter, John uses some interesting concepts. The central idea is “the Word of life.” Clearly this is part of his whole idea of the pre-existing Word (John 1). This is also “the Life the eternal” (verse 2). So

what are we to understand by this “Word of life.” Surely it is the Word *that brings* life, the same source of life as the One who breathed into Adam the breath of life. He is the same life-giving power, the Alpha and Omega who is the resurrection and the life. This is what John announces: the truth about the Life-source of the universe, in contrast to all the lies that the Accuser has told against God as part of his campaign of defamation. With absolute conviction and breathless enthusiasm that has not dimmed over the years since Jesus ascended, John witnesses to the fact that Jesus, the Word of Life, became one like us so that we could know God, believe in Him, and be saved to eternal life.

The prologue of John’s gospel (1:1-18) presents the universe-wide setting of the Great Controversy. While we are particularly concerned with our own problems—most of all, with our own salvation—John introduces the larger view that includes the whole on-looking universe. The pre-existence of the Word was most important, especially to those to whom he was writing, and continues to be essential in the understanding of Jesus and his mission. So what is this “Word,” and what does it mean? And in a culture that saw the physical as evil, what did it mean for the Word to become flesh and dwell among us?

While these verses are wonderfully beautiful, a poetic image that appeals to our aesthetic senses, their primary aim is to convey deep truths. They speak to the pre-existence of the Word, explaining that while he came in human form at a point in human time, the Son was not a created or lower being. This is especially important, not for the reason that we often suggest—that only God could be a perfect sacrifice—but because only God could truly reveal God.

These verses also establishes creatorship. For John’s hearers, this was particularly significant, since the physical world was viewed negatively. It is also important for us today, since the Universe is here declared not to be the result of deterministic physical forces.

Jesus is absolutely clear about his pre-existence and divinity. So many times in John’s gospel he identifies himself as the one who came—from above, from the one who sent him etc. Additionally there are the numerous “I am” statements that reveal his identification with God, and were understood that way by his hearers. This is the preexistent, preeminent Christ in human form.

### **Ellen White Comments**

“Before Abraham was, I am.” Christ is the preexistent, self-existent Son of God. The message He gave to Moses to give to the children of Israel was, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”,, In speaking of His preexistence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.

Christ’s words were spoken with a quiet dignity and with an assurance and power that sent conviction to the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. They felt the power of the message sent from heaven. God was knocking at the door of their hearts, entreating entrance ( *The Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900).

He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent.... He is the eternal, self-existent Son }

In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. “He that hath the Son hath life” ( 1 John 5:12). The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life. “He that believeth in me,” said Jesus, “though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”.... Christ here looks forward to the time of His second coming. {LHU 17}

Christ himself was the Word, the Wisdom, of God; and in Him God himself came down from heaven, and clothed himself in the habiliments of humanity. He engaged in the mysterious conflict with Satan and his hosts, that man might understand elevated themes of truth. He rescued the truth from the companionship of error, and sent it forth free to the world. {RH February 1, 1898}