

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST AND THE CROSS IN GOD'S ECONOMY

Message One

Christ and the Cross—One Person and One Way in God's Economy

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 2:2; 1:17-18, 23; Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 6:14; Col. 1:18, 20-22; 2:14-15;
John 12:24-25; 2 Cor. 4:10-12

I. In God's economy, He gives us one person—Christ—and one way—the cross—1 Cor. 2:2; Phil. 2:5-11; Gal. 6:14:

- A. The one person—Christ—is the center of God's economy, and the one way—the cross—is the center of God's government—1 Cor. 2:2; 1:17-18, 23; Gal. 6:14:
 - 1. God governs everything by the cross and deals with everything by the cross—Col. 1:20; 2:14-15.
 - 2. By the cross God has dealt with all the negative things in the universe, and He is still governing everything through the cross—Eph. 2:14-16.
 - 3. In the church life Christ must be all and in all; everything that is not Christ must go to the cross—Col. 1:18; 3:10-11.
 - 4. Through the cross we need to become nothing, to have nothing, and to be able to do nothing; otherwise, what we are, what we have, and what we can do will become a substitute for Christ—1 Cor. 1:17-18, 23.
- B. In the book of Colossians we see a clear vision of the cross as God's way in His administration—1:20-22; 2:11-15:
 - 1. "Through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens"—1:20.
 - 2. "Wiping out the handwriting in ordinances, which was against us, which was contrary to us; and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross"—2:14.
- C. "Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it"—Col. 2:15:
 - 1. This verse portrays the fighting that took place at the time of Christ's crucifixion:
 - a. Activities involving Christ, God, and the evil angelic rulers and authorities were brought to a focus on the cross; thus, the cross became God's eternal, central, and unique way—vv. 14-15.
 - b. At the same time, the evil rulers and authorities were busy in their attempt to frustrate the work of God and Christ, pressing in close to God and Christ; thus a warfare was raging at the cross.
 - 2. God openly made a display of the evil angelic rulers and authorities on the cross and triumphed over them in it, putting them to shame—v. 15.

II. The crucified Christ was the unique subject, the center, the content, and the substance of the apostle's ministry—1 Cor. 2:2:

- A. The death of Christ has become God's power to eliminate all the problems in the universe; thus, Christ crucified is God's power to abolish all negative things and carry out His plan—1:23-24:

1. The human way of solving problems is to negotiate, but God's way is to terminate; the best way to solve problems among people is to terminate everyone involved—Gal. 2:20; cf. 1 Cor. 6:7-8.
 2. The crucifixion of Christ has silenced the entire universe and simplified the extremely complicated situation in the universe—cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- B. When we experience the crucified Christ, all that we are, all that we have, and all that we can do are completely terminated, and His resurrection life is imparted through us into others—John 12:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:10-12.

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Message Two

The All-inclusiveness of Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:3, 5, 9-10, 23; 2:6; 3:10-11; 4:10; Col. 1:14-18; Col. 2:2; Rom. 1:20-21; 11:36; 1 John 3:2; John 3:29-30; 12:24; 1 Cor. 12:12; Acts 9:4-5; Luke 19:12; Rev. 21:1-2, 5, 22-24; 22:1

I. Christ in God's plan—Eph. 1:9:

- A. God's plan being in Christ—3:11.
- B. Christ is the sphere of God's plan.
- C. Christ is the center and the purpose of God's plan —1:10, 22; Col. 1:16-18; Heb. 1:2.
- D. Christ is the means and fulfillment of God's plan—Col. 1:16-18.
- E. God's plan being Christ Himself—Col. 2:2.

II. Christ in God's creation:

- A. All things being created through Christ—John 1:3; Col. 1:16.
- B. Christ being the firstborn of all creation—v. 15.
- C. God made Christ the Creator of all things so that all things might be an expression of Christ—Rom. 1:20-21.
- D. The created man made according to Christ for the purpose of representing Christ—Gen. 1:26; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4.
- E. All created things cohering in Christ—Col. 1:17.
- F. Eventually, all things will be inherited by Christ—Rom. 11:36.
- G. Christ is everything in God's creation.

III. Christ in God's redemption:

- A. God's redemption was accomplished in Christ and through Christ—Eph. 1:3, 5; 2:6; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 1:14.
- B. God's redemption is for Christ so that Christ will fill all things—Eph. 4:10.
- C. God's redemption joining Christ and His redeemed as one—John 1:14; Heb. 2:9; Eph. 2:6; 1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:20-21.
- D. Christ being the Firstborn from the dead in God's redemption—Col. 1:18.
- E. Christ is everything in God's redemption.

IV. Christ in the church:

- A. The church was produced according to the eternal purpose and plan that God made in Christ—Eph. 3:10-11.
- B. The church being brought forth in Christ to be one with Christ—John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3; cf. Gen. 2:22-24.
- C. The church is the Body of Christ and being Christ Himself, the corporate Christ—Eph. 1:23; 1 Cor. 12:12.
- D. The church is the fullness of the One who fills all in all—Eph. 1:23.
- E. The church is the increase and spread of Christ—John 3:29-30.
- F. The church is the universal, great "Me"—Acts 9:4-5.
- G. The church is Christ.

V. Christ in the kingdom and in eternity:

- A. The kingdom was foreordained by God for Christ—Psa. 110:1; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5; Dan. 7:13-14; Micah 5:2.
- B. Satan attempting to destroy the kingdom.
- C. After Christ accomplishing redemption, He ascended to God and received the kingdom from God—Luke 19:12; Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 2:34-35.
- D. Christ bringing the kingdom from God—Luke 19:12; Rev. 19:11-16; 12:10.
- E. The kingdom expressing Christ's dominion and glory—Dan. 7:14.
- F. The kingdom ushering in eternity for Christ—1 Cor. 15:24.
- G. God's desire will be fully accomplished in eternity where all things will be made new—Rev. 21:1-2, 5.
- H. In eternity the triune God in Christ will be with the redeemed man and be fully mingled with them—Rev. 21:3, 12, 14.
- I. God and Christ will be the center in eternity—22:1; 21:22-24.

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Message Three

The Indwelling of Christ

Scripture Reading: John 1:12-13; 3:15; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27; John 14:16-18, 20;
1 Cor. 15:45b; Phil. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 3:17a

- I. The most precious result of our faith in Christ is that we receive Him into us—John 1:12-13; 3:15; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27:**
 - A. Although this is the pure and unadulterated yet mystical truth, it has been neglected by most Christians.
 - B. Christ has ascended to heaven, but He as the all-inclusive One is also dwelling in us—3:1; 1:27; Rom. 8:10.
- II. Christ dwells in the believers as the life-giving Spirit in resurrection—John 14:16-18, 20; 1 Cor. 15:45b:**
 - A. Christ's resurrection was His transfiguration into the life-giving Spirit in order to enter into the believers—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 14:17.
 - B. As another Comforter, the Spirit of reality, inside of us, the indwelling Christ is our life, our supply, and our person—Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:17a.
- III. The indwelling Christ is the secret of the Christian life—Col. 1:27; Phil. 4:12:**
 - A. The most crucial point in our enjoyment of Christ's salvation is the indwelling Christ—2 Cor. 13:5; Phil. 1:19; 2:12-13.
 - B. Christ is subjective to us; He is not only near us but also within us, in the depths of our being.
 - C. Christ in us is the heart of the Bible and the heart of our being—Eph. 3:17a.
- IV. The indwelling Christ is the treasure in earthen vessels—2 Cor. 4:7:**
 - A. God's shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the indwelling Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of the Triune God to be our life and our everything—v. 6.
 - B. This treasure, the indwelling Christ, is the divine source of the supply for the Christian life—v. 7.
 - C. If we learn to take Christ as our person by looking at the index of His eyes and by enjoying His presence, we will have a sweet sense of the preciousness of the indwelling Christ—2:10; 3:18; 4:6-7.
- V. We worship the enthroned Christ in the heavens, but we experience, enjoy, and partake of the indwelling Christ in our spirit; we are one with Him in a very subjective way—Col. 3:1; 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:17:**
 - A. Christ, who dwells in our spirit, is our hope of glory; the indwelling Christ will saturate our entire being so that our physical body may be transfigured and conformed to the body of His glory—Col. 3:4; Phil. 3:21.
 - B. The Christ who indwells us is not a small, limited Christ but the all-inclusive, extensive, preeminent Christ—Col. 1:15-16, 18-19.

- C. We need to be infused, saturated, and permeated with the all-inclusive, extensive, preeminent Christ until in our experience He is everything to us—2:16-17; 3:4, 10-11.
- D. The indwelling Christ is our life; universally, Christ is extensive, but in our experience He is our life, our being—v. 4.
- E. We need to allow the peace of the indwelling Christ to arbitrate in our hearts; the arbitrating of the peace of Christ is Christ working within us to exercise His rule over us, to speak the last word, and to make the final decision—v. 15.
- F. We need to let the word of the indwelling Christ dwell in us richly so that He may exercise His headship and minister His riches to us—v. 17; 1:18; 2:19.

VI. Paul prayed that we would be strengthened into the inner man so that Christ may make His home in our hearts—Eph. 3:17a:

- A. Our heart is the totality of our inward parts, the center of our inward being, and our representative with regard to our inclination, affection, delight, and desire; thus, when Christ makes His home in our hearts, He controls our entire inward being and supplies and strengthens every inward part with Himself.
- B. The more Christ spreads within us, the more He settles down in us and makes His home in us, occupying every part of our inner being, possessing all these parts, and saturating them with Himself.
- C. As Christ makes His home in our hearts, He becomes us and causes us to become Him—v. 17a; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 1:21a.
- D. When Christ spreads into our hearts, He becomes our person; the only way for Christ to be our person is for Him to make His home in our hearts—Eph. 3:17a.
- E. The Christ who is making His home in our hearts is an unlimited, immeasurable Christ—v. 18.
- F. When Christ makes His home in our hearts, we will be filled unto all the fullness of God; the fullness of God is the Body of Christ as the expression of the Triune God to the uttermost, the ultimate consummation of the corporate expression of the Triune God—v. 19.
- G. The genuine church life is the issue of the unlimited and immeasurable Christ personally making His home in our hearts; the content of the church is the Christ whom we take as our person, the Christ who is wrought into our being—v. 17a; 4:16.

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Message Four

The Centrality of the Cross

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 40:47; 43:13-27; Rev. 5:6; 21:22-23; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15; Rom. 8:3; John 12:31-32; Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:20; John 1:14; Rom. 8:21; 11:17-24; 2 Pet. 3:12-13; John 19:34, 36; 12:24; Rom. 6:6, 11; Rom. 8:13

- I. In Ezekiel the altar is the center of the whole compound of the building of God; when we come to the altar at the center of God's building, we experience the cross in a particular way—40:47; 43:13-27.**
- II. The altar, which signifies the cross, is actually the center of the universe.**
- III. Other than Christ Himself, nothing in God's plan has a higher place than the cross:**
 - A. Christ is the center of God's purpose and the cross is the center of God's procedure.
 - B. God has determined to do everything in His plan in Christ, and God has determined to do everything in His plan through the cross.
- IV. The cross is part of God's eternal plan, not an afterthought:**
 - A. The cross comes out of eternity past, and it will continue to exist in eternity future—Rev. 5:6, 13:8; 22:1.
 - B. In eternity future God will be with us as the light of life and everything in the Lamb who was slain—21:22-23.
- V. The negative and positive functions of the cross:**
 - A. The negative function of the cross - the aspect of termination:
 1. Terminating Satan—Heb. 2:14.
 2. Terminating the authority of darkness—Col. 2:15.
 3. Terminating sin—Rom. 8:3.
 4. Terminating the world—John 12:31-32.
 5. Terminating the flesh with its passions and lusts—Gal. 5:24.
 6. Terminating the old man—Rom. 6:6.
 7. Terminating the "I"—Gal. 2:20.
 8. Terminating all things—Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:9.
 - B. The negative function of the cross - the aspect of redemption:
 1. Christ being joined to all things in order to redeem all things—John 1:14; cf. Gen. 7:1-4, 14-16, 21-24; 8:16-19.
 2. The redeemed creation hoping for restoration to be set free from the slavery of corruption—Rom. 8:21; Acts 3:21.
 3. Christ's redemptive death opening the way for redeemed man to receive and contain the divine life with the divine nature—Rom. 11:17-24; 9:21-24.
 4. Christ's redemption restoring all redeemed things and making them new—2 Pet. 3:12-13; Rev. 21:1; Rom. 8:21.
 - C. The positive function of the cross is to release the eternal life of God and to transmit it into man for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose:

1. The water that flowed out of the Lord's pierced side is for imparting life, dealing with death, and producing the church—John 19:34; 3:14-15; Eph. 5:29-30.
2. As a grain of wheat, the Lord Jesus fell into the ground and died in order to produce many grains for the church—John 12:24.
3. The bone is a symbol of the Lord's resurrection life, which nothing can break; this is the life with which the church is produced and built—19:36.

**VI. The Scriptures reveal that the cross of Christ is an accomplished fact—
Rom. 6:6:**

- A. We do not need to do anything other than to see and know the fact.
- B. Upon seeing the fact of the cross, we must accept the fact of our co-crucifixion with Christ as a certainty and to acknowledge that we have already died—6:11.
- C. After seeing and accepting the cross, we need to apply the cross to ourselves by the Spirit—Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13.

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Message Five

The Cross and the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10; 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 1:18; 12:12-13, 27; Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:6; 8:13; 12:4-8; 2 Cor. 10:13-15

I. Only experiences that are in Christ and that have passed through His cross can be considered as being spiritual and having eternal worth.

II. The cross bringing Christ to us and Christ bringing us to the cross:

- A. Christ enters into us through the cross, and He gains ground in us and becomes our all through the cross.
- B. Through the cross He becomes our all so that we may grow into a full-grown man in His life and have the measure of the stature of His fullness—Eph. 4:13.
- C. The measure of Christ in us depends on how much we experience the death of the cross.
- D. Knowing Christ is connected to being conformed to His death, and being conformed to His death follows knowing Him—Phil. 3:10.
- E. The life of Christ contains the element of death and the killing power—2 Cor. 4:10-12; Rom. 8:13.
- F. The resurrection power of Christ conforming us to His death—Phil. 3:10.

III. The church being produced out of Christ through the cross:

- A. On the cross Christ released His resurrection life in order to produce the church. As a result, the church shares one life with Christ and is a part of Christ—John 19:34-36.
- B. The life that produced the church was released through the cross—cf. Matt. 16:15-18, 21, 24-26.
- C. "That He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace, and might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it."—Eph. 2:15-16.
- D. Colossians 3:11 says that in the new man, the one Body of Christ, "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all."

IV. The cross leads us to the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:18; 12:12-13, 27:

- A. The cross operates in the sphere of the Body—Rom. 6:6; 8:13; 12:4-5:
 - 1. The work of the cross goes as far as the Body of Christ and consummates with the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:18, 23; 2:1-2; 12:12-27.
 - 2. Not only does the work of the cross bring us into the Body, but also the Body becomes the realm within which the cross works—Col. 1:20; 3:15.
- B. In the Body of Christ we cannot go on without the cross—Eph. 2:16:
 - 1. The cross will dig away our natural life, our own activities, and any disproportionate growth—Matt. 16:24-26.
 - 2. Life and work in the Body necessitate drastic dealings with the flesh, and such dealings necessitate a deep knowledge of the cross of Christ—Gal. 5:24.

3. The restriction of the Body will take away our freedom and drive us to the cross—Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 10:13-15; Eph. 4:7, 16.
4. All of God's dealings with us have been with a view to prepare us for the Body; all His work in us is a process of elimination so that we can become functioning members of the Body—Rom. 6:6; 8:13; 12:4-8.
5. If our natural life is dealt with by the cross and if we submit to the headship of Christ and live the Body life, we will have the Spirit's anointing and enjoy the fellowship of the Body—Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 10:16.