



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

Volume XIX

January 1999

Number 6

Was Christ A Created Being?

By

Bob Bauer

Bob Bauer is the preacher for the Port Charlotte Church of Christ, Port Charlotte, Florida. Though preaching full-time, Bob drives one day a week and takes classes at the Florida School of Preaching. Bob is in the Computer Based Bible Exegesis Class and wrote the following article as a part of the work done in this class. We are printing it here that you might know Bob, and the work that is being done in the school in this class. We know that what he has written will be of help to any who read it. Editor.

In Colossians 1:15, Paul describes Christ as the "firstborn of creation" (ASV). This has led some to errantly conclude that Christ is a created being.¹ Is this the message that Paul intended to convey? Is Paul alluding to Christ's birth order or is there another thought being presented?

We must consider Christ's role in the creation process. 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. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). John declares the Word to be Jesus Christ (John 1:14). If Christ was made first before everything else then how

could the inspired writer John be correct in stating that Christ made all things? Could Christ create Himself in order to create everything else? In Colossians 1:16 Paul 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. All things were created through Him and for Him." Again the question arises, if Christ created all things did He create Himself? If Christ, as the Word, was and is God then He would have the characteristics of God. He must be eternal (Col. 1:17; John 8:56-58) and not a created being. Christ could not be a created being and harmonize with how the Scriptures depict Him. Thus, when referring to Christ as the "firstborn of creation" we can not rightfully conclude that this refers to any order of creation and if being the "firstborn of creation" does not represent a chronological order what message is being conveyed by Paul?

The Firstborn Son Was The Pre-eminent Child

The child was to be set apart for God (Ex. 13:2; Numb. 3:13). The firstborn son was to receive a double portion of inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17). He, upon the death of his father, was also to be the spiritual head of the family under the Patriarchal system of religion and serve as the priest of the family.

In Israel, the firstborn son was loved in a special way by his parents and inherited special rights and privileges. His BIRTHRIGHT was a double portion of the estate and leadership of the family. As head of the home after his father's death, the eldest son customarily cared for his mother until her death, and provided for his unmarried sisters until their marriage. He was the family's spiritual head and served as its priest.²

It seems the firstborn son was superior and special in the eyes of his parents because of his position as the firstborn, thus he was the pre-eminent child. W. Vine wrote,

"Firstborn" ... is used of Christ as born of the Virgin Mary, (Luke 2:7); further, in His relationship to the Father, expressing His priority to, and preeminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the "first" to be born."³

¹The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society: Brooklyn, NY, 1968, p. 47.

²Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, CD-ROM version.

³W.E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, CD-ROM version.

T. Rees wrote, The laws and customs of all nations show that to be "firstborn" means, not only priority in time, but a certain superiority in privilege and authority. Israel is Yahweh's firstborn among the nations (Exo 4:22; compare Jer 31:9). The Messianic King is God's firstborn Septuagint protokos), "the highest of the kings of the earth" Ps 89:27. Philo applies the word to the Logos as the archetypal and governing idea of creation. Similarly Christ, as "the firstborn of all creation" Col 1:15, is not only prior to it in time, but above it in power and authority.⁴

This leads us to conclude that Paul, describing Christ as the "firstborn of creation" was referring not to His birth order in the creation process but to His pre-eminence.

The Context Of the Passage Is

The Pre-eminence of Christ

The context of Colossians 1:15-18 is one of the pre-eminence of Christ. Notice what Paul wrote:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 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. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

(emphases added, rlb, from New King James Version.)

Albert Barnes wrote concerning Colossians 1:15:

Among all the creatures of God, or over all his creation, occupying the rank and pre-eminence of the first-born. The first-born, or the oldest son, among the Hebrews as elsewhere, had special privileges. He was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. It has been, also, and especially in oriental countries, a common thing for the oldest son to succeed to the estate and the title of his father. In early times, the first-born son was the officiating priest in the family, in the absence or on the death of the father. There can be no doubt that the apostle here has reference to the usual distinctions and honors conferred on the first-born, and means to say that, among all the creatures of God, Christ occupied a pre-eminence similar to that.⁵

We conclude that, due to the fact that Christ is the creator of all things, and thus could not be the first to be created; that the firstborn male was the pre-eminent child with special blessings and superiority; and that the context of Colossians 1:15-18 is that of pre-eminence of Christ, that Paul is referring to Christ's superiority and pre-eminence over all creation when he refers to Him as the "firstborn of creation."



Extension Class

In the December meeting of the Board of Directors, the decision was made to have an extension class in

Bushnell, Florida. The Class will begin January 4, 1999 and end May 5, 1999. It will meet at the BUSHNELL CHURCH OF CHRIST building on Monday evenings from 7:00 to 9:30.

The class will be a study of THE LIFE OF PAUL; Teacher, Jackie Stearsman.

The cost for the class is \$5.00 registration fee plus \$3.00 to \$5.00 in prepared class notes for each student.

If you are in the Bushnell area and want to join the class at a later date, please contact:

Greg Harmon, Preacher
P. O. Box 2515
Bushnell, FL 33513
352-568-8963, Home
352-793-8428, Work

The only difference in those taking the class for CREDIT and those AUDITING the class will be that those auditing will not be required to take the tests.

THE CLASS WILL NOT MEET JANUARY 18 OR MARCH 8, 1999. January 18 is the week of the Florida School of Preaching Lectureship. March 8 will be during the regular Spring break.

Life Of Paul Class

Instructor: Jackie Stearsman

Monday, 7:00-9:30 PM

January 4-May 5, 1999

Bushnell Church of Christ

The Harvesters

Published Monthly

Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803

(941) 683-4043

Editor: Jackie M. Stearsman

Board of Directors

Gordon Methvin, President	Carl Fatra
Paul Thornhill, Vice President	George K. French
J. H. Blackman, Jr., Secretary	Allen Gardner
E. Robert McAnally, Treasurer	Samuel J. Honey
B. C. Carr, Director Emeritus	Dale Spung
Glenn Burgess	David Spurlock
Elmer Burgett	Oma Sibwell
Jack C. Cronk	Jackie M. Stearsman
Maruke Davis	

TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

⁴T. Rees, "First-Begotten," International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia. 1996, CD-ROM version.

⁵Albert Barnes, Barnes Notes, 1997, BibleSoft CD-ROM version.

What Does It Mean To Be A Christian Like Paul?

Below is a table of contents for the *1999 Florida School of Preaching Lectures*. This will be the Thirty Year Anniversary of the School and we have made this a special volume. It will contain an Appendix with articles that will not be a part of the oral and video lectures. This material is topical in nature. It provides answers to controversial issues that face us as we present New Testament Christianity today. You will want this volume for it will be of value to you as you seek to reach others. If we are going to please God, we must go back to his designated models and authoritative spokesmen. Paul, not Campbell and Stone; Paul, not Calvin and Luther. "What Does It Mean To Be A Christian Like Paul?"

INTRODUCTION

Preface
Dedication
What Does it Mean to Be a Christian like Paul?

SECTION I

PAUL OUR GREAT EXAMPLE

Paul Changed Religions, Could You?, Carlton Hyde
How Was Paul Called to Be an Apostle?, Charles Burch
Paul an Example to Preachers, I, V. P. Black
Paul an Example to Preachers, II, V. P. Black
Paul an Example to Preachers, III, V. P. Black
Did Paul Make a Mistake?, Bruce Daugherty
Do You Have the Zeal and Perseverance of Paul?, Tom Holland
If Brother Paul Visited. . ., B. C. Carr
How Did Paul Handle Church Funds?, Earl Edwards

SECTION II

DOCTRINAL ISSUES

Did Paul Emphasize Doctrine?, E. Claude Gardner
What Did Paul Teach About Grace and Works?, Earl Edwards
What Did Paul Teach About Apostasy?, Brian Kenyon
What Did Paul Teach About Tongues?, Mike Elledge
What Did Paul Teach About the Church?, Landis Suggs
What Was Paul's View of God's Word?, Jimmy Clark
What Did Paul Teach About Water Baptism?, Robert Williams
What Did Paul Teach About Fellowship?, Roy Dicks
How Did Paul Deal With False Teachers?, Vernon Sirmons
What Did Paul Teach About the Second Coming of Christ?, Bob Carey
What Did Paul Teach About Heaven?, Howard Johnson

SECTION III

AFTERNOON FORUMS

How Did Paul View Customs and Traditions?
Head Coverings, Greeting with a Holy Kiss, Foot Washing, Terry Hightower
Offending a Weak Brother, David Watson
Becoming All Things to All Men to Win Them to the Lord, Keith Cozort

How Did Paul Address Special Issues?

Marriage-Divorce-and -Remarriage, Terry Hightower
Homosexuality, Tom Holland
Women in Leadership, Jimmy Clark

How Did Paul Reach the Lost?

By Starting Congregations, Dale Flowers
By Stabilizing Congregations, Frank Higginbotham
By Teaching Congregations to Help One Another, E. Claude Gardner

How Did Paul Solve Problems?

Personal Problems, Robert Brooks
Congregational Problems, J. H. Blackman, Jr.
Brotherhood Problems, Leslie Bland

APPENDIX

History of The Florida School of Preaching, B. C. Carr
Anti-ism: Parasitic Christianity, Jackie M. Stearsman
Anti-ism Is Not Dead, Jackie M. Stearsman
Schools Under a Board of Directors, Jackie M. Stearsman
Church Cooperation and Evangelism, Jackie M. Stearsman
The Only Saints Doctrine of Benevolence, Brian Kenyon
Is it Scriptural for a Preacher to Be Paid by the Church?, Brian Kenyon
Eating in the Church Building, Jackie M. Stearsman
Must a Woman Worship With Her Head Covered, Brian Kenyon
Does a Member of the Church of Christ Being Married to a Non-Member of the Church of Christ Constitute an Unequal Yoke?, Brian Kenyon
How Did Paul Deal With Criticism?, Brian Kenyon
What Did Paul Teach About Church Discipline?, Brian Kenyon
How Does God Show His Willingness to Forgive by Forgiving Paul?, Brian Kenyon
Must a Widow Marry Only a Member of the Church of Christ?, Jackie M. Stearsman
Must an Elder Have More than One Child to Meet the Qualifications for an Elder?, Jackie M. Stearsman
Must an Elder Resign If His Wife Dies?, Jackie M. Stearsman
What Is Paul's Thorn in the Flesh?, Jackie M. Stearsman
How and When May a Person Put Away an Unfaithful Companion?, Jackie M. Stearsman

LECTURESHIP DATE: JANUARY 18-21, 1999

HAVE YOU ORDERED THIS VOLUME?

REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION

Have you considered the origin of religious movements from the Biblical perspective? Are religious movements today like those in the Bible? May one be sure of a religious movements standing before God? Do our religious actions meet with God's approval?

Lessons are presented for us in the Bible. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

We should learn from the sin of Jeroboam. The consequences of his actions are clear. "And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day" (II Kings 17:20-23).

Jeroboam understood his duty. "And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee" (I Kings 11:38).

Jeroboam's disobeyed clear and explicit instructions and rejected any and all admonition. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense" (I Kings 12:28-33). Following this, Jeroboam is rebuked by the young prophet (I Kings 13)

Jeroboam continued in his sin. "After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the

lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth" (I Kings 13:33-34).

Israel is taking captive and the foolishness of the Assyrians and Jeroboam priesthood is exemplified. "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt" (II Kings 17:24-29). "So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence" (II Kings 17:32-33). "So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day" (II Kings 17:41).

Lessons: (1) Man made churches or religions do not equal that which God designed. (2) Seeking advice from religiously confused and disobedient people is a sure way to fail. (3) Today we have perverted worship, perverted church organizations, immorality, man made plans of salvation—all as a direct result of listening to man rather than God. As in the case of Jeroboam, sure defeat awaits all persistent disobedience:

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:19). "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:13-14). "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalms 127:1). [Editor]

FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

1807 SOUTH FLORIDA AVENUE

LAKELAND, FLORIDA 33803-2653

PHONE (941) 683-4043 (800) 320-9780

FAX: 941-683-0750

E-MAIL: fsop@gte.net

WEB SITE: <http://chdi.com/fsop/>

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lakeland, FL
PERMIT #235

Return Service Requested