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[00:00:02] When we're still looking at this epistle to the Colossians. And I must announce again that this is a recording made in the Chapel of the Open Book and is number five of the series. Access and Acceptance or Made meat. Colossians Chapter one. We have been looking. At the fact that this meekness is the consequence of being delivered and redeemed and translated and forgiven. And now our attention is being drawn to the one who makes this possible. Redemption cannot work itself. Redemption needs a redeemer. And here we can either enter into a debating society and scream ourselves hoarse in our endeavours to beat one another down with regard to this problem or that. Or we can take off our shoes and walk off our feet and listen to what God said to Moses. Thou canst not see my face and live. But I will just reveal you the back part. That means to say it's telling us there are some things that belong to God, to his person, to the person of Christ, which is written for our learning, but not for our argument. We have to say to ourselves and not one of us could embrace all that is said concerning the person of Christ and present it as a connective, logical, rational statement. There are some things that baffle us, but why should that? That should be strange to us. When we read in the very scriptures themselves that Confessedly great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.

[00:02:07] So shall we this morning? Rather consider what God says and let that way with us and then say it's beyond our ability to understand it completely. But we've got enough to make us worship and bow down and glory in the fact that God has taken such a step to bring such as we are back to himself. Now, the first thing I think which stands out in Scripture is this by men. Game day. By man must come the resurrection of the dead. This is taken from Scripture, but in other statements of Scripture says no man can by any means redeem his brother. Well, what did he get to do then? By man came. Death by man must come the resurrection. But no man can redeem his brother. Well, there is one name. That stands out separate from all. And he is spoken of as the second man. And the last Adam. But there's something about him that makes him separate from all mankind. A supernatural birth. Prophesied in the Old Testament that a child should be born who would nevertheless be. El Shaddai the mighty God. Could you understand that? I can't. Can we believe it? Well, what are we going to do if we don't? So should we say here we are facing the mystery of redeeming love and it will be our joy one day to have it more fully explained to us. But meanwhile, we bow our heads and

just accept what God says and praise him for his marvelous condescension in taking this step.

[00:04:11] And so we have, as we've looked at in Isaiah 45 and in Hebrews chapter one. That the there is no else, no one else but God. I just got to the savior. His Highness laid the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the work of his fingers. Old Testament. And every knee shall bow to him. Old Testament. And you know what I'm going to say, don't you? That it says of our Savior. The earth and the heavens are the work of his hands. And every knee shall bow to him. So you see, these things are written and they are waiting for us not to argue the point and make splits among us, but rather unite us together and say, Oh, to us love. Twas wondrous love, the love of God. To me, it brought my savior from above. The die on Calvary. So let's look at this passage now in Colossians Chapter one, turning our attention away from what he has done to what he is. It says in the first case, verse 15 is the image of the invisible God. Now, that's a condescension to us. God is spoken of in the scriptures throughout that is as invisible whom no man hath seen or can see. And yet there is a need in our nature to have something that we can hold on to. Something that we can, in some measure, grasp. And he's condescended to that.

[00:05:56] So let us notice how say for instance in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is introduced. This is an old story, but ever new. I know the epistle to the Hebrews Chapter one. It says God, who at sundry times did in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. That's a general survey of Old Testament scriptures and the different ones that God used Moses, Isaiah and others. Hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His son. And this we have faced before. It doesn't actually say by his son. It says he has spoken unto us in son. But of course, that doesn't make good English. But we've got something here that no language, English, French, Greek or Hebrew can really envisage. He has spoken unto us in Son. But if you study the Old Testament, you will find that that is an expression that they would understand. God spake in God Almighty. So that these are assumptions of the invisible God stooping down for our sakes. And he has spoken unto us in Son. He hasn't thundered from Mount Sinai. He has come to Bethlehem and he has walked the shore of Galilee. And he is set upon a green hill and he has spoken in the language of men. He has spoken unto us in his son. And then it doesn't hesitate to say. Verse six. And again, when he brings bring it in the first begotten into the world, he said, And let all the angels of God worship him.

[00:08:03] But you do remember, don't you, that even in the Old Testament, they had enough knowledge of God to know that it was not possible for a man to please God and to be a worshipper of angels. And we have the epistle to the Colossians, the very one that we have in front of us, where he rebukes them, adopting the worshiping attitude of angels. But yet here's one that God himself says Let all the angels of God worship him. And yet, once more, verse ten of chapter one of Hebrews. And thou Lord in the beginning. Has laid the foundations of the foundation of the earth. There could be no possible doubt as to what that refers to. In the beginning, God laid the foundations of the earth. A job is rebuked because he didn't quite realize this. And God tells him so. This is the one who is called a son of God. This is the one who is our redeemer. In the beginning there was laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of thine hands. You can hardly believe it, can you? But then it's written. The heavens. Why, when Paul wrote these words to the Hebrews, the heavens were vast enough. But what about the heavens today, where we have these marvelous instruments that search out the millions and millions of miles and light years that we have to deal with now with space. The heavens are the work of thy fingers.

[00:09:40] It's overwhelming, isn't it? Yet it stands written. They shall perish. That very latest. This one is going to outlast time and eternity. And in the last chapter of this side, Hebrews, he comes back to this. He says, Jesus Christ. The same yesterday. And today. As forever. For our friends. Let's get our anchorage there. Never mind whether we can understand all the mystery of godliness. How we can understand how God could walk the earth in the guise of a man. Let let that be. But say it was done. That God might be just and the justifier of those that believe his son and that we belong to him. A wonder we are going to be like him. And then we shall know even as we are known. We're not upstairs yet in the big school. We're down in the infants class here. And there are many things that even the teacher couldn't make us understand, even if he wanted to. So let us bow our heads in the presence of this mighty revelation and realize some of the titles that are given to Christ in this Colossians Chapter one. Before we go back to Colossians, will you look at the first epistle of Timothy? The first epistle of Timothy Chapter one. First 17. Now unto the king. Eternal. Immortal, invisible. The only wise God be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. Notice the words The King. Eternal, Immortal. Invisible. Now, will you look at the last chapter of this same epistle? Chapter six.

[00:11:48] He's giving instruction to his son, Timothy. Verse 14. That thou keep this commandment without spot and rebuke able until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Which in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings and Lord of Lords. Now you can turn thee to the verse in the book of the revelation which says, That's the title of Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who only hath immortality. Did you see? This is balancing chapter one. Unto the King, Eternal Immortal, who only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto. That's invisible. Whom no man hath seen, nor can see. So now we've got injector one and the Chapter six. These statements concerning God. Now, will you look at chapter three? In the middle. As it were. Get the two chapters in your mind, like this one, that side, one that side, and the lines converging down to chapter three in the middle like this. Verse 15 of chapter three. But if I carry long, he's going away in his writing. And Timothy. That thou mayest know how thou ought is to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of truth. And without controversy, I won't go into the differences of translation. But as far as I read this, I do not believe that church is the pillar and ground of truth.

[00:13:40] I think it's got a much firmer foundation than the church could ever give it. So I stop at the pillar at the Church of the Living God. Now he says, The pillar and ground of truth and confessedly. Great. Is the mystery of godliness. And what is this mystery of godliness? God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. So there again, you see you get two statements in this epistle to Timothy speaking about God who is eternal, immortal, invisible, whom no man hath seen or can see. And then the mystery of godliness that he has been seen, that he has been here, and that he has been manifest in the flesh. So now we come back again, then to the the Colossians chapter one to notice the titles that are given to this redeemer of ours, even though we may not be able to take them very far. Colossians Chapter one. It's the very first thing that he said is verse 15. Who is the image of the invisible God? There is something in human nature that craves for an image, something to hold on to. Otherwise, why is it that some nations who otherwise were mathematicians and. Fairly advanced in civilization should have had image worship. Why is it that the people of Israel, who were given God's Word so easily slipped into image worship? Why? Simply because of our inmost desire to to know something more than that.

[00:15:45] God is, but is invisible. But all image worship is a usurpation of the essential position of Christ, for it is right that we should have an image, but not one that we make. Christ is the image. Christ is God's condescension to our limitations. God says to us in so many words, You want to know what I like? Well, I can't tell you in the fullest sense, but I point you to my son. A simple question and a simple answer. A child might ask it and a child might receive it. What is God like? Have you ever taught children in Sunday school? What is God like? For God is like Christ. God is Christlike. Let that be enough for us till our travelling days are done and then we shan't have to change it, but will realise how vast it is when we know, even as we are now. So he is the image. Hebrews chapter one says he is the express image, and the word that is used in that passage is our English word character. A character is something which has been cut or carved. And so we have characters like letters that have been made in type and so on. So we have the character of God. What is he like? He's like, Christ. He's walked this earth. He has spoken in the language of men. And so this condescension of God is one of the marvelous thoughts we have to keep in mind.

[00:17:30] Is the image and then it says is the first born of every creature. And there are some who said, Oh, that means he was the first one to be created. He had no existence before, but he was the first one to be created. So will you glance down to chapter 18? Words. Verse 18. I'm sorry, written by the same man in the same context. And he is the head of the body, the church who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Well, now, Christ couldn't be the firstborn from the dead if he had no existence until resurrection. Because that's nonsense. So we are rather slipping up on the word firstborn. In the Old Testament, particularly the firstborn, did not necessarily mean the first one to be born. It was a title of dignity. You remember that the first born son of Jacob forfeited his position because of his immoral action? And the one that received the coat of many colors. The one that was given dominion. The one to whom his brethren bowed down. The one who was the type of Christ was a long way down the list. Joseph. But he was beginning the firstborn position. When you read Genesis ten, you read a long list of the nations that were in the Earth. Genesis ten. And yet, after Genesis ten was written, Moses was sent into the presence of Pharaoh. And God said, Let my firstborn go.

[00:19:08] That's Israel. Well, they were the first board of the Nations, but they weren't the first of nations for their many Bibles. There were any amount of nations before ever Israel was brought into existence. So the first born is a position of dignity, very much like associated with the adoption, which gives you the position of firstborn son and heir. And then the astounding fact that it says of this savior of ours by him were all things created. Now, if there's one thing which is characteristic in the scriptures of the deity of God, if I may use it in expression, it is He's the creator. In the beginning, God created the heavens, declare the glory of God. They show his handiwork. I did the Old Testament, you will find that the he laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of his hands. But in the epistle to the Hebrews chapter one, those very words are used of Christ. I think we'll see them in case anyone should wish to know the exact chapter and verse. Chapter one. Hebrews Verse ten. And our Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth. There's no doubt about it, is there? He is the creator and the heavens are the work of thine hands. He is the Creator. Well, now we are up against a problem, aren't we? The creator. Pickups bad. I walked this earth. A dies as a man that we might live.

[00:20:54] It seems almost impossible, doesn't it? And yet the Bible is full of that fact. That God it is love and moved by his righteousness, provided himself a way whereby we might be justified and redeemed and sanctified and taken to glory. Oh, marvelous is the condescension of this God. Who upholds the earth through the heavens and counts them as like the dust in the scales or in a bucket. Let's go again. The fact that I seven of these titles that we could ponder over for hours. The image of the of God, the first born, the creator. And he is before all things. Oh, before we leave creation, notice its scope. It isn't merely the atoms of the earth. That's wonderful enough in all conscience. But this says visible and invisible. He's not merely the creator of the fabric of the earth, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by him. This is Christ is being spoken of. Added, It doesn't end there. I haven't finished it yet. They are not only created by him, but for him. For him. So he's the gold of creation and they're all for him as well as by him. This is almost unbelievable, isn't it? I guess I'll go back to the Acts of the apostles. And I read the Church of God, which He hath purchased by his own blood. And they've rewritten that and translated that in every possible way, but it still stands.

[00:22:55] Inexplicable and yet written. Not explaining it to us, but telling us. So Colossians once again. He is before all things. And by him all things consist. The word consist means to hold together. It's the force that we speak of is cohesion. There is some power that's in what we call nature that holds things together. As I've said before, these seats on which you're sitting in this chapel have been there for about 70 or nearly 80 years. Don't be afraid. They'll still hold your weight. But don't forget. They are held together. Not a son of God. That power which once it released. Let's switch power free as to shatter the earth. Side dishes of a last split. The atom. Of course, that's a contradiction in terms because he means without and Tom is a part of the word that like in anatomy, a part of the word that means to cut or to split. They split the unsplittable. But you know, what they've done here is the hand of Christ holding all things in his control. And the scientists have just lifted his little finger like that. And there goes off an explosion. That means terrific destruction. That's Christ as our savior friends. What poor specimens we are. When something happens, we worry ourselves over this and over that. Well, we're all the same. But this is our standby. This is our redeemer. This is our Savior. This is our creator. This is our upholder. And then it goes on to say one thing further.

[00:25:01] He is the head of the body, the church. This value created all things visible and invisible. This one who by whom all things are held together. Now, he says, I believe in creation. Paul may have said to them, Look, Colossians, I'm no scientist. I'm not kidding you because I know this. I'm only telling you these as our introductions, but I want you to understand who he is. That's head of the church. That one is the head of the church, and we are members associated with him. And he is the head of the body, the church, this one who is the beginning. So it's all over again. Oh, yes. In this new creation, in this particular calling. He's the beginning as he was in the beginning of the fabric of the worlds. He is the beginning, so far as you and I are concerned. He's first. He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, because now we're dealing with moral issues, not merely the first born of all creation, but the firstborn from the dead. Shall we use the wonder of wonders? He who created heaven and earth took upon himself the nature of man that a body being prepared him. He could offer himself for our sins. It's so wonderful that so many say, I can't accept it. I can't believe it. But it's written for our learning friends without going into explanations and details. There it is. Is the head of the body.

[00:26:46] The church. The beginning. The firstborn from the dead. And he is the goal. That in all things he might have the preeminence. Now that leads to the fullness of God. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. And the church of the one body is described in the scriptures as being the fullness of him that filleth all in all. So we have a place in this mighty passage before us. You remember we had read Isaiah 45 where it repeats itself. There is none else. No. God beside me. And it ends up with the words. That had to be every knee shall bow. And with that passage, I will conclude this very simple survey by turning back to Philippians chapter two. Verse five of chapter two Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God. Thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant. There are many things here that need careful rectification. I'm not stopping. But do notice the two forms. This does not mean external shape. Except that the word shape. Had a meeting in early English, which it hasn't got now. If you are acquainted with Shakespeare's King Lear, who resigned his throne and headed it over to his daughters because the way they carried on, he said, I will resume the shape that you think I've cast all forever.

[00:28:54] But it wasn't going to make himself look different. He was going to assume kingship again. So this is the shape or form or characteristic of God and the shape or form and characteristic of a servant and being found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself even more and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given him not a name, but the name which is above every name. Now here comes the quotation from Isaiah 45, where the Old Testament says There is none else beside me that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth that every tongue should confess. That Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. Oh, what a savior we have provided for us, or what a pattern is left us, or what an inexplicable mystery of godliness he presents to us. And yet, how simple. How simple it can be reduced down. So that we can say to a child who's inquiring the way of salvation. He that believeth on the son. Hath everlasting life with no further explanations, no theological terms brought in. Or trust that we are not only concerned about probing into these mysteries, but to recognize the love that provided such a way that God might be just as well as the justifier of Him that believes in Jesus.