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**THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY
IN WEST AFRICA**

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**J.C. POOL LIENNA
BAPTIST SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO NIGERIA**

BY

**JOSHUA KINTIM WEBNDA
OGBOMOSO, OYO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This Thesis is entitled: The Supremacy of Christ in the Epistle to the Colossians and Its Implications for Contemporary Christianity in West Africa. The motivation to write this thesis came as a result of some people misconstruing the scriptures for lack of a proper knowledge of the syntax of particular passages of scripture. For example Colossians 1:15b, some understand it to mean that Christ is the first of God's creatures to be created.

The thesis is centred on the fact that Paul's theology of the supremacy of Christ is based on Paul's understanding of Christ as God. He existed before all and he created all (Col. 1:15-16), but he was not created by any one.

As supreme, Christ is God and he reveals God to man. He also is the only intermediary between man and God. He was before the creation in time and he is supreme over creation in rank (Col. 1:15). He is the head of his body, the church because he is its beginning and life. He is supreme in his resurrection because by it, he overcame death for all who believe in him (1:18). Jesus Christ brought reconciliation between God and man by his death on the cross (1:20; 3:11).

Jesus Christ is supreme because he is God who is blessed forever (Rom. 9:5). He is supreme because he is the only Lord over the whole of creation, "through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6). He was in the nature of God but he emptied himself of his authority, prerogatives, rights etc. and was robed in the nature of a servant. He obeyed

unto death and God gave him the name above all names, "LORD" (Phil. 2:6-11). So he became supreme over all creation.

As a result, Christians must acknowledge the timeless lordship of Christ. Christ's death achieved peace for all creatures and creatures with God. This must be achieved by embarking on sound biblical teaching and preaching.

Conclusion

Based on the study carried out in this research, this writer concludes that the Epistle to the Colossians is Paul's refutation of a heretical teaching which depreciated Christ to be one of the creatures. This fatal error was strongly combated by Paul as he presented Christ as he truly is, he reveals God⁶ (1:15, 19, 2:9), Christ was from the beginning with God (1:15-18; cf. Jn. 1:1), He is the Creator of all creatures, and they are subject to his control. He is the very goal of their creation⁷ (1:11-17), Christ is the head of the universal and local church, "as the head, he gives the church life, energy and power⁸ (1:18). Christ has triumphed over death for his followers (1:18; 3:1-7; Jn. 14:19; Rev. 1:5), by his death Christ brought harmony among creatures, and creatures with their God (1:19-209; 3:11; cf. Gal. 3:28). Christ is divine and thus supreme over all creatures.

The Epistle to the Colossians is a refutation of the heretical teaching which encroached into Colossae, Paul first presented his doctrine of Christology and then countered the false teaching providing its substitute thus:

1. The false teaching was an empty philosophy, the tradition of men (2:8). Colossians states that in Christ is the fullness of deity, from whom comes the true knowledge and wisdom of God's mystery (1:19; 2:2; 3:9).
2. Instead of the worship of angels as mediators between God and man (2:8, 18), Colossians presents Christ as the only mediator between God and man (1:18), because Christians have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world (2:20; 3:1). Another reason is that Christ is the Creator of all creatures (1:16-17) and he is the head over all rule and authority (1:18; 2:10,17).
3. The false teachers stressed a circumcision made with human hands (2:11), but the Epistle to the Colossians presents the more valuable circumcision which is rather spiritual and attainable in Christ from the sinful nature (2:11-13).
4. Finally, the dietary laws and festivals (2:16) are to be considered cancelled by Christ's death on the cross (1:20; 2:14-15). Therefore, life in Christ is what mattered to the Colossian church than all these additional burdens of the heretical teachers. Christ is all and in all he is divine and therefore supreme over all creatures.

Every believer should be loyal to Christ whom as a result of his divinity is supreme over all creatures (1:15-20; 2:9; 3:11), in everything whether as a church or an individual. This is because the believers do not own themselves, they are the Lord's (Col. 1:16) and so their all must always be subjugated to Christ in all situations because Christ is supreme over all. The attitude of Christians must be that of total commitment to Christ to:

1. Seek to please the Lord always.
2. Seek to both win the lost, the straying and also nourish those already in the faith through the use of Bible based lessons and messages. This writer will conclude this work with the following suggestion for further study.

Suggestion for Further Study

Scholars have not paid much attention to the relationship between the image of God in the Epistle to the Colossians 1:15 and the image of God in Genesis 1. This is important for the purpose of understanding the Scriptures and also for the purpose of scholarship.