

The Son and the Universe

by H.J. Vine

Christ is the Creator, Reconciler, and Filler of the universe, and He will fill all things with divine blessing.

Scripture: Psalm 8:6, John 1:3, Ephesians 1:22, Ephesians 4:10, Colossians 1:16, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 2:9

Topics: "Christology", "Cosmic Redemption"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the divine revelation of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, His relation to the whole creation, and the role of the Holy Spirit in leading us to understand these truths. The sermon delves into three main aspects: (1) Christ as the Creator of all things, highlighting His role in the creation of the universe and the heavenly thrones and authorities; (2) Christ as the Reconciler of all things, focusing on His sacrifice for universal peace and reconciliation, including the assembly as His body; (3) Christ as the Filler of all things, emphasizing His ascension above all heavens to fill the universe and the role of the assembly in this divine plan.

Transcript

It is indeed great grace which has granted to us the divine revelation of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and made known to us His relation to the whole creation, and also given to us the Holy Spirit to lead us into the understanding of these things.

In speaking of the whole creation, we have in mind that which is so often spoken of in the Scriptures as "all things," and that which is commonly called The Universe.

This last term is sometimes used to designate what is simply world-wide: it is, however, creation-wide when we read, "All things were made by Him (John 1:3). It is universal in the all-embracing meaning of the term. In one whole is comprehended the most distant ranges, and the most immediate parts, along with the vast and varied interweavings and interdependencies of all the material, the intelligent, and the moral creation; the animate and the inanimate; the breadth and length and depth and height; the UNIVERSE--one--all comprehended in one whole. The hearts of those who know the surpassing love of Christ may well aspire to know the relation of our blessed Lord and Saviour to it all. And God would have us to apprehend this. The Holy Spirit is here to enable us to do so. Liberty, fullness of joy, life and peace, are thus maintained in the soul.

Leading on to the time when our great and glorious Saviour shall shine publicly as the Head and Centre of the universe, we must necessarily pursue our subject in the following order:

(1) His glory as the Creator of all things; (2) His glory as the Reconciler of all things; (3) His glory as Filler of all things. With the last we shall have to notice the peculiar place of the assembly, which is His body, in relation thereto.

1. The Creator of all Things

Two words concerning our Lord Jesus Christ and the universe make known to us the divine purpose for which this wonderful creation has been brought into being--"FOR HIM."

All things are of God--the Triune God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all had their part in the creation. The first name used for God in the Bible indicates this. It is Elohim, a plural name. It involves three Persons--a Trinity; for the Hebrew language has singular and dual as well as plural; not simply singular and plural as in English. When, however, the One who was the active agent in creating is singled out, in the full revelation of the New Testament, it is the Son who is so spoken of: not the Father, as is stated in the so-called Apostles' Creed. Three Scriptures bring this clearly before us, presenting to us three distinct aspects of Christ's creation work.

First, in Hebrews 1, the glory of Christ is seen as the Son. God has spoken fully and finally in Him. By Him also He made "the worlds" (v. 2). Second, in Colossians 1, our blessed Lord is peculiarly and preciously designated as the Son of the Father's love. Here He is the eternal Son. By Him all the thrones and authorities "IN" the heavens and "UPON" the earth were created (v. 16). Third, in John 1, He is the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God. He is the Creator of everything, in the fullest sense of the word here, without the limitations expressed in the other Scriptures: "All things were made by Him" (v. 3).

If the first scripture speaks only of the worlds as being made by Christ, it is because the special dignity of God's Son is in view as taking the throne of glory in relation thereto. As to the Son it is therefore said, "Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age" (v. 8, N.Tr.). And when entering this habitable world even, it is said, "Let all God's angels worship Him." The second scripture recognises other thrones. All of them were, however, created by Him--by the Son of the Father's love. Now these great and glorious positions in the seen and in the unseen, which are expressed to us as thrones, lordships, principalities, and authorities, all subsist together by Him. The Spirit constantly indicates to us that there are mighty dignities in the heavens, and we see around us very high and exalted dignities upon the earth, in the various nations where authorities are divinely set up. We are to view all these, apart from the disorder which has come in through sin, as created primarily "in" the Son, and also "by" Him, and "for" Him (Col. 1:16). How all this greatness enhances before our gaze the glory of our adorable Lord. And when, as we shall see, all these glorious thrones and authorities are reconciled, He shall shine in supreme splendour and royal majesty above them all. This place is His already; it will be seen publicly soon. Faith takes it in now. The third scripture embraces not only the worlds mentioned in the first, and not only the thrones and authorities named in the second, but everything--the universe. "All things received being through Him, and without Him not one thing received being which has received being" (John 1:3, N.Tr.). This work was done, as we have said, by the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God. HE IS THE CREATOR.

"His almighty power and wisdom

All creation's works proclaim,
Heaven and earth alike confess Him,
As the ever great I AM."

2. The Reconciler of all Things

And now, this august Creator, the mighty God, deigns to come into the creation which His own omnipotent hands had made. He stoops to His footstool, and takes a place thereon as Man upon the earth. What a wonderful sight! the Creator amongst His creatures! The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Passing by the holy angels, He came down to us, being made "some little inferior to the angels" (Heb. 2:7, N.Tr.). And even then, such His lowly mind, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death--and such a death as it was--a death of shame and ignominy--the death of the cross!

"Yes," the youngest believer can say, "it was for me He came down; He died for me, to save me--to make me His own." Another more advanced in the knowledge of the truth can say, "He loved the assembly and gave Himself for it." Both blessedly true, but in the aspect of His death of which we have just spoken it is the culmination of His pathway of obedience to God, for His glory. We may well bless His holy name when we see such an One come down to the very bottom, to lift us up to the very top!--when we behold the One who was rich, for our sakes become poor, that we through His poverty might be enriched!--we cannot cease to praise the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ! But, oh, how our hearts are moved to adore Him, when we see that lowly, holy One treading the path of perfect obedience (in which we had so sadly failed), and thus bringing glory to our God and Father, where we had dishonoured Him. Blessed Lord! Blessed Saviour! There is none like unto Thee! None so high. None went so low. We adore Thee now and evermore.

We must turn now to the immediate aspect of the death of Christ which is before us. Enmity and alienation having taken hold of man through sin, and disorder having come into the creation through the fall of Satan, one of the great dignities in the heavens, who sinned before man, and who compassed the fall of man, it became necessary, if peace and reconciliation and order were to be established, for the Lord Jesus to undertake the work. And this involved His death;--a death, not only for the salvation of the individual sinner, but to lay a righteous basis for universal peace, reconciliation and order, so that all things might be adjusted in a new way to the Fullness that dwells in Him. We are therefore told, He tasted death for everything (Heb. 2:9, N.Tr.); also, "By Him to RECONCILE ALL THINGS to Itself; having made peace by the blood of the cross--by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens" (Col. 1:20, N.Tr.). We have little idea how great has been the disorder brought into the heavens through the irremediable fall of such a great dignity as Satan, who dragged others with him to hopeless doom. We see something of the awful results of sin in this world; and how terrible will be the eternity of those who refuse to repent! But, blessed be God, already the firm foundation of reconciliation has been laid by Christ in His death; and the work of reconciliation has begun already with those who believe. They "have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10). Or, as it continues in Colossians 1--You has He now reconciled. Afterwards He will reconcile all things.

There is a new creation in Christ, and the assembly of which He is the glorified Head is brought into reconciliation in a way distinct from the rest. We are told that it is "in the body of His flesh through death"; whereas the things in the heavens and on the earth are to be reconciled "by" Him. We are reconciled "in" Him. When the assembly is glorified, and Christ has that with Him in glory which is a new creation in

Himself, then He will reorder the wide creation. What glory and gladness shall then abound in those reconciled realms! What peace and rest and divine direction shall then bless those holy scenes! All confusion shall cease, and contented creation shall sweetly sing the praise of its CREATOR AND RECONCILER.

"Joyful now the wide creation

Rests in undisturbed repose,

Blest in Jesu's full salvation,

Sorrow now nor thraldom knows."

How deep will be the joy and satisfaction of God when all is thus reconciled in and by the Son. His rest shall be disturbed no more. If He said, It is meet that We should make merry when we were reconciled, what shall such fullness be?

3. The Filler of all Things

We have spoken of Christ as the Creator of the universe, and also of Him as its Reconciler. The Holy Spirit further tells us, in Ephesians 4:10, that He has ascended up above all the heavens that He might fill all things. And with this object in view, it is made known to us, the assembly which is His body is being formed during the present period. Christ is going to fill the universe, and He will do this by means of His body. It is, however, Himself who does it. We must keep this in mind, or we shall fall into the error of those who exalt the assembly at the expense of Christ's glory. The hope of our calling is so exalted and so glorious that the very knowledge of it becomes a danger, unless the pre-eminence of Christ is rejoiced in with reverence and love.

The sweet singer of old said, The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. The earth is full of His riches. The singers today, when the full revelation of God has been made known, may sing, The universe is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. The heavens and the earth abound with His riches.

Now, if in view of the reconciliation of all things He made peace by His precious blood, so, in view of filling all things with divine blessing, He came down to the deepest depths and then ascended to the highest heights, after having overthrown and spoiled the one who had brought in the curse. The language of the Holy Spirit as to this is most expressive, "But that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens that HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS." Let the thoughts travel up to the highest of the heavens--He is above them all! Let the mind discover the multitudinous marvels of the material and moral universe--He is to fill all things! How great and wise and glorious then is our blessed Saviour. And shall not He who can do this, and whose love for us led Him to die for our sins, fill our hearts?--yea, fill them to overflowing. Oh, that those who comprise His well-loved assembly had simply clung to Him! He is enough the mind and heart to fill! But how early the assemblies left their first love!

The scripture above quoted passes on to tell us that the gifts were given from the ascended Head of the assembly in view of its edifying, that we might grow up to Christ in all things. For from Him the whole body is fitted together, and receives that which is for its good, and growth, and self-building up in love. Now the wonderful thing is that when the assembly is complete, and glorified together with Christ in His exalted place as Head over all things, it will then be the perfected instrument whereby He Himself will fill with order

and blessing all things over which He is the glorified Head. This is made known to us in that unparalleled scripture, in this connection, at the end of Ephesians 1, where we are told that Christ is set above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, all things being put under His feet; and that He is Head "over all things to the assembly, which is His body, THE FULNESS OF HIM WHO FILLS ALL IN ALL." What honour then is bestowed upon the evangelist, and upon the shepherd and teacher, to have part now in the edifying of this body of Christ. Could any service be greater or more dignified and gracious? And what is it to be part--even a feeble part, of so blessed and eminent an assembly?--the most eminent and exalted in the universe, because it is the body of Christ. Oh, that we might show our deep appreciation of the love that has taken us up for this, by seeking the exaltation of the Head of the assembly at all times.

It is He Himself who shall fill all things. What would the body be without Him? But how little we grasp what "all things" mean. The more we do so, the more the greatness grows before our eyes of Him who is to fill all things. That is if we look at them rightly as in relation to Him who is the exalted Head of all. Psalm 8 tells us of some of these things, "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." But there is also the earth itself, and the heavens above the earth. There are the peoples in distant climes who have not yet heard of Him; and the nations where thrones and authorities are set up; and then in the heavens there are intelligences with their powers, and authorities, and principalities, and dominions, and thrones--all--all things are to be filled by our Lord Jesus Christ. The place is His already, but He awaits the time when the assembly shall be glorified. And what a response shall be given to all the blessed beneficence, and direction, and gladness, and glory with which He will fill the universe! "To Him shall every heart be love and every lip be praise!" All will redound to the praise of God's glory. The wicked and all wickedness shall be removed. And in the assembly in Christ Jesus shall be everlasting glory to God. He has revealed Himself to us in the Son--in the One who is the Firstborn of all creation, the Son of the Father's love. May we know Him and His relation to the universe better. He is its CREATOR, RECONCILER, and FILLER.

"How great our glorious Saviour is,

All radiant on the throne!

The universe He'll fill with bliss,

And gladden everyone."

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