

Name Above All Names

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:15-23)

At the writing of this letter to the Ephesian church, it had been several years since the Apostle Paul had lived and ministered among them. And from reports coming to him from some of his beloved “spiritual children”, he believed it was necessary for him to reconfirm some of the foundational doctrines that he had taught to them while he ministered among them, especially as it related to who God the Father was and even more especially, who the Lord Jesus really was, this one in whom they had placed their faith.

We really don't know how familiar the Ephesian gentiles were with the God that their neighboring Jews held in such high esteem. It seems that they did have at least some prior knowledge of Him. But for the most part, the Man Jesus Himself was completely unknown to most of the people of the gentile world.

The Gentiles were more accustomed to their own ideas about gods, mostly they believed in mythical beings who engaged themselves in more human-like activities; and were generally independent of a central rule, gods such as Zeus and Artemis who themselves struggled with allegiances and often even fought amongst themselves for power.

But we must always remember that those gods were really not gods at all. The Apostle Paul expressing it this way in Galatians 4:8. He said . . .

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. (Galatians 4:8)

Mythical beings such as those worshiped by the Greeks were really not gods at all of course, but were most likely only strong demons who ruled those regions. But with their background of beliefs about their mythical gods, the people of Ephesus probably had a difficult time rationalizing a God like the Almighty “God the Father” and especially this one who was called His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Jesus was different from all that they had been accustomed to as gods. He was a humble, suffering Savior who fought no wars, led no insurrections and had no political ambitions. Jesus just simply did not “fit the mold” of one that most people would want to call “God”. His only claim to glory was that His blood could wash away their sins and give them eternal life.

And so here, through this letter written to the people of Ephesus, and then made available to people like us who would later read it, God is carefully explaining who He Himself is and also who this man Jesus really is.

And may I say that both fortunately and unfortunately, such words place you and me, and anyone else who reads it, within a difficult position. Because these words are truth, in their purest form, they do leave you and me with a very, very important decision to be made. I say fortunate in that, we can be eternally saved if we receive this truth, but unfortunate if we choose to reject it, leaving us without excuse and eternally lost.

Here, within these words, God provides us with all of the truth that we will need to know regarding Himself and His Son, the Lord Jesus. And simply put, the choice is now ours to make, to accept it or to reject it!

Follow along with me again and let’s consider what God has to say to us here in these words. Here, first of all, Paul tells his “spiritual children” that he is praying for them that they will be able to have real spiritual wisdom and understanding.

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
(Ephesians 1:18-18)

Again, Paul intends to take them back and reconfirm to them who God the Father is and who Jesus is. And may I say that this is something that we should also always be

faithful to do, both for the sake of our own souls and for the sake of the dear ones that we minister too.

While it may seem repetitive to say the same things over and over again, it is a necessary thing to do. It is a right thing for me to keep giving you the same gospel Sunday after Sunday. Billy Graham gave essentially the very same message thousands of times over his years of ministry.

And in 2 Peter, we find Peter saying much the same thing, that it is right to keep reminding and resaying these things, over and over again.

12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. (2 Peter 1:12-15)

So then, for ourselves and for our loved one and for anyone else who will listen, may we be diligent to always be remembering and reminding others, and saying over and over again who God really is and who the Lord Jesus really is.

Most of us here in this church are not burdened with the foolishness of belief in mythical gods like Zeus and Artemis. But we do have confusion when it comes to beliefs similar to ours, beliefs like those of the Jehovah's Witness and the Mormons; and even those that extend closer into the borders of Christianity, denominations like Word of Faith and other such churches that seem to severely limit their message to matters of "prosperity" and "name it and claim it" promises.

With God's name being bandied about so freely within their doctrines, many people have become confused and have wandered off into their errant teachings. As with the Jehovah's Witnesses, our beliefs are close, even to the insisting of Christ being the Son of God and being the Savior in which we must believe. But very subtly, the Jehovah's Witnesses have also insisted that Jesus Himself not be God, that He is not divine, He is not deity. And such is also true of the Mormons.

But folks, for many, many reasons, the Lord Jesus not only is, but also must be God, the most important reason being for the sake of our salvation. Only a pure and Holy God could be so sinless as to pay the debt for our sins and cleanse us from our unrighteousness. Had Jesus only been a man, as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the

Mormons insist, He would have needed to die for His own sins, making Him insufficient to die for yours and mine.

Yes, Jesus really was also a real man, but that was necessary to the purpose for which He was sent, to be the Christ and to die to pay the penalty for our sin. But to be sure, He was not just a man. He was also God incarnate, “begotten” and not “created”. When the Holy Spirit begat Jesus in the womb of Mary, Jesus’ embryo was the very essence, the very DNA of God the Father, wholly pure, and without any vestige of a sin nature that is common to an ordinary man’s DNA.

And may I also address another error in belief that is common to some of those “fringe” doctrinal beliefs? And that is that Jesus was born just a man who then became the “Son of God”. Jesus did not become the Son of God. He is and always has been the Son of God, a co-equal member of the Trinity, eternally co-existent with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, from all times past and throughout all times future.

And contrary to the beliefs of the Mormons, neither God the Father nor Jesus His Son were just men who were able to work their way up into the position of God. And the Holy Spirit is not just a manifestation of God’s thought processes.

They, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all three separate individuals eternally co-existent as One Person forming the eternal Trinity of God. And just because our minds can’t fathom that sort of nature of being does not diminish its truth. It simply is the way it is and each of us must by faith accept it.

But may we also take just another few moments and ponder God’s unfathomable nature. His names in the scriptures often describe and testify as to who He is and what He can do. The first name that He is called by in the Book of Genesis, Elohim, describes Him as being the “Almighty God”. But mysteriously the name Elohim is in a “plural” form meaning that God is not merely one person, but more than one, giving the understanding that all three, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit took part in creation.

In chapter 1 verse 2 of Genesis, we read where the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep. And in chapter 2, verse 4, we read where YAHWEH created the heavens and the earth. And then also in John chapter 1 and Colossians chapter 1, we read where Jesus created all things.

And yes, all of those seemingly differing words can be confusing and beyond our ability to comprehend, but they are, in their simplest form, true. All three, God the Father, God

the Son and God the Holy Spirit were eternally present and all three took part in the creation of all the things in existence today.

But even with all of that being true, Jesus, the Son of God, still had to come to earth and become a man, so that He could become the Christ who could then suffer and die and take away all our sins, a completely unfathomable plan and circumstance, but again still all the same, absolutely true.

A question . . . why is it so necessary that you and I know about these things? And why is it important for you and me to be reminded over and over again? And why was it so necessary for the Apostle Paul to continue to remind his “Ephesian children” of these attributes of the Person of God and of Christ, His Son? Listen again!

16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:16-23)

This reminder about who God is and about all that has taken place in the life, the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was necessary because it appears that these Ephesian saints were digressing into those same errors in belief that had taken place with the Jews, and especially with the Scribes and the Pharisees, that of developing a system of beliefs and then depending upon that system of beliefs for salvation.

We will study about that in depth over the next few weeks as we study chapter 2. Here, God is relaying and reestablishing the groundwork for the faith that they began with by bringing the focus back from a “system of beliefs and behaviors”, back to the “Person of God the Father” and to the “Person of Jesus, His Son”.

Salvation and eternal life can never be gained through adherence to a system of beliefs and behaviors. Salvation and eternal life is wholly dependent upon faith in the Persons of God the Father and God the Son.

And you and I must also be diligent in remembering these things. Sometimes, after we have been a believer for a number of years, the fervor of our Christianity begins to descend into being “old hat” to us. Our zeal for Christ dulls and we attend church on Sunday mostly because we know we ought to.

Yes, we believe and are saved, but just like the Scribes and the Pharisees, our zeal is more for the principles of Christianity than for the Person of Christ Himself. And that is when we need to do as the Apostle Paul has done here, go back and remind ourselves and remind all of our “spiritual children” who will listen about all these same things that the Apostle Paul is reminding his “spiritual children” about, that God the Father is the Almighty God and that salvation and eternal life can only come through an intimate relationship with the Person of Jesus, His Son.

Yes, we should have good attendance at church. And we should go to bible studies and we should have private devotional times with the Lord. But those things alone will never sustain our salvation. Our diligence must be to the very Person of God and to the very Person of His Son Jesus.

It can only be one way and that is the way that Jesus expressed it when asked about the “greatest commandment”. You and I must personally love the Lord our God with our whole heart, with all of our soul, mind and strength. That and that alone will be our entrance into heaven! Listen to these words as I close!

8 . . . being found in appearance as a man, He (Jesus) humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:5-12)