

The theme of Colossians is the preeminence of Christ. Christ is above the entire creation, both physical and spiritual (1:15–19). Although Christ is supreme in actual fact, His preeminent position is not always evident in actual experience. Sadly enough, this is sometimes true in the lives of Christians who have been reconciled to God through the atonement of Christ (1:20–22). Because Paul recognized this possibility, he instructs the believer to know his completeness in Christ. The grand theological truth that Christ is preeminent should have a practical effect on the Christian. That all fullness dwells in Christ should cause the Christian to be satisfied and to find in Christ all that is necessary and essential to life, both material and spiritual, because those in union with Christ share in His fullness and have no need for anything outside of Him.

Colossians 2:9–15 gives the reason believers have no needs outside of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the source of all spiritual life, and the believer is inseparably united to Him. Paul has already declared that “it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell” (1:19). It is impossible to read Colossians—particularly the text before us—without being impressed by the recurring statement “in him” (2:9, 10, 11, 15; also “with him” in 2:12, 13). In Him all the fullness of deity exists. In Him the Christian has been made complete, participating in His death and sharing in His life. In Christ there is triumph over every enemy. Each of these truths contributes to the fullness of life available in Christ.

The Fullness of Christ

“For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9). The totality of deity has permanent



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residence in Christ. There has never been a moment when the only Redeemer of God's elect did not have this fullness: He is the eternal Son of God. The word translated "Godhead" occurs only here in the New Testament. Designating more than just divinity or divine attributes, it signifies the very essence of Godhood. This is a direct and unreserved declaration of the absolute deity of Jesus

Christ. Christ is the essence of God. Fullness of spiritual life is possible in Christ because He is Himself the fullness of God.

The Fullness in Christ

"And ye are complete in him" (2:10). With a play on words, the apostle stresses that the believer is complete in Christ. The word *fullness* in verse 9 and the word *complete* in verse 10 are the same root—the first is a noun, the second a verb. There is a spiritual union between Christ and His people. This union does not imply that believers become gods, but that Christians share with Christ and receive all the benefits and blessings of His absolute supremacy over all principality and power. Everything necessary for spiritual life, enjoyment, and satisfaction is available and can be found in Jesus Christ.

There can be completeness in Christ because every believer has mystically participated in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (2:11–12). Association with the death of Christ involves the removal of sin. In verse 11, this removal of sin from those in union with Christ is described with the image of circumcision. In the Old Testament dispensation, circumcision was a rite of purification that demonstrated membership in the covenant community. It was an external sign identifying an individual as a possession of God and symbolizing his acceptance by God. Although circumcision was an external sign, the Old Testament consistently stressed the necessity of the inward spiritual reality that was being pictured by the sacrament. The circumcision of the heart was vitally more important than the religious rite (see Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:16; Jeremiah 4:4). Paul refers here to a spiritual circumcision done without hands. It is the circumcision of Christ; it is a divine act. The stripping away of the entire body of flesh also suggests the spiritual aspect of the act; this circumcision was not limited to the foreskin that merely symbolized the sin nature. Those in Christ share in His purity.

Verse 12 continues the same theme with the image of baptism. With the finished work of Jesus Christ, there is no more place for any bloody rites, so water baptism replaced bloody circumcision. What circumcision symbolized in the old dispensation, baptism symbolizes in the new. But again Paul's focus here is on spiritual baptism. Just as there was no knife in verse 11, there is no water in verse 12. Mystically and spiritually the believer was united to the death of Christ. When Christ died, the believer died in Him. Consequently, all that Christ accomplished by His death becomes the joint experience and possession of every believer. Christ died to remove sin, so in Christ there is forgiveness. As a result of union with the death of Christ, the Christian is to participate and share in the resurrection. *(continued on page 23)*