

Christ the Only Potentate

Let us turn to our Bibles to 1st Timothy chapter 6. 1st Timothy chapter 6, verses 15 and 16. Let us listen attentively to the word God, 1st Timothy 6, 15 and 16. I'll read a part of verse 15, speaking of Jesus.

He who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in the unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom we honor an everlasting power. Amen. Let us pray.

So, Lord God, we read here in this glorious doxology, a theology of praise, by the Apostle Paul, in which, speaking of writing of Christ here, he goes off into a divine bunny trail, as it were, relative to the topic he was talking about, fighting the good fight. But it's encouragement, Lord, it's a reminder that in fighting the good fight, Jesus Christ is our Lord, in our battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And as our Lord, he is our King and our Master, and he defends and guides and subdues us.

And this is an encouraging truth and a fact, God Almighty, that we pray, our Heavenly Father above, we would learn more, or we learn it again, God, for our encouragement and growth and grace, we pray. Amen. So here, in this dense sentence, we have the highest praise for Jesus Christ by the pen of Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It is what they call a doxology, a theology of praise. And this is significant. By example, Paul is showing that he is worshipping Jesus as God.

He is attributing to Christ those things, those attributes found only in the divine. In a day and age in which many polled, polled evangelicals, questions by Pew study, for example, and they deny that Jesus is God. Such verses are important for us today.

They reinforce what we were taught, what we read elsewhere, and we'll read elsewhere in the Bible about Jesus. However, to get a clear understanding of these verses, we need to understand how the description of Jesus as only potentates, immortal, and endowed with everlasting power, how it's useful for us in this regard. It is not that Jesus is only divine, or that as a human he has now become demigod, that is a half human, half God.

Rather, Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine in one person. We need to get this context here of the theology of who Jesus is. And we get this from the Shorter Catechism question 21.

Westminster, Shorter Catechism question 21. Who is the Redeemer of God's elect? The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man and so was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever. One person, two natures.

We are one person in one nature, human nature. Christ is both divine and human, fully both. The second person of the Trinity, whose name is the Son of God, has always existed in eternal fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In the fullness of time, the Son of God took a true body and a reasonable soul, becoming man, yet was still divine, that is God, the second person of the Trinity. So sometimes you hear the word God, and we can be confused on this word, because sometimes it means divine, divine nature, the Godhead, the Godhood. And other times we mean the Father.

I don't mean the Father. When I say Jesus is God, I don't mean Jesus is the Father. I mean He's divine.

The Confession means that, and the Bible means that. That Jesus is divine is significant for our salvation, because if a mere man saved us, we would be lost, there would be no salvation, since only the divine could satisfy infinite justice. Yet it was not God alone who came to earth to save us, but God in the flesh, because He is our advocate and our substitute, the second Adam, and so He had a body and a soul to identify with us.

We need both to have salvation. These verses at the end of the book of 1 Timothy contribute to the proof that Jesus was and is God in the flesh, that is divine, having all the attributes of divinity, just as the Father and as the Holy Spirit. And so I broke it into three parts here.

It could be done a little differently, depending on how you want to highlight it, but clearly the vast majority of the wording here is about His power and His might and His rule. He is the only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He has everlasting power, and He is such that no one can approach Him with His light and His beauty and His glory and even His power. So the first point is Christ the only potentate.

Christ the Only Potentate

He is blessed and happy as well, in particular, He who is the blessed and only potentate. Because the word blessed can mean happy. Now with respect to, of course, God, divine, we don't mean happy in the sense of giddy, or something like that, a human response which is more or less mostly emotional.

It's more of the emotions than of the mind. But a happy state we can speak of more objectively of the mind or of one's existence. And that's what this is here with respect to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the blessed, and thus the source and the greatest of all blessings is in Him. Christ indeed has all good blessings because He is God, but it points to more than that, that He Himself is our blessed hope, the blessed. He is the source of all goodness for us and for His people.

Jesus is our blessed hope, Titus 2.13. Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. There's another text. It's the hope, the blessed, Jesus Christ, describing Him as God and as Savior, Jesus Christ.

And explicitly the source of our blessedness because He is the blessed, as divine. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all the blessed. And the word the is emphatic in the Greek.

Ephesians 1.3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, in the Messiah, in the Anointed One for us. Of all good things, of course, materially, and there in Ephesians 1, especially spiritual gifts. As the Blessed One, He is also the only Potentate.

It's an old word. It's kind of interesting. It's used in two other texts in Luke 1.52 and Acts 8.27. It means mighty one, but in the context of authority, of course, the sovereign one.

And given in the next phrase, King of kings and Lord of lords, it shows the exalted office and His authority. So it's not just a mighty one in the sense of power, but Potentate, a king and a ruler, a sovereign over all. And as the only Potentate we read in the text.

But we know that there are other officers of the Roman state that were called Potentates of old. And so Paul means by the word only the truest and all-sovereign ruler. Everyone else is therefore derived from His authority as sovereign, as Potentate, as the all-powerful one.

And it's only meaningful here, of course, if He is God. We read in Romans of all authority being established on earth by God because God is the highest authority and their authority is what? Derived from His. And so when you say He is the only Potentate, the only all-sovereign of all things, that means real power is in Him and all other power is not as real or significant or as powerful.

It's derived, we say. Not unlike a child babysitting his younger kid, His authority comes from the parents. You're in charge, Junior.

You take care of the kids in the house until we come back. But Him being in charge, He knows, is temporary, is limited. It's not the same as the parents, really.

And all the more with the King of kings and Lord of lords, creator of all things, who has all being and is immortal and ever eternal existing compared to the rest of us who are all derivative and dependent upon Him. That's the idea here. It's there.

The word only is there. To emphasize that point. And thus it's what? More proof that Jesus is divine.

He has a divine nature. King of kings and Lord of lords. Clearly explaining and unpacking the idea of being the only Potentate.

Revelation 19.16 is one of the texts, at least I go to in my head when I think of this phrase, King of kings and Lord of lords. I don't, at least growing up as a Christian, didn't think much about 1 Timothy 6.15. I didn't think of that text. I thought of Revelation.

We see this glorious image here in Revelation of the King Jesus coming down from heaven. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Lord of lords, plural.

The supreme title of all the world is what that is highlighting. Meaning the greatest and powerful king of the entire world. Not Nero, not Genghis Khan, not President Reagan, not Gorbachev, not Putin, not Zelensky.

All these are piddly ant rulers and kings of the world. Presidents and dictators. They are under Him to be king of the kings.

And Lord of the lords. And president of the presidents. And the judge of the judges.

Means that they are under His power and authority. Under His domain and rule as Jesus. And therefore, as we sang in the, read in the Psalms, night 67, earlier.

We should praise and honor Him. All the nations should praise and honor Him. Sometimes we'll read, as we'll read this afternoon, as I go through the psalm.

That the kings will bow and sing praises. But of course the kings are going to do it. The people under the kings are supposed to do it.

The entire nation is supposed to do it. Now, Jesus as king and lord. This is true in two senses.

The first sense is king of kings and lord of lords as God. As the divine, as the creator of all things. The sustainer of all things.

Without Him, nothing can exist. And so the Son of God was and is and ever shall be. Lord and sovereign over all creation.

We know this in John 1, 1. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. As He is with the Father and He is divine. And by Him all things are created.

And nothing was created without Him. We read. That's Jesus and that's what it means to be king of kings and lord of lords.

Their mere existence. That the Russian Empire, that the American Empire exists because of the sovereign pleasure of King Jesus. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess.

That this Jesus is the divine creator, sustainer and lord of the earth. That's going to happen. And we are privileged to already confess it.

And we are blessed because of that. Because that day when Jesus returns and they can no longer deny and pretend otherwise. They will confess but it will be too late.

The nations and the kings and the judges. Who thought they had enough power to protect and preserve themselves like the pharaohs of old. I'm going to be buried with all my treasures.

No you're not. You're dead. And you're in the abode of the dead.

And your treasures are here and your power is gone. But Jesus being king of kings and lord of lords and only potentate. Is also true in a mediatorial sense.

That is as the not only God. He was always a God. Divine person God.

And then later in time with respect to us. He took on himself the body and the reasonable soul to the divine person Jesus. So he became the God man.

He started a new reign in the New Testament era. And thus the radical change and the passing away of the Jewishness of the church. During the time we find ourselves in.

So this kingdom fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises. He reigns and guides all people and all nations for the good of his people. That's the mediatorial reign of Jesus now.

Something different because now he's become a man as well. Made a radical difference. The temple's gone.

Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D. And now we're spread across the whole world. And all things are guided under his domain as Jesus the God man. This is his mediatorial rule.

That leads us secondly then to Christ is immortal. Who alone has immortality? So for clarity in praising Christ Jesus here. Paul is praising the inherent immortality of Jesus.

Christ the Immortal

As one commentator wrote very vaguely. In his own essence not merely at the will of another as all other immortal beings. So the idea of the word immortal can be unclear at times to us.

In which we realize what we are immortal. When we die our soul continues to live forever. The question is will it be in heaven or hell? But for Jesus his immortality is not dependent.

Ours is what? Dependent. We are created. That we exist forever is at God's good pleasure.

Do not forget that. This here in the use of the word. And it's there again.

It's not italicized. When you have italic words in your translation. That often means they put it there to help clarify.

It's not italicized. Who alone has immortality? Like he alone is the potentate. Again by alone it doesn't mean the Father is not immortal.

And the Holy Spirit is not immortal. It means with respect to his Godhood. Because they are all three God.

And have the characteristics of God. Godness the deity has and only has immortality inherent within. He was always existence.

Always is and always shall exist. He is independent. And not dependent on anything outside of himself.

This is what it's speaking of here. It only makes sense. Because if it was speaking otherwise.

What kind of praise is that? Jesus is like the rest of us. He too is immortal. I'm immortal.

I'll live forever. He'll live forever. I'm going to praise him and not praise other men.

What would be the difference? The difference is he only is immortal. He has this uniqueness about him. Because he is divine. As the Father and as the Holy Spirit. They have a shared uniqueness. And so the praise is therefore of his divinity. The book of John especially highlights Jesus' eternal nature. That he is divine. That he is God in the flesh. John 5.26 we read. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. The Son has life in himself means it is part of who he is. John 1.1. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God.

A clear declaration of Jesus' divinity. If there ever was one. He is not merely exalted like the angels.

They didn't exist. But existed before the creation of all things. And was and is God Almighty.

To exist beforehand of course means he was always there. He is immortal. We speak of in the beginning.

John does in 1.1. He speaks as a man. Because there was no beginning. Just before creation.

Always there. John 8.58. John 8.58. Jesus says to them. That is the Pharisees.

Most assuredly I say to you before Abraham was. I am. Think about that. This man is speaking to you and he says. Talking about Abraham. You are the sons of Abraham. I am telling you. Before Abraham was. I am. Present tense. I am always there. Not I was before him. I am before him. It is an eternal I am. And of course they were quite offended. And wished to kill him because of it. They understood the implications of that language. That Jesus used for himself. They mocked him of course. Are you really old compared to Abraham? No. I am. Ageless. I am eternal. I am immortal. And clearly Jesus is claiming his existence in eternity past. That although he has a human body. At that time.

Talking to the Pharisees. And even now. Before the incarnation of 2000 years ago.

He still existed. And always existed as a son of God. And will always exist as a son of God.

We read. I put under this rubric here for clarity of course. Ease of presentation.

Who alone has immortality? Dwelling in an unapproachable light. Who no man has seen or can see. Unapproachable light.

One commentator describes it this way. So that the seraphims and their addresses to him. Clap the wings on their faces.

Isaiah 6.2. As men are wont to do with their hands. When lightning flashes before their eyes. Even they.

The greatest of creation in their own certain sense. Angels are. Cannot witness the fullness of God.

The greatness of who he is as a supreme being. As a morally perfect being. Represented by the light.

And our lack of access to that light. 1 John 1.5 we read. This is the message which we have heard from him.

And declared to you. That God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him. And walk in darkness. We lie and do not practice the truth. And so there in 1 John we read. Of light. Being a parallel and a metaphor for moral holiness. Not just illumination of knowledge. We typically think of light. Well I need a light to see. To understand. To comprehend. Here he speaks of morality. Of purity. And so it's shorthand for that. Or we would say moral knowledge. Of right and wrong. And thus knowledge and morality must go hand in hand. And so this imagery of light.

Often can carry both ideas. Of knowledge. Not in the abstract. But of moral knowledge. And therefore purity. And of holiness. The two ideas go together in this image of light. Especially there in 1 John 1.5. But there's no reason not to see it. Here in verse 16. And the idea and the language of light. Echoes the Old Testament teaching. Where we read for example.

In Psalm 104 verse 2. Blessed. Bless the Lord O my soul. O Lord my God. You are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty. Who cover yourself with light. As with a garment. Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. Who is this about? It's about the Lord.

If you don't have the text before you. I'll tell you. It's all caps. So it's the covenant keeping God. It's Jehovah. The I am that I am. He covers himself with light. As with a garment. That which we cannot grab. That is beyond our grasp. Is the picture here. Light is almost like omnipresent.

It's there. It's powerful. It's illuminating.

It's a picture of moral perfection. Of course as well. He cloaks about him. He has absolute control. Because it reflects who he is. It's the Lord.

Jehovah has light. Covers himself in light. And yet that language of light is used for Jesus. In other words. The pictures that we have in the Old Testament. Especially in the Psalms.

Where it uses this physicality. Of grabbing the things of this world. And the fact the earth itself being what? A footstool.

As though God had a foot. And light itself being a cloak about him. Are characteristics of what? The divine.

This is Jehovah. He is unique. He is not like all the other Baals and Ashtoreths of the land.

Who are limited. And have just little clouds and some ocean water. For power and majesty.

God has the entirety of all things. That you can ever imagine. Including light itself.

That which they can't really grasp and get a hold of. But we know it impacts our world. In other words.

Describing divine characteristics. And here Paul is using that language. Of the Old Testament.

Of light. And saying this is Jesus. Because Jesus is what? Divine.

It's an argument for his deity. In other words. That's further proof of it.

And we see. Of that light. Jesus is the light of all men.

In John. When he comes down to earth. We read in John 1.18 in particular.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten son who is the bosom of the father. He has declared him.

And he is that light. The light of all men. We read in John 1.6 and following.

He describes this light. This unapproachable light. Who no man has seen or can see.

But the son has seen him. As I read there in John 1.18. No one has seen the father. But the son has.

And he has declared him to you. Proof therefore of his deity. That he can approach the light.

Because the light is in him as well. He has an unapproachable light. Because he shares in his majesty with the father.

And with the Holy Spirit. Therefore Jesus is more than a man. What we read here in other words.

Who no man can see or has seen or can see. What is intending by that language. As we often do.

When we speak. We speak as shorthand. Who no mere man has seen.

Because Jesus is a man. But he is not merely a man. He is more than a man.

He is divine. And this is going to be important as well. As I unpack the fact we read elsewhere.

In Revelation 22.4. They shall see his face. And his name shall be on their foreheads. And again.

Matthew 5.8. Blessed are the pure in heart. Jesus tells us. For they shall what? See God.

So he says here on the one hand. That it is an unapproachable light. That no one has seen or can see.

And elsewhere we are told we can see. And we will approach him. By the blood of Jesus Christ.

What is he saying here? He is highlighting his divine nature. Which is above and beyond us. It is infinite.

We cannot fully grasp. We cannot approach. That light.

And comprehend in its fullness. Because it is eternal. He is eternal.

And we are but finite. When we talk about in math class. I think a number of you have at least gone far enough to know that.

You can talk about infinite numbers. Numbers have no end. You just keep counting and keep counting.

Until you are exhausted. And someone else keeps counting. And it goes on forever.

When we just talk about it in the abstract. We don't fully grasp it. We can't get beyond just kind of using it as a functional tool.

In mathematics for example. Or in everyday life. God, our Lord and Savior, is more than that.

When we speak of the eternity. Of the unapproachable light. Of his moral purity.

Of his absolute perfection. It is without end. Both at the beginning.

Because there is no beginning with God. And forever. In both directions.

Because we only conceive of time as a line. Or even a plane or whatever. It is still infinite.

Forever and ever. Amen. And so, man cannot physically approach God.

In this sense. Nor morally. That is as sinners.

Who do not have access to God the Father through Christ the Son. And of course physically. Because God, Jesus as divine, does not have a body.

His body is a human body. It is not divine. When you see his body.

You are not seeing God in the sense of. Well God has a body now. Great.

Everything I have been taught in Christianity is wrong. No. It is his human body.

It is the second Adam. That is what you are seeing. It is purified.

It is perfect. It never sinned of course. It is exalted on high.

He intercedes for us. He still identifies for us for eternity. We are always dependent upon Christ in heaven.

It is not like Christ comes. We go to heaven. And we no longer need him anymore.

Whatever intercedes. He always has his human body. He is always the second Adam.

He is always our head. Of the covenant of grace. Forever and ever.

Amen. But Christians can see his body of course. And be encouraged.

And strengthened. And grow thereby. And we are going to enter into his glorious presence.

And it is relative. It is a relative difference of course. 1 Corinthians 13.12. We read.

For now we see in a mirror dimly. But then face to face. Now I know in part.

But then I shall know just as I am known. I will know fuller. I will have a greater revelation of who he is.

But even that greater revelation. Is still compared to eternity. As though we can never see him.

Nor ever approach him. Because he is infinite. And we are finite.

Christ everlasting power. To whom. That is to Jesus.

Christ the Everlasting Power

Be honor and everlasting power. Honor here of course. Given the titles and attributes above.

He is the only potentate. The king of kings. The lord of lords. He is alone immortal. And he is a light of such purity. And a perfection of infinite power. That he is unapproachable. When all things are considered. And of course such an honor. Must therefore end here. And be emphasized by his everlasting power. That is eternal.

Paul means eternal. Never ending honor and glory to Christ Jesus. To honor the lord Jesus.

To exalt him. Above all names. Which is another way to say what? Worshipping him.

Paul is worshipping Jesus with these words. He is publicly honoring him. Even if it was a private letter. He is still honoring him. When you think of Jesus. When you think of God.

When you think of the Holy Spirit. When you think of the father. You are supposed to think holy thoughts.

Good thoughts. True thoughts. That is a way of honoring and worshipping him.

Worship is not reduced to what you do on Sunday. That is the point there. We are called to imitate of course the apostles.

Therefore we are called to worship Jesus as lord and king. To give him the honor that is also due to the father and the Holy Spirit. Such honor is twofold.

It is by word and by action. By word of course what we believe and say about Jesus. In our head. And certainly with our mouth. And our words. And our written words. As Paul does here. And by our actions. That is our life. Acting out what we believe. Endeavoring as we saw the call of repentance. Endeavoring. You are making the efforts. You stutter. You fall. That is true. But you are endeavoring in your heart. To have actions in your hands and your feet. That are honoring to him. Confessing him as our lord and savior. Even defending Jesus' honor. And saying Jesus is God. You should not say otherwise. It is here in this text. It is here in other texts. That is defending his honor. Because we believe he is God in the flesh.

And that honor of course is to him. Because he has everlasting power. Honor should be given to him.

And to whom who has everlasting power. He has and always has everlasting power. If he is immortal, he will have that.

If he is the only potentate, he will have that. Clearly a divine attribute. That is the last piece of evidence in these verses.

That Jesus Christ is God. Bam, bam, bam. Just hammering it home.

Word after word. Sentence after sentence. That Jesus Christ is divine.

And what does that look like? That he has everlasting power. That he created all things. John 1. All things were made through him and without him.

Nothing was made. That was made. The beginning of all things.

Before the beginning of all things. From eternity past. And he had a hand in the creation of all things. They are the acts of a divine being. Jesus did these things. Therefore he is divine.

John 1 tells us in the beginning was what? The word. And in Genesis 1 we read what? God was in the beginning and created all things. And he spoke the word.

And all things came into existence. And the spirit of God hovered upon the earth. You have all three members of the trinity there in Genesis 1. But his omnipotence. His all powerfulness. His everlasting might. It's not just in creation. Of course in providence. I could have added that. How he sustains all things.

That we're here right now. That the water comes from the sky. And not from random chance events. He redeems his people as well with his almighty power. Hebrews 7.24. But he, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore he is able to save. Verse 25. Able to save. To the other most, those who come to God through him.

Since he always lives to make intercession for them. He can make intercession for them. Because he has the power to save us. It's not just an ability. He is able to save. You hear that word able in the English. And you think, at least I do. Oh, he has this potential within him to do something. That's not the idea here.

He can do it. And he has done it. Because he has that might and power.

As he made all things. And so he can save whom he will. As he will.

He is a priest. And thus forever. Continues forever.

While he's forever. Because he has that power to be forever. Let us meditate, brothers and sisters.

Upon the glorious praise that Paul has offered us here. This doxology in verses 15 and 16 of Jesus Christ our Lord and Master. Seeing and embracing the greatness of Jesus Christ as the only potentate.

The only immortal. And to whom be only power and power everlasting. Amen.

Let us pray. Be with us, God. Encourage us, strengthen us.

That we rejoice in this truth. Our Lord and Savior. And to know that we have a sure foundation that Jesus Christ is not merely a man.

And not just a great man who did miracles as the prophets did. But he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The only potentate.

Who alone has immortality and everlasting power. Because he is a deity. Just as much as the Father and the Son.

For this we praise you and rejoice. That he is our Lord and only potentate. Amen and amen.