

## Bible Reading Challenge 46: THE CHURCH – CHRIST THE CENTER

**Key verse:** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Col. 1:17

We're moving out of the book of Acts this week, and into a section of the New Testament called the Epistles. The word epistle means letters, and these letters are written by pastors and teachers to the very first Christians. They were written by Peter, James (the brother of Jesus), John, and especially Paul.

We've read the stories of Jesus: how he was born, how he lived, what he did, how he died and came back to life. We've read about the coming of the Holy Spirit and how the church exploded out of Jerusalem and went on to march through the whole world. Farther back, we read the long story of God's people before Jesus came, and we've seen a little of how their failure proved that no man could rescue people from sin. But for the next three weeks, which we'll spend in the epistles, the main question will be *What did it all mean?* We're going to look at three big ideas over the next three weeks, and the first of those big ideas is this: Jesus Christ is at the center of everything: history, creation, the future, right now.

In order to understand this a little better, we'll look at what Christian writers have called the three "offices" of Christ. Those aren't buildings, but three jobs that he does to save God's people. The three offices are **Prophet, Priest, and King**. We saw how the Old Testament provided three great figures in those roles: Elijah as prophet, Moses as priest, and David as king. As we also saw, none of those men were perfect and they all failed in some way. But they also pointed to Someone who would perfectly do their work, we'll soon see how.

The epistles are so packed with insight and information that it's hard to take it all in with a quick read. Our readings are a lot short this week, but they may take a lot more thought.

**Reading for this week:** I Corinthians 15:1-9, Philipians 2:5-7, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1 and 3

### Questions to Think and Talk About:

1. Make a list of everything Christ is and does in Hebrews 1:3-4 and Col. 1:15-20.
2. Why does Jesus "sit down" at God's right hand in Hebrews 1:3-4?
3. What things does Paul say are of "first importance" in I Cor. 15? Why?
4. What does Jesus do as a Prophet? (see Heb. 1:1-2 and Matt. 24:35) What does he do as a Priest? (Actually two things; see Heb. 9:11-12 and Heb. 7:25.) What does he do—and will he do—as King? (see Acts 17:31 and Col. 1:17)
5. Colossians 1 says that Jesus is also the head of the church, his body. This means, among lots of other things, that we represent him on earth, and we get to act as prophets, priests, and kings, too! What can we do as prophets? (see II Cor. 5:20) How about priests? (I Peter 2:9, II Cor. 1:11, I Tim. 2:11) And Kings? Really? (see I Tim. 2:11-12a)

### Activities:

- **Christ the Center:** This time of year, we celebrate Christmas with lots of traditions. See how many ways you can think of to make Christ the center of your traditions. I love some of the ideas on this [website](#), including making an edible nativity scene instead of a gingerbread house.
- **Play the Prophet, Priest, and King Game:** You can do an online version [here](#), or make your own flashcards with the names and play your own version.
- **Make a Christmas Timeline:** Show when some of the most famous prophets, priests, and kings lived. Then use an arrow to show them pointing forward to Jesus' birth and later his second coming!