

1st Over All

Colossians

Week 4 – Christ, First Over All

Colossians 1:15-20

Purpose: Christians will live to show that Jesus is First Over All and First Over Them.

Call to Worship

Stand to Read (Congregational Reading – Project the scripture on the screen)

Colossians 1:15-20 ESV

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Prayer

Father, we declare the personhood of Jesus Christ. We sing His Hymn proclaiming He is God. He is the creator of all things, and He is the savior of your people. Thank you for Jesus Christ and for causing us to worship Him together. Amen!

Sermon

Series Graphic (SLIDE 1)

Opening Idea

Two Rich Men

There are two separate stories of two men who were very rich. One man approached Jesus and asked about inheriting eternal life. It appeared that Jesus was first over all of his life. He claimed to know and keep the 10 commandments. Yet, when asked to give all his possessions away and follow Jesus, the rich young ruler walked away from Jesus. The man revealed that something besides Jesus was the focus of his heart and mind. (Luke 18:18-30)

The second man, who was also very rich, arranged his day to see Jesus when He came through the man's town. Jesus went and had lunch with this man. The man believed Jesus was the

Messiah and responded in giving his money to those in need and the acquired riches back to the people from whom he had swindled at a rate of four times what he had taken. Zaccheus showed that Jesus was the object of his worship and affection. Jesus declared that salvation had come to Zaccheus that day. (Luke 19:1-10)

What is the difference between these two men? The place that Jesus occupies in their heart and mind. The evidence of faith and belief in Jesus is seen in how they managed their finances. There are other aspects of proof of faith. The reality is that anything that is the center and focus of a person's heart and mind is what they worship.

Let's continue studying Paul's letter to the saints in Colossae to grow as God's people.

Read

Colossians 1:15-20 ESV

(SLIDE 2) **15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

(SLIDE 3) **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 4)

Notes on Colossians 1:15-20

This is structured as a hymn to Jesus Christ. A hymn, in this context, is defined as a song of praise to God. Paul precedes this hymn writing a statement concerning what has happened to the saints, those who God has chosen to believe and be transferred from the darkness into the kingdom of where saints dwell no longer in darkness, but in light. This kingdom has a king and it is the beloved Son of God. Paul now sings a song sung to the beloved Son. The content of this song is the personhood of the beloved Son. This is a song about Jesus Christ sung to Jesus Christ as a high act of worship. Those who sing this song learn about whom Jesus Christ is and affirm His character.

First Part of the Hymn to Jesus Christ – Creator of the World v. 15-17

Jesus is God in Human Flesh (v. 15)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Representation (a painting) vs Manifestation (subject is present)

God arrived in such a way that people could see Him. Two things to consider with God being present. First, the invisible God became visible. God does not exist in human form. God is a spiritual being. Therefore, man being limited by sight cannot see God. Second, God is pure, holy, and perfect. Man is not able to look upon God due to man's sin. Therefore, God robed Himself in flesh for man to look upon God and live. This statement by Paul is similar to John's writings in John chapter one where John writes, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Jesus is God.

Paul continues and writes that Jesus is, "the firstborn of all creation." A good understanding of Paul's writing is to understand this statement as a revealing statement. God the Son was not born, yet Jesus was. But Jesus isn't the actual first-born human. Paul's statement is revealing that Jesus Christ is the first over all creation and expresses an idea of preeminence and first in line to oversee the father's estate. The word firstborn isn't about an actual birth but occupying a special relationship with God the Father. It also reminds the readers (both in Colossae and beyond) that God the Son was not created, yet in taking on flesh to manifest God to man, Jesus was born. It is reinforcement to keep thoughts about Jesus Christ in accurate terms. Jesus Christ is both fully God and truly man.

Jesus is the Source and Focus of All Creation (v. 16)

16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

As Paul continues writing about Jesus Christ as Creator of the world, Paul writes that Jesus has a significant role in creation. Scripture reveals that God the Father is attributed as "creator". This passage doesn't contradict those assertions but gives the reader clarity about God's work to create of the world. Paul writes that Jesus took part in creating all things. His involvement is that through Jesus Christ, all things were created. Jesus Christ, God the Son, put the architectural plans into action. Theologian Richard Melick Jr writes that *through (Jesus Christ's) creative imagination and power, the created order exists*¹. God is the creator of the universe. God the

¹ Richard R. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](#), vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 217.

Father is the designer. God the Son brought the plans to life. God the Holy Spirit is the agent of change applying His will.

Not only did Jesus Christ create all things, but they also were created for Him. Paul is writing that all of creation is subordinate to Jesus Christ, He is the highest and primary focus of creation. Paul also communicates through the phrase, “for Him”, that all creation is to show the glory of Jesus Christ. It also shows, since creation is for Him, that one day Jesus Christ will be glorified in all of creation.

Whether it is through direct work or indirect action, all of creation is for the glory of Jesus Christ. The aspect of “all” includes things that are physical and spiritual, in heaven and on earth, all aspects of people in power at all levels, human and non-human. Paul writes, and literally means, all things will glorify Jesus Christ. Jesus is the source and focus of all creation!

Jesus is Essential to Creation (v. 17)

17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Paul continues with Jesus Christ’s role as creator of the world by writing that Jesus is vital to creation because of His nature. Being God who brought all creation into existence means that Jesus Christ is essential. He was not created; he was before all things that were created. This is a statement that is reinforced in the previous passage. To create means that the creator must exist before creation takes place. Being God the Son means that Jesus Christ was not created but exists. He has always existed and will always exist. Not only does Jesus Christ exist before all things, but is, again, the primary focus of all things. Nature knows Jesus Christ and in scripture we see nature, all things other than human, responding. This is shown multiple times in the narrative of Jonah where the waves, wind, whales, trees, worms, and other non-human things are responding to God’s direction. Jesus Christ is primary in creation!

Paul also writes that Jesus Christ is important to creation in that since creation was through Him, Jesus Christ is the cohesive force by which all of creation holds together. Without Jesus Christ’s presence, the world would devolve into chaos and fall apart. The ultimate power of the one who created all things continues to be shown in holding everything together. Every molecule, every brick, every structure, and every system owes its architectural integrity to Jesus Christ. If He were to ever turn His face or his eyes from creation, it would fail and be obliterated. It isn’t just buildings, but society, systems, economies, ecosystems, and relationships. Jesus Christ holds all things together. Only God, who created all things, can do this!

Second Part of the Hymn to Jesus Christ – Savior of the World v. 18-20

Jesus is the First Over All (v. 18)

18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Paul changes focus from creation to salvation in verse 18. Being creator of all things puts Jesus Christ in a unique position to then be able to save. Paul begins the revelation of Jesus Christ relationship to creation as savior by writing about Jesus Christ's relationship with His people, His body, the Church. This is not one specific church in a particular city or town. Paul writes about Jesus Christ's relationship to the church universal. These are His people who have lived in all times and exists eternally in His presence. This is described as His body. Paul writes that He is the head of the body. This description is a place of vital importance and honor. The body is submissive and dependent upon the head. This idea continues as Paul writes that Jesus Christ is the beginning, the first born. This is best understood from a place of position rather than the timing of birth. Being *the beginning, the firstborn*, as Paul writes, is to understand that Jesus is the primary force and is the primary person over all things. The firstborn is the one who is primary to the family's legacy. The firstborn has authority over the estate and affairs of the family. Jesus being the beginning and the firstborn has authority over all creation. Paul uses a qualifying term following the beginning and firstborn. Paul writes that Jesus Christ possesses authority from among the dead. Jesus Christ once died. He then defeated death to live again and never die. He has authority to lay His life down and pick it up again (John 10:17-18). Jesus Christ possesses this authority. Jesus Christ's resurrection proves His salvific power and supremacy.

Jesus is Fully God (v. 19)

19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

Paul then writes that Jesus Christ's power and authority to save creation extends from Jesus Christ being God. It wasn't that Jesus Christ possessed power at times and not at others. It wasn't that Jesus had epiphanies at times but could only see with His eyes at others. There weren't times that Jesus Christ acted like God or had God's power to then not have it at other times. Paul writes that *in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*. Jesus Christ's ability to save God's people extends from Him being fully God. It was pleasing to God for this to be this way.

Jesus is The True Savior (v. 20)

20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Being fully God, Jesus Christ then exercised His power as God and brought reconciliation. Sin has caused chaos and Jesus resolved that through His life, death, and resurrection. He was able to resolve the chaos because He is God and has the power and authority to effectively do the work needed. The idea that Jesus Christ reconciled all things is tricky. This isn't a statement of universalism (all things are saved), but a statement revealing that Jesus Christ reconciled more things than just people. Paul writes in the next phrase that all things includes things that are on

earth and things that are in Heaven. Jesus Christ reconciled and brought peace. Sin brought rebellion and chaos, but peace through Jesus Christ brings deep, true, and eternal peace with God. This is the place where creation finds rest and restoration. The way in which reconciliatory peace is received is through the violent work of the blood of Jesus Christ! Paul declares that Jesus Christ is the true savior, and reconciliation can only be found through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is First Over All (SLIDE 5)

He Existed Before All Things (SLIDE 6)

Eternal

Creator

He Has Authority Over All Things (SLIDE 7)

To His Glory

Bringing Salvation

We Live to Show Jesus Christ is First Over Us (SLIDE 8)

In Our Hearts

Values and Will

In Our Souls

Emotions and Desires

In Our Thoughts

Our Focus, Ideas, Inner Dialogue

In Our Actions

Responding to Him

How We Treat Each Other

Read (SLIDE 9)

Mark 12:29-31 ESV (Echoing the Shema – Deuteronomy 6) (The Greatest Commandment)

29 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ **31** The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Series Graphic (SLIDE 10)