

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE OVER CREATION

Please take your Bibles and turn once again to Colossians 1. To recap, here is what we've looked at so far. Chapter 1—verses 1-14—make up the **introduction** of Paul's letter.

--In verses 1-2, we have the greeting.

--In verses 3-8, we have "Purpose 1 for Paul's Praise—God's Work Through His Word."

--In verses 9-12a we see "The Priority of Paul's Prayer."

What did Paul pray for? What did Paul **ask God to do** on the behalf of the believers in Colossae? He wanted them to be filled **with knowing**—by first-hand experience—the **will of God** so that they would **do the will** of God with the end result of **living a life** that was **pleasing to God**.

--Now, please **follow along** as I read verses 12-14. Here we have what I referred to **two weeks** ago as "Purpose 2 for Paul's Praise—God's Work Through His Son!" **Why** did Paul give thanks unto the Father?

Because the Father "hath made us meet"—meaning **qualified us**, past tense—"to be partakers of the saints in light"—meaning entrance into heaven. **How** did the Father make us qualified? By **having delivered us** (past tense) from the power of darkness...and **having transferred us** (past tense) into the kingdom of His dear Son...and **currently, continually forgiving** us of our sins through the blood of Christ!

And then—as if Paul **could no longer contain** himself—his praise goes from the Father to the Son! Many scholars suggest that verses 15-20 is actually **an early church hymn**. Notice what it says. **Who composed** it...and what was **the tune**...and whether or not it was **actually sung** are not things we can know for sure. But we **do know this**—it is all about the **greatness**...the **preeminence**...the **supremacy** of Christ!

It is also too **deep and rich and wide** to cover in **one** sermon, so I'll be breaking it up into two! **First**—in verses 15-17—we have the preeminence of Christ **in creation**. **Second**—in verses 18-20—we have the preeminence of Christ **in the church**.

You've probably already noticed on your handout that the outline for this morning's sermon is going to be a little bit different than they usually are. Rather than providing you with 2 or 3 **points**...with 2 or 3 **subpoints**...and 2 or 3 **subpoints to the subpoints**, you are getting **seven** main points—with no subpoints! **Why** the difference—and **what** difference does it make?

Sometimes **it is easy** to see how the verses **relate** to one another. For example, in verse 12 we see Paul **giving thanks**—and then he elaborates on **why** he gave thanks. But sometimes it is difficult to see how the verses **build** on one another. That, I believe, is what we have here. They are **all related** to the one great theme—Christ's supremacy over creation—and answer the question **why** Christ is supreme over creation.

1. Christ is the image of the invisible God (vs 15a)

God is **invisible**, isn't He? It says it here...and in I Timothy 1:17...and in Hebrews 11:27. **Why** is God invisible? Because Jesus said in John 4:24 that **God is a Spirit**—and spirits cannot be seen with our **physical** eyes!

--I Timothy 6:16 "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; **whom no man hath seen, nor can see**: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

But just because God is invisible, it doesn't mean that people **haven't wanted** to see Him!

--**Moses wanted to see God**—and asked God to show Himself. Notice God's response to Moses' request.

Exodus 33:20 "And He said, Thou canst not see my face: for there **shall no man see me, and live**."

--**Philip**—one of the 12 disciples—wanted to see God, too! Notice on your outline the conversation between Philip and Jesus in John 14. **John 14:8-9** "Philip saith unto Him [Jesus], Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

It can't be **any plainer** than that, can it? Philip said to Jesus, 'I want to see the Father.' Jesus said to Philip, 'You're looking at Him!' **How** and **why** could Jesus make such a claim? Because Jesus is Immanuel—God with us! He is the "Word" that became flesh and dwelt among us! He is the image of the invisible God!

Hebrews 1:3 “Who being the brightness of **His glory**, and the **express image of His person**, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:” The NASB translates “express image of His person” as: “the exact representation of His nature.”

Why should that be a blessing to us? There are a number of reasons; here are three.

First, because it reveals that **God loved us enough** to come to earth and **die** for us (II Cor 5:19)!

Second, because God already **gave us Himself**, anything else we ask for is small in comparison (Rom 8:32).

Third, because we can know God better by studying the life of Jesus as recorded in the Bible (John 14:9).

Next, we see that...**2. Christ is the firstborn of every creature (vs 15b)**

What does that mean? Does it mean that of all the things **God** created, **Jesus** was the **first “thing”** created?

No; that’s not what it means! How do **we know** that’s not what it means? Because vs 16 says—**twice**—that all things were **created by Him**—meaning Christ!

But—some argue—why couldn’t God have **created Jesus first**—then have Jesus be the Creator of **everything else**? **Logically** you could make that argument, but Biblically you can’t!

Mark your spot here and turn toward the front of your Bibles to John 1. We’re not going to spend a lot of time here, but it is important that you see this for yourselves. Notice what it says in vs 1: “In the beginning”—before time even began—“was the **Word**.”

--**Who**—or **what**—is the Word? We know from vs 14 that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” so “the Word” **is Jesus!**

--**Where**—according to vs 1—was the Word? “With God.”

--**Who**—according to vs 1—was the Word? “And the Word **was God**.”

--Vs 2. “The same” (the Word referred to in vs 1) “was in the beginning with God.” Once again, John states that in the beginning of beginnings—before time began—the Word [Jesus; God the Son] was there!

--Vs 3. “**All things** were made by Him [the Word] and without Him [the Word] was not **anything** made that was made.” The word “made” does not mean **construct out of something** that is available—it means **bring into existence** something that hadn’t existed before!

--Vs 4. “In Him [the Word; Jesus] was life...” But in order for Jesus to be the “bringer about” of life—the fountain and source of life—He had to be self-existent!

Back to Colossians 1:15. So if “firstborn” doesn’t mean first-**birthed**—or first-**created**—what does it mean? It means first in **importance**—first in **rank**! In **Psalm 89:27**, God says of David: “Also I will make him my **firstborn**, higher than the kings of the earth.” David **wasn’t the firstborn** in his family—and he **wasn’t the first king** of Israel. But he was the **most important king**! How do we know! Because the angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be given “the throne of His **father David**” (Luke 1:34)!

Now, vs 16: “For by Him”—Christ, the agent of creation—“were all things created...” Sounds a lot like John 1:3 that we looked at just a few minutes ago: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Christ created **everything**—and **nothing was created** that wasn’t created by Him!

But Paul—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—is not content **just to repeat** what John said. It is as if God through Paul wants to make sure we understand that “all things” refers to things “that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible, and invisible...”

3. Christ created all visible things in heaven and earth (vs 16)

The word “created”—used in both the beginning and end of vs 16—comes from the Greek word “k-tee'-zo” which occurs 15 times in the Greek NT. It **does not mean** to build...or form...or make something out of pre-existing materials—like **kids “create” forts** in the back yard! It means that something “came into being”—**out of nothing**—and it is used **only of God**!

So **the earth** that we live on...and **the stars** that we look up at...and **the sun** whose light and warmth we enjoy...and **the people** we inhabit the earth with, were all created by God! How? **By merely speaking!** At least 8 times in Genesis 1 we have the phrases “And God said, Let there be...and there was.”

Hebrews 11:3 “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the **word of God**, so that **things which are seen** were not made of things which do appear.”

We did not evolve—and we did not create ourselves! **Psalm 100:3** “Know ye that the Lord He is God: **it is He that hath made us**, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”

Psalm 100:3 was the verse written about in the “Days of Praise” devotional booklet for Friday, May 16th. I appreciated **this quote**: “Our psalm says we did not make ourselves. In order to make yourself, you would **have to exist before you came into existence**. That violates basic logic.”

Why should it be a blessing to us that God created us? Again, there are multiple reasons. Here are **three**: **First**, God created us for a **purpose**! We weren’t just randomly born! God **created us** because He has something **He specifically wants us to do!**

Second, because God created us, He knows better what will bring us **joy and satisfaction** than we do!

Third—along those same lines—because God created us, He knows what **we need**—and is able and willing to provide what we need! The problem is we think **we know better** what we need than **the One who made us!**

But because we are made by God, there is **also an accountability to God**, isn’t there? **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

What about you? Are you **seeking God’s purpose**—His will—for your life?

--Are you **pursuing Him** and His ways to **bring joy and satisfaction**—or are you looking somewhere else?

--Are you trusting Him to **know your needs**—and **meet those** needs—or are you doubting His ability or goodness?

--Are you living in light of the fact that you will **stand before God** someday—or are you living like you **don’t have a Creator** that you are accountable to?

4. Christ created all invisible things in heaven and earth (vs 16)

There’s another whole “world”—an **invisible, spiritual one**—that our eyes can’t see, isn’t there? Some of you are familiar with **Ephesians 6:12** “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers of the darkness** of this world, against **spiritual wickedness** in high places.”

Pretty safe to say that “principalities and powers” in Ephesians 6:12 refers to **evil, invisible, spiritual** beings—not **physical** ones! We see those same words—“principalities” and “powers”—in the middle of vs 16.

In Col 2:10, Paul repeats the idea that Christ is the **head of**—Christ **is over**—all **principality and power**. Notice what it says in Colossians 2:15. Here again we see “principalities and powers”—and they are obviously **not good** because Christ “spoiled” them—meaning disarmed them—and “triumphed” over them.

What about “thrones and dominions”? Do they refer to the **spiritual** realm—or the **physical** realm? Commentators are divided; I lean toward the **physical, visible** realm because Christ is certainly over all kingdoms of the earth! The book of Daniel emphasizes that several times.

Regardless of whether or not “thrones and dominions” are **physical or spiritual**, Paul is certainly making the point that Christ is over the **spiritual world**—including the **invisible world of angels**! And because Christ is over angels, **Christ** is to be worshipped—not angels like some were doing according to Colossians 2:18!

Why should that truth be a blessing to us? Because regardless of how evil this world is...and how strong the evil spiritual forces are...and how bad this world gets, Christ is more powerful than they are!

Christ wins; they lose! **Good will triumph**, Satan and all fellow demons will be **forever cast into the lake of fire**, and all things will be made new! II Peter 3:13 “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And all God’s people said?

Next, let’s notice... **5. All things were created for Christ (vs 16)**

We see that in the end of vs 16 “...all things were created by Him, and **for Him**:”

Christ is **not only** the Creator—He also is the **goal**; the **reason**—that **He created what He created!** What was that reason? **To bring glory to Himself!** Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare [display, point to] **the glory of God**; and the firmament sheweth His handywork.” Romans 11:36 “For of Him, and through Him, and **to Him**, are all things: **to whom be glory for ever**. Amen.” Revelation 4:11 “Thou art worthy, O Lord, **to receive glory** and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure they are and were created.**”

Too many people—even God’s children—have the mindset that God exists for **their** benefit—and they get angry because God **doesn’t do** what **they think** He should do! They consider God their “genie in a bottle”—or a vending machine! Think about **the arrogance** behind the thought: ‘God made me so He could be at **my disposal!**’ We were created **by** Christ—and **for** Christ! We were made for **Him**—He was not “made” **for us!** Isaiah 43:7 “This people have I formed **for myself**; they shall **shew forth my praise.**”

Shouldn’t we want to do that—shouldn’t we want to bring praise to Him—because of who He is?

6. Christ is before all things (vs 17a)

We see that in vs 17 “And He is before all things...” Is Paul **repeating** what he said earlier—that Christ is **higher in rank** than what He has created—or does Paul mean that **Christ existed—in regards to time—before** anything else existed? And the answer is...**yes**; he is probably referring to both truths! The phrase in Greek can mean either one—and **both certainly apply!** Christ **always has existed**, so He certainly **existed before** He created. And He certainly is **above all that** He created b/c that is what these verses have been emphasizing.

Lastly, notice... **7. By Christ, all things consist (vs 17b)**

We see that in the last part of vs 17. What does “consist” mean? The Greek word that it comes from literally means “stand together.” The idea, then, is “held together”—and the majority of translations use those words.

What is meant by Christ “holds all things together?” Douglas Moo in his commentary on Colossians wrote: “What holds the universe together is not an idea or a virtue [as in Platonic and Stoic philosophy], but a person: **the resurrected Christ**. Without Him, electrons would not continue to circle nuclei, gravity would cease to work, the planets would not stay in their orbits.” (Douglas Moo; *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon* [Eerdmans/Apollos], pp. 125-126; cited by Steven Cole; Bible.org; Lesson 5: Christ Preeminent Over All (Colossians 1:15-20)).

We saw that same concept earlier in Hebrews 1:3 “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, **and upholding all things by the word of His power...**”

The reality, then, is that if Christ **chose not to hold** things together, the universe would **literally come unraveled!** Sounds a lot to me like what John wrote in Revelation 6:14 “And the **heaven departed as a scroll** when it is rolled together” and what Peter described in II Peter 3:10 “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the **heavens shall pass away** with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

Why should it be **a blessing** to us that Christ holds all things together? Here are two good reasons:

First, God decides **when the world ends**—not man! It is held together **by Him**...and **for Him**...and will continue to be held together **by Him** until **He decides** it is time to **destroy it** and bring in the new heaven and new earth!

And because it is under **God’s** control, we should **not live a life of fear**, worrying about climate change or World War III!

Second, since God is great enough to hold **the world** together, He can certainly **hold you** together! Many of you are going through **difficult things** right now that make you feel like you are being **pulled apart**.

God **knows** about those things...and is more **powerful** than those things...and will be **with you** and “hold you together” as **you go through** those things. Jesus is with you **in the storm**—and rest assured He’s **not asleep in the boat!** And He doesn’t bring us out in the middle of the lake **to drown us!** We must remember that Jesus taught us troubles **would come!** But...He also taught us that He has **overcome** them!

John 16:33 “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; **I have overcome the world.**”

God used Paul—in this wonderful letter to the believers at Colossae, to **describe—and exalt**—Christ.

--Who is Christ? He is God...the Creator of all things visible and invisible...and the Ruler over all things.

--He is **before** all things in time...and **above** all things in rank...and holds everything together.

--And He made us for Himself!

Are you loving Him...and serving Him...and submitting to Him? That is certainly an appropriate response—our “reasonable service”—based on Who He is!

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

It depends who you are, right? What do I mean by that? You are either **a child of God**—or you are not!

1. **If you are not** a blood-bought, born-again child of God, you are one heartbeat away from hell!

“Aren’t you being a bit dramatic, Pastor?”

Not at all! God left heaven—in the person of His Son—to die in your place.

How can you reject Jesus—how can you say “No” to Him—and still go to heaven?

You **can’t**—and you **won’t!**

So if you are **not a child of God**, God wants you to come to Him in repentance and faith.

2. **If you are** a child of God, here is what I believe God wants us to do.

--Love Him! Shouldn’t we love the One who loved us—and gave Himself for us?

--Serve Him! Shouldn’t we serve the One who created us—and that we will someday give an account of our lives to?

--Trust Him! Shouldn’t we trust the One who has already given us the greatest gift—Himself—to meet our greatest need—salvation from the future penalty of our sins?

“When Morning Gilds the Skies” (71) has the wonderful chorus: “May Jesus Christ be Praised!”