

Colossians 1:15-20

The Preeminence of Christ!

NASB95

Colossians 1:15-20 – He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

LSB

Colossians 1:15-20 – 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been 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; Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him—whether things on earth or things in heaven.

1. Overview of Colossians

- » Small town in Lycus valley in Southern turkey
 - Laodicea (10-12 miles away) and Hieropolis (13 miles)
- » Smallest church Paul wrote a letter to
 - because of Epaphras
 - in Rome as a prisoner (house arrest)

Colossians 1: The Preeminence of Christ Proclaimed [Declared]

1:1-2	Prologue
1:3-8	Preamble
1:9-14	Path of Redemption
1:15-20	Preeminence of Christ

2. Colossians 1:15-20

» **Focus of every Christian and the argument against all false teaching (ch2)**

1. Jesus is God (v15)

Image – an exact representation and revelation

» Jesus is the full revelation/manifestation of the Triune God

David Guzik: If Paul meant that Jesus was merely similar to the Father, he would have used the ancient Greek word *homoion*, which speaks merely of similar appearance. The stronger word used here proves that Paul knew that Jesus is God just as God the Father is God. It means that “Jesus is the very stamp of God the Father.” (Robertson)

John 1:14 – And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 – No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Hebrews 1:3 – And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Colossians 2:9 – For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

2. Jesus is the Priority (Focus) (v15)

Firstborn (*prototokos*) – priority of position, not origin

... idea of heir and preeminent one (not necessarily the one born first)

Col 1:15, 1:18, Rom 8:29, Rev 1:5, Heb 1:6, Psalm 89:20-29

- Examples: Esau was firstborn but Jacob had the position and rights of firstborn
- Ishmael and Isaac (Exodus 4:22-23)
- Manasseh and Ephraim
- Solomon (wasn't firstborn but was named firstborn in Psalm 89:27)

3. Jesus is the Creator (v16)

He is the creator

- thus He was uncreated and has all authority and power over all creation
 - includes the physical and spiritual realms (visible/invisible)
- Thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities: often understood as the angelic hierarchy
 - Angel hierarchy was important to Jews and gnostics ... gnostics included Jesus as one of the messengers/emmesaries of angels ... **Paul dismisses the notion by saying Jesus created them all**
- Regardless of angelic or human powers: He is over all things

4. Jesus is the Sustainer (Goal) (v17)

Before – before, above, in front of, earlier than (both of time and position)

Hold together/Consist – to be compacted together, united, to be held together

Ephesians 1:9–10 – He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, **the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him**

Scholar (Barclay) – So, the Son is the beginning of creation, and the end of creation, and the power who holds creation together, the creator, the sustainer and the final goal of the world.

5. Jesus is the Head (v18)

Head – head of the body; the one in charge

Wiersbe: In Greek usage, the word *head* meant “source” and “origin” as well as “leader, ruler.” Jesus Christ is the Source of the church, His body, and the Leader. Paul called Him “the Beginning” which tells us that Jesus Christ has priority in time as far as His church is concerned. // Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 116.

» We are a part of His body

– Thus we must be under His authority

Beginning – origin, the first in a series, the leader, the originator ... Alpha/Omega

Firstborn – [same word as in v15] (prototokos) – priority of position, not origin ... idea of heir and preeminent one (not necessarily the one born first)

1. Jesus is God (v15)

2. Jesus is the Priority (Focus) (v15)

3. Jesus is the Creator (v16)

4. Jesus is the Sustainer (Goal) (v17)

5. Jesus is the Head (source, origin, leader) (v18)

Ephesians 1:20-22 – which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, **far above** all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church ...

3. So That!

SO THAT – the whole purpose

Colossians 1:18b – ... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

ESV –... that in everything He might be preeminent.

- **Be** (ginomai): become ... to enter into a certain state or condition
- **Preeminent** (prōteuōn) - be first, to have first place, to have a superior status
 - Preeminent: first, surpassing all others, greatest, distinguished

- Only time used in NT

(1 time in OT in Esther 5:11 how King made Haman first/promoted to his high position)

» Theme of the entire epistle

For (Colossians 1:19-20) – For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him—whether things on earth or things in heaven.

4. Distraction Culture

Brett McCracken (Wisdom Pyramid) – [information age] In 2019, a single minute on the Internet saw the transmission of 188 million emails, 18.1 million texts, and 4.5 million videos viewed on YouTube. By 2020, there were 40 times more bytes of data on the internet than there are stars in the observable universe. Some estimates suggest that by 2025, 463 exabytes of data will be created each day online—the equivalent of [213 million] DVDs per day. What is an exabyte? Well, consider this, 5 exabytes is equivalent to all words ever spoken by humans since the dawn of time. In 2025, that amount of data will be created every 15 minutes. Here’s the craziest thing: It’s all in our pockets.

- 2021 the average American spent 4 hours a day on their mobile devices and 3.5 hours a day watching TV
- Most people check their phones 58 times a day ... and spend roughly 1 minute 15 seconds on their phone once they pick it up.
 - <https://elitecontentmarketer.com/screen-time-statistics/> (checked February 6, 2022)

Yet Strangely...

- 50% of Christian adults read the Bible less than 2 times a year
- 61% of evangelical Christians never share their faith
- 31% of Christians have not prayed within the last week

3 Things that tell us what is most important to you

- how you spend your TIME, MONEY, WORDS

Idolatry + Adultery

Exodus 20:3-5 – [Ten Commandments] You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them ...

– we may not have Buddha statues but we serve other gods

- money, fame, success, productivity, appearance,
- spiritual: ministry, numbers,

» we want to be seen, we want to feel important

» Focus is on US not Christ = we have become our own idols

Ezekiel 14:6 – “Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

» **Hosea + Gomer** – God has rescued us and provided everything we need ... yet we keep running off and committing adultery with the world

Hosea 14:1 – Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Is Christ First in your ...

1. Mind (thoughts) and emotions
2. Purity
3. Rest and entertainment

Psalm 16:11 – You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

4. Marriage
5. Family
6. Work
7. Future goals and desires

» Have we given Jesus first place in every area of our lives?

Colossians 3:17 – Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:4a – When Christ, who is our life ...

Colossians 3:11b – [context of salvation of believers] ... but Christ is all, and in all.

Jesus is ...

God [v15: Image]
The Priority (Focus) [v15: Firstborn]
The Creator [v16]
The Sustainer (Goal) [v17]
The Head [v18]

So that ...

He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Because ...

in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell
and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood
of His cross—through Him—whether things on earth or things in heaven.

So ... is Jesus ...

your number one focus
your true delight
your main drive
your consuming passion
the beat of your heart
the light of your life
the thought in your mind
the word upon your lips
the apple of your eye
the center of your life
Your North Star
Your supreme focus
Is He truly preeminent, first place, in all things?

Mark 12:28-31 – One of the scribes ... asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost [preeminent] of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 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**!' "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

5. Practical Application

- » Is Jesus Lord over everything in our lives?
- » Does He have first place in our
Daily activities, thoughts, emotions, relationships, definition of success, future goals,
words, etc