

COLOSSIANS 2: Christ Above Creation
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We are preaching through the book of Colossians and the title of our series is Christ Above All.

I want to begin today with a short review. The epistle to the Colossians was written when Paul was in prison in Rome around 60 AD. The people in Colossae had heard the gospel from Epaphras. Epaphras traveled to Rome and informed Paul of the false teaching, pluralistic religion and pagan secularism which threatened the church.

So, Paul wrote this letter to counteract all these errors by showing that Christ is greater – Christ is supreme – all sufficient – not just part of a philosophy or religion – He is Lord of all. That's why the theme of Colossians is Christ Above All.

Today we're looking at Colossians 1:15-19 as we teach on Christ Above Creation. In this short passage – Paul reveals 9 amazing truths about Jesus.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.

V 15a *He is the image of the invisible God,*

The Gnostics denied the deity of Christ. They believed that spirit was good and flesh was evil. So, they would not accept the fact that God became man.

Paul addresses this head on by saying Christ is the image of God. This is of utmost importance because Christianity rests upon who Jesus Christ is. Ancient Gnostics and modern-day skeptics don't believe Jesus is God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us why:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

But what does it mean that Christ is the image of God? Do both have brown eyes and brown hair? That's not what this means. This verse is not speaking of physical characteristics.

The Greek word for image is eikon – which means precise likeness. Not just something that looks like the real thing – but is the real thing.

When Deb and I were in Rome – there were guys on the streets everywhere selling purses. Louis Vuitton – Coach – And they were selling them cheap. A Louis Vuitton can cost \$1000 or more, but these were 30 bucks. Why? They were fakes – cheap imitations.

Speaking of fake – that reminds me when Deb and I went to Ephesus, Turkey. There were shops selling all kinds of merchandise but I really loved this one – Genuine Fake Watches. The watches were really fake and they admitted it up front. They were a cheap version of the real thing.

That's not what Paul means when he says Jesus is the image of God.
 Jesus is not a cheap imitation – He's an exact representation.
 Jesus is not a fake – He's the real thing!
 Jesus is not false – He is truth personified.
 Paul is not just saying that Jesus is like God – he's saying Jesus is God!

To see Him is to see the Father. This was a difficult concept for the disciples to grasp. In John 14:7-11 Jesus was telling the disciples about the Father.

*Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."
 Jesus answered: "Don't you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me?
 The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work. Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.*

What is God like? Like Jesus! If you want to know what God is like – look at Jesus. Hebrews 1:3 says:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.

Jesus gives us a total and exact representation of God. If your God is different than Jesus, you've got the wrong God. In fact, you've got a god who is not really god at all.

There are two main ways in which Christ is in the image of God.

1. In His Character –
 Christ reveals God's Holiness, Righteousness, Love, Faithfulness, Patience, Grace and Mercy.

2. In His Conduct –

Jesus only did what He heard the Father say and do.

Jesus did nothing of Himself.

Everything He did revealed the supernatural power of God.

Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins. But also, to show us who God is!

John 1:18 AMP says:

No man has ever seen God at any time; the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father, He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known].

Christ is given to us as God's image so that we may know what God wills and does. That is made plain by seeing who Jesus is.

Not only does Jesus reveal God to us - V 15 also tells us He is: *the firstborn over all creation.*

In the Bible, God placed a special claim on the firstborn. This was done in memory of the death of Egypt's firstborn and the divine protection of Israel's firstborn during the EXODUS. This meant that the nation of Israel attached high value to the eldest son and assigned special privileges, rights and responsibilities to him.

His birthright was a double portion of the estate and leadership of the family. So, when V 15 says Jesus was the firstborn it is saying that he had the rights and privileges of a firstborn.

This is not speaking of position as in birth order. This means to be first in rank, importance, honor and authority. This is seen in Psalm 89:27

I will also appoint him My firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.

Amplified Version says - *I'm setting him apart as the First of the royal line, High King over all of earth's kings.*

There are 5 passages in the New Testament which refer to Jesus as firstborn.

Romans 8:29 calls Jesus *...the firstborn among many brethren.*

This shows His relationship to the church. He is Lord of the church!

Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus *...the firstborn over all creation.*

This shows His relationship to His creation. He is Lord of creation!

Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5 call Him *...the firstborn from the dead.*

This shows His relationship to life, death and eternity. He is Lord!

Hebrews 1:1-6 is very relevant to Colossians because it deals the same things the church in Colossae was fighting. The Gnostics in Colossae not only taught that Jesus was not God. They also taught people to worship angels instead of Jesus. Listen to this awesome truth from Hebrews 1:1-6:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 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 at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

This show us that Jesus Christ is Lord of all – including angels – and He is the one we should worship – not the angels! In the Bible – you find that everyone who worshipped an angel was always stopped by the angel! For instance – Revelation 22:8-9 says:

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

We don't worship angels because God created them and we do not worship any created thing – only the Creator of all things!

Our response to the fact that Jesus is first – Jesus is Creator - Jesus is Lord – is found in Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:16 explains:

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

This is one of the reasons why he is called "the image of God," and the "first-born." It is because of His creative power.

John 1:1-3 says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus is the Creator of all. We don't exist because of random change or evolutionary survival of the fittest. We exist because God created us. The fact that there is a creation requires a Creator. To believe otherwise you would have to believe that:

Nothing produced everything

Non-life produced life

Randomness produced fine-tuning

Chaos produced order

Unconsciousness produced consciousness

Non-reason produced reason

It takes more faith to believe that than to believe that God created everything!

You would think I was crazy if I told you I believed my watch had no creator – it just spontaneously happened by chance. You know something this intricate requires a creator. Yet many people believe that the universe – which is infinitely greater than this watch – just happened.

No way! Creation requires a Creator.

Jesus created all things in heaven and on earth.

Jesus created all things visible and invisible.

There is a visible world that we can see and invisible spirit world we cannot see.

The invisible spirit world is comprised of angels and demons.

Angels and demons are spirit beings created by God. Actually, God created angels, but some of them rebelled against God. They are now fallen angels, or demons.

There are different ranks of angels like cherubim and seraphim. The highest rank is archangel. There are also different ranks of demons. Ephesians 6:12 says:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We see this in Colossians where Paul calls them thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. This is referring to the ranks of angels and demons.

Thrones – where the king sits – this speaks of power and authority

Dominions – this word comes from the word lord.

It speaks of government - whether angelic, demonic or human.

Principalities – speaks of main leaders and the area over which they rule

Powers – this speaks of supernatural force and influence

Angels and demons have power, but we should not worship angels and we should not fear demons! As we will see later in Colossians, Jesus defeated demons and robbed them of their power at the cross. They have power – but we have been given authority over them in the name of Jesus! In Luke 10:19, Jesus said:

I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy.

Demons have power – but you have authority over their power and authority trumps power every time! Look at Colossians 1:16 again:

I want you to notice how it begins by saying by him all things were created by Him and it ends by saying all things were created through Him.

Twice in the same verse it is repeating this fact. The reason for this emphasis, so that there could not be the possibility of mistake. It also says everything was created for Him. That means you were created for Him! Your purpose and destiny are found in Him.

V. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

This verse is telling us that He existed before the world was made, before the beginning of time, and therefore from all eternity. Before anything existed – God existed. He is eternal. He has no beginning or end.

In him all things consist means that he is the super glue holding all things together. Without Him everything would fall apart. Without Christ – creation would fall apart.

Jesus holds everything together so whenever and wherever things are breaking down or falling apart in life are places where someone is not submitting to the Lordship of Christ.

V. 18a And He is the head of the body, the church.

There are many passages in the Bible that describe the Church as a body. Head means the highest, most important part of the body. Ephesians 1:22 says:

And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

Although the reference to the church as being a body is a symbol or a figure, it is much more than this.

In a sense - the church is a continuation of Christ himself. We are like Christ in the earth. Think about that for a minute. If we are Christ's body, then we have access to whatever Christ has access to. Can you say to your body, I'm going to eat this meal but body, you don't get any. Or, I'm going to sleep now but body, you have to work. Of course not. Well, in the same way Christ can't say to us that there is food at His table but we can't have any.

Whatever is available to Him is available to us:

Fellowship with the Father - The fullness of His Spirit - Power to overcome - It's all available to us through Christ.

V.18b who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

This does not mean literally that he was the first who rose from the dead for He himself raised up Lazarus and others. But it means that he had the pre-eminence among them all because He is the only one who rose to immortality.

The others who were raised from the dead died again. Christ rose to die no more. And the resurrection of Jesus is the central truth and most important proof of Christianity. Christ's resurrection proves that Christianity is true and that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Preeminence means that He is first and He is the greatest.

V. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.

This verse is simply saying that God was pleased to place in Christ all His fullness. The Gnostics in Colossae believed that there was a host of intermediary spirits between them and God. They believed none of them fully represented God.

Paul refuted this by teaching that Jesus fully reveals God to us!
 The revelation of Jesus Christ is a full and true revelation of God!
 Everything that is true about God is true about Jesus Christ!
 That's why we don't need Jesus PLUS anything!
 All that God is – Jesus is!
 He is kind and He is King!
 He is gracious and He is Great!
 He is good and He is God!
 He is merciful and He is mighty!
 He is faithful and He is Father!
 He is righteous and He's our Redeemer!
 He is love and He is Lord!
 And He alone is worthy of all our praise!
 The question is – have you received Jesus as Lord of your life?