

The Preeminence of Jesus Christ
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
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August 11, 2024

Text: Colossians 1:15-20

Purpose: We need a clear understand of the preeminence of Jesus Christ. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is the second person of the Trinity. Through the blood of the cross, we are reconciled to God. There is no other way of salvation except through Jesus Christ. We must be “born again.”

A young couple moves into a new neighborhood.



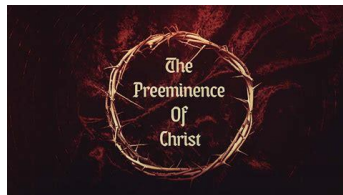
The next morning while they are eating breakfast, the young woman sees her neighbor hanging the laundry on the clothes line outside.

"That laundry is not very clean," she said. "She doesn't know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap." Her husband looked on, but remained silent.

Every time her neighbor would hang her laundry outside to dry, the young woman would make the same comments.

About one month later, the woman was surprised to see nice clean laundry hanging on the line and said to her husband: "Look, she has learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this?"

The husband said, "I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows."¹



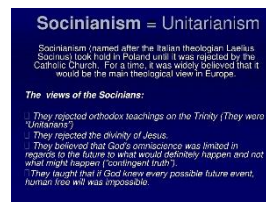
Today we have come to one of the most important passages of scripture related to the person of Jesus Christ. I hope this sermon this morning will help us see clearly the person of Jesus Christ without any faulty lenses clouded by misunderstanding or incorrect interpretations of scripture. This is a very lofty, grand section of the Book of Colossians. Paul was writing to a group of believers in Colossi and he wanted them to know more about “Who” Jesus Christ was.

I believe it is good to come back to this important topic from time to time. We are often so busy in church life focusing on applying the scripture to our lives, singing songs of praise to God, studying the salvation story of God as it is interwoven throughout scripture, that we rarely think about the relationship of Jesus Christ to God. Sometimes when we do, we may have unscriptural thoughts about Jesus. Many of the converts to non-Christian cults have been swayed because of a faulty, weak, understanding of the personhood of Jesus Christ. The number one denomination from which cult groups obtain their converts is Baptist. We learn the passion of loving God but fail terribly to understand the key theological tenants of our faith.



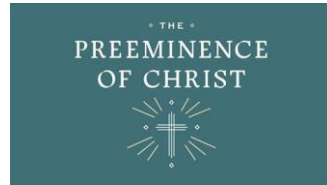
This passage of scripture in Colossians provides us an answer and gives us clarity concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. Paul is attempting to answer one of the oldest heresies in the church, Gnosticism. They felt that the physical world here below where we live was separated from the heavenly world where God lives and reigns. They theorized that since God is so holy, and humanity is so sinful, the two could never come together in any way. They also taught that they had secret knowledge about God. For them, Jesus Christ coming in the flesh was simply incompatible. Paul addresses his Gnostic audience.

In this passage of scripture Paul is also addressing Arianism. This was a system of teaching by Arius of Alexander. He believed that Jesus was “created” by God. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD answered this heresy by formulating this statement: “The Son is very Man of very man, and very God of very God.”



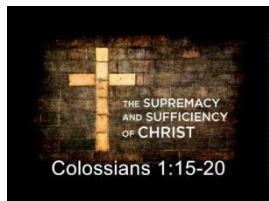
Later in the church, Socinus propagated the heresy that Jesus was not God and that mankind did not need a Savior from sin. He taught that we were not totally depraved. Today that is the basis of Unitarianism and several other groups including Jehovah's Witnesses.

J. Vernon McGee in his commentary on this passage of scripture has identified nine marks of identification for Jesus Christ that set Jesus apart from any other person that has ever lived.



Paul has laid the ground work for our identification with Jesus Christ as our Savior. Our faith in Jesus has delivered us from the power of darkness and placed us into the kingdom of God. Paul says we are redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ and have received forgiveness for our sins.

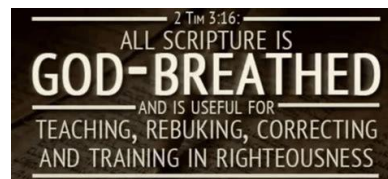
It is our faith in Jesus Christ that has given us the hope for salvation and forgiveness. Because of this great gift of salvation, we should therefore walk as Children of God and not children of this world. God has taken care of our past, present, and future. In Jesus Christ we find our fellowship with God.



The passage of scripture taken from Colossians 1:15-28 is a Christological passage. It focuses on “Who” Jesus Christ is and His relationship with God. It is essential for a Christian to

completely understand the theology taught here. If you are not grounded thoroughly in the theology of Christ, you can easily be deceived and led astray.

Let me pause for a minute: What I am preaching on today is not what I think, it is an explanation of what the scripture



teaches. I believe the Word of God is profitable for teaching and reproof. We need to hide God’s word in our hearts so that when Satan comes to deceive us, we will have a sure foundation to withstand the temptations to accept another gospel besides the one taught in the scripture.

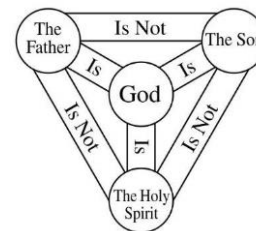
Colossians 1:15 says this: ¹⁵ *He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*



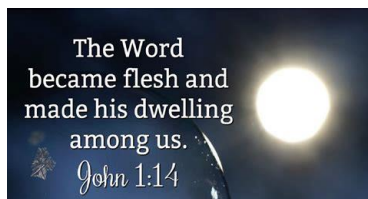
I. He is the “image of the invisible God.”²

The first point made by Paul is that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. Can you image taking a photograph of God who is invisible? It would be impossible.

John the Apostle helps clarify this for us in his prologue in John 1;1. *“In the beginning was the Word.”* Before there was a starting point – God was there. Before there was a starting point – Jesus was there. Before there was a starting point – the Holy Spirit was there.



John continues ... *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* We see that Jesus Christ was not a creation of God – He was with God and was God.



John 1:14 says, “*And the Word was made (born) flesh.*” Jesus existed prior to his fleshly birth to Mary. He was born flesh. He was not some emanating spirit – He didn’t “seem” to be flesh as the Gnostics assert – He was literally flesh and bones just like you and I are. He was 100% man. He got cold like we do. He got hot like we do. He got hungry like we do. He experienced all of what being a human is like. He was tempted like you and I are, but in it all, Jesus never sinned. But Jesus was also 100% God.

II. He is “the firstborn of every creature.”

The second thought in that passage of scripture is that Jesus was the “firstborn of every creature.” Some may point to this passage and say Jesus was created. This reveals His relationship with the Father – it points to the relationship within the Trinity – God is the eternal Father, Jesus is the eternal Son, and the Holy Spirit is eternally with them.

J. Vernon McGee says the word “firstborn” indicates Jesus’ priority before all creation. Nowhere in scripture do we find that Jesus had His beginning in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 does say He would be born in Bethlehem but he came from “*everlasting.*” Isaiah 9:6 says “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*” Yes a child was born, but a Son was given to us. Jesus came out of eternity and took on humanity.

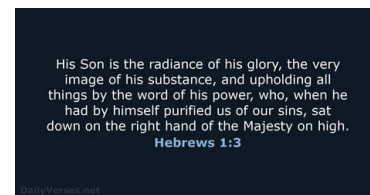


Paul is attempting to address one of the philosophies of his day. It was called *demiurge*. It was the philosophy that God created a creature below him, and that creature created one below him, and that one created another beneath him – all of these lower emanations underneath God. Gnosticism taught that Jesus was one of these emanations.

When Paul says Jesus was “firstborn” of all creation – he is using the word *tokokos* which means “before all creation.” Jesus was not born or created. He was pre-existent with God because He was God.

This phrase is used several times throughout the Bible – but it does not mean Jesus was created. There is no *demiurge* - no series of created beings emanating from God.

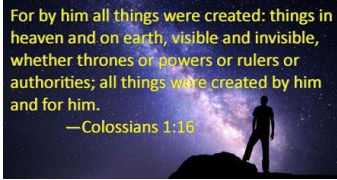
Hebrews 1:3 says, “*Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*”



That doesn’t sound like someone “created” – that sounds like God himself! He is the second person of the Trinity.

When the Angel announced to Mary the special child that was to be born to her, the Angel said, “*That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*” (Luke 1:35) Jesus was the Son of God.

That is why Peter's confession of Jesus was so accurate. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)



For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.
—Colossians 1:16

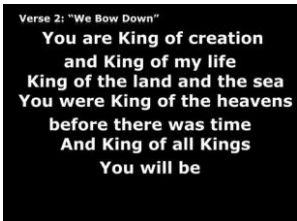
Let's move on to the next verse:

¹⁶ 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.

III. "By Him all things are created."

The phrase "By Him all things are created" clues us into the fact that everything that was made was made by Jesus. That is why I wanted to introduce you to that praise and worship chorus, "We Bow Down." In that song it says,



Verse 2: "We Bow Down"
You are King of creation
and King of my life
King of the land and the sea
You were King of the heavens
before there was time
And King of all Kings
You will be

You are Lord (King) of creation and
Lord (King) of my life,
Lord (King) of the land and the sea.
You are Lord (King) of the heavens
before there was time
And Lord (King) of all lords (kings)
You will be.

This passage of scripture reminds us that there are two realms in which God is sovereign. There is the physical world and the spiritual world. Jesus is Lord and King over both. He is Lord over the physical world and the invisible world. He reigns over all dominions, principalities, and powers. We are reminded in other passages of scripture that there are angels, archangels, seraphim and cherubim.

Jesus was responsible for their creation as well. Satan is one of the fallen angels that seek to usurp the Lord's power and position. Jesus is ruler over all.

IV. All things were created "for Him."

Another point made in this passage of scripture is that "all things were created by him, AND FOR HIM."



Jesus made it all and it was made to bring glory back to God. The Westminster Confession says, "The chief end of man is to glorify God." Just as the stars in the sky were placed in their location specifically by God, you too were placed where you are by God for a specific reason and purpose.



What a wonderful privilege we have to be a part of the Lord's plans and purposes. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are invited to be joint heirs with Christ. We are invited into the Family of God. We are given a place at the Table of the Lord. We are told in Scripture that He has prepared a New Jerusalem for those that love Him.

Right now we are living here in our earthly tents – frail, weak, prone to sickness, aching bones, sore muscles, diminished hearing and failing eyesight. But God will give us new bodies and a new home. Where there will be no more tears, no more sickness, and no more death. Praise God for the invitation into eternal celebration for what God has done for us.

Verse 17 says, ¹⁷ *And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*



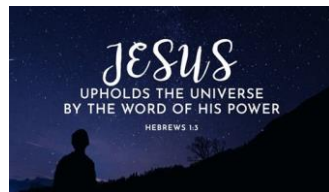
V. “He is before all things.”

First we are reminded Jesus is before all things. All the fullness of God dwells in Jesus Christ. He is described as the “Alpha and Omega” – the first and last – in the Book of Revelation. He was there in the Book of Genesis creating everything and He is in the last chapter of the Bible calling everyone to come unto Him.

VI. “By Him all things consist.”

The second phrase “*By Him all things consist*” reminds us of the Lord’s continual presence in the world. He did not create the world and simply stand back and watch it unfold. He did not treat creation like a watch that is wound up and then left to continue on its own. He didn’t pull the string and watch the world spin like a top. He didn’t wind up the world like a toy and laugh as it slowly winds down. The Lord has been very active in every generation, every nation, every community, every period of time, calling people to come unto Him.

It is by the power of God all things consist. He is the one that holds it all together. Hebrews 1:3 reminds us again, that Jesus is “*upholding all things by the Word of His power.*”

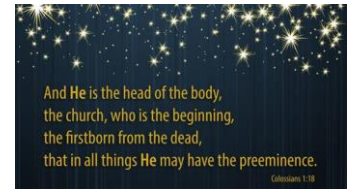


Everything that was made, He made it.
Everything that is sustained, He sustains it.

Jesus reminded the disciples, “*Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*” (Matthew 6:26) If God can sustain the numerous birds of the air, cannot He sustain you?

Paul turns his attention from Jesus being Lord of Heaven and Lord of the Earth, to being the Lord over the Church.

Verse 18 says, ¹⁸ *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.*



VII. “He is the head of the body, the church.”

Jesus is the head of the body, the church. I don’t know if you have ever noticed how the Books of *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philippians* tie together.

- In *Ephesians* we see Paul talking about the church as the *Body of Christ* down here on earth.
- In *Colossians* (in this passage we just read) we see Jesus described as the “*head of the body.*”
- In *Philippians* we see Paul describing the church as with *feet walking* in the world.



Jesus Christ is the head of the church. In Revelation the church is described as the Bride of Christ. We that are in Christ have been redeemed by Him and we should live as one waiting for the Bride Groom to come and claim His bride.

Jesus is described as the “*firstborn from the dead.*” Jesus was raised from the dead in a glorified body. When we die, our bodies will be laid in the grave awaiting our redemption. For those that are in Christ, our spirits are present with the Lord. There is no “soul sleep” as some teach. “*To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.*” (II Corinthians 5:8)



But one day, the trumpet of the Lord will sound and the dead in Christ will be raised. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18) Our bodies will be raised from the dead and we will forever be with the Lord.



I John 3:2 says, “*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*” Praise

God – We shall be like Him!

VIII. “That in All things He might have the preeminence.”

The next phrase we read in Colossians 1:18 is “*That in all things He might have the preeminence.*”

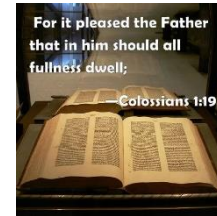
The word preeminence means – supremacy, priority, superiority, or domination.

The will of God will prevail over all of His creation. We see so much rebellion in our world today. In our communities we see so much distrust, stealing, hatred,



murder, and lies – we see in our homes the breakdown of families – spiritually in our nation we see a turning away from God. But God is still on the throne. God’s will – will be done “*on earth as it is in heaven.*”

God is moving forward in history and is inviting all that want to be a part of the Kingdom of God to receive His Son Jesus Christ.



Paul concludes this section on the preeminence of Jesus Christ by saying:

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

IX. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.”

This goes back to the idea that in Jesus Christ, dwelt the fullness of God.

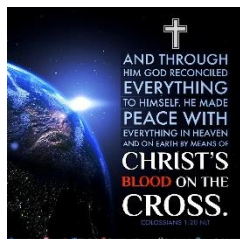
The Greek word for fullness is “*pleroma.*” It means to fill completely. It is completely filled. As I said earlier, when Jesus was here on earth, He did not set aside His deity – He was still fully man, yet fully God. 100% man AND 100% divine. He is Man of very man; He is God of very God.

To summarize –

- Verse 15 helps us understand Christ’s relationship with God the Father.
- Verses 16 and 17 let us know Jesus Christ was the one by which all of creation was made.
- Verses 18 and 19 let us know about Christ’s relationship with the church.

- Verse 20 brings us to the last point I want to bring out of this scripture this morning:

²⁰ *and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*



X. We are “reconciled ... by the blood of the cross.”

We have been reconciled to Jesus Christ by the blood of the cross.

This means that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sin and in His body on the cross He bore our guilt. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we receive forgiveness for our sin because Jesus (Holy, Spotless) was the propitiation (the righteous sacrifice required) to satisfy the righteous requirement of a Holy God.

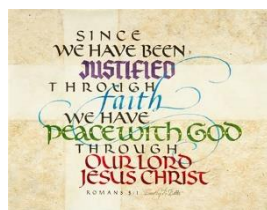


Because of what Jesus did at Calvary we can now have peace with God.

We do not need to leave from here this morning saying, “When I die, I sure

hope God will smile down upon me and let me in.” I heard someone say this recently. When we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have forgiveness for our sins and we can know we are saved.

One of the greatest revelations of Martin Luther during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century was when the light bulb of faith came on for Martin Luther. Romans 5:1 says,



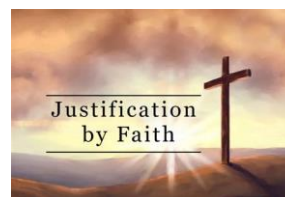
“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The two phrases that arose from the Protestant Reformation was *sola scriptura* and *solo fidelis*. Scripture Alone – Faith Alone.



Martin Luther tried to earn his salvation by his righteous living. But salvation is a gift of God received by faith – not by any work we do. We call upon Jesus

Christ to forgive us of our sins and believe in Him. Out of our love for God, we strive to live holy lives, be obedient to what He taught in the scriptures. But our works – no matter how good, nice, or kind – they will never earn forgiveness. We have peace with God – forgiveness for our sins – through the blood of Jesus Christ offered up freely at Calvary for you and me.

We do not need to listen to the deception of Satan. Some float through life thinking it will all work out just fine in the end. That God will smile and wink at our sin. **We must be reconciled back to God.** God has done the reconciliation but we need to receive it. We need to believe it. We need to receive it.



God does not offer a “**hope so**” offer for eternal life. He gives us a “**know so**” offer through Jesus Christ. There is no other way to God except through the blood of atonement offered by

Christ – God himself hanging there on the cross. To reject this offer of salvation is to reject God himself.

The Invitation

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews came to Jesus under the cover of darkness one night. He was searching to see if Jesus was the Messiah – the Christ. He knew Jesus came from God but did not quite understand it all. (John 3)



Jesus said to him, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* (v. 3)

Jesus told him that he would be lifted up – and in doing so – would draw all men unto Himself. (v. 14)

God so loves us that He sent His one and only son to this world to die to redeem this world back to God. God is calling you, if you have never received Jesus Christ as your Savior, believe in Him and live! If you believe in Him, you will not perish, but will have everlasting life. (v. 16)

Today is the day of salvation – You must be born again.

Make sure of your salvation before it is too late.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Mickey’s Funnies, A Laundry Funny, July 24, 2024

² Outline from J. Vernon McGee’s commentary on Colossians