

Colossians 1:15-19
The Preeminence of Christ

1

Introduction

Colossians was written to counter the false teaching that had entered the area. These heresies are still around today. They center in the person and work of Jesus and how salvation is obtained.

This passage defends the true nature of Jesus' identity by viewing Him in relation to four things: God, the universe, the unseen world, and the church.

2

Colossians 1:15-19

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 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. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 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. ¹⁹ For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell.

3

Jesus in Relation to God

Colossians 1:15

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

Jesus is God! He is the exact representation of who the invisible God is.

4

Jesus in Relation to the Universe

Colossians 1:16-17

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

Jesus is preeminent in creation. **He is the Creator**. Everything in this created universe was made by Him!

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

5

Jesus in Relation to the Unseen World

Colossians 1:16-17

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

Last week we saw that Jesus the Creator of all the physical universe. He is also the Creator of the “invisible” or “unseen world”.

Thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers refer to the various ranks of angels. Far from being an angel, as the Colossian errorists taught, Christ created the angels. The writer of Hebrews also makes a clear distinction between Christ and the angels.

Hebrews 1:7-8

And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.”⁸ But to the Son *He says*: “Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.

6

Jesus in Relation to the Unseen World

Colossians 1:16-17

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Ephesians 1:20-21

He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

As a result, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10). With that truth the apostle Peter agrees: “[Christ] is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22).

7

Jesus in Relation to the Unseen World

Colossians 1:16-17

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Scripture is clear that Jesus is not an angel, but the Creator of the angels. He is above the angels, who in fact worship Him and are under His authority. Jesus’ relation to the unseen world, like His relation to the visible universe, proves He is God.

8

Jesus in Relation to the Church

Colossians 1:18

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.

Paul presents four great truths in this verse about Christ's relation to the church.

1. Christ is the head of the church

There are many metaphors used in Scripture to describe the church. It is called a family, a kingdom, a vineyard, a flock, a building, and a bride. But the most profound metaphor, one having no Old Testament equivalent, is that of a Body. **The church is a Body, and Christ is the head of the Body.**

9

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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.

This concept is not used in the sense of the head of a company, but rather looks at the church as a living organism, inseparably tied together by the living Christ. **He controls every part of it and gives it life and direction.** His life lived out through all the members provides the unity of the Body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–20). He energizes and coordinates the diversity within the Body, a diversity of spiritual gifts and ministries (1 Cor. 12:4–13). He also directs the Body's mutuality, as the individual members serve and support each other (1 Cor. 12:15–27).

Christ is not an angel who serves the church (cf. Heb. 1:14). He is the head of His church.

10

Jesus in Relation to the Church

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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.

2. Christ is the source of the church

The Greek Word translated “**source**” is used here in the twofold sense. It refers to the **beginning** of something and its **primacy** in relationship to the whole. The church has its origins in Jesus. God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). It is He who gives life to His church. His sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf provided our new life and established His church.

As head of the Body, **Jesus holds the chief position**, or highest rank in the church. As the beginning, He is its originator.

11

Jesus in Relation to the Church

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3. Christ is the firstborn from the dead

We have already covered the concept of “**First-born**” at the beginning of this passage. Of all those who have been raised from the dead, or ever will be, Christ is the highest in rank.

12

Jesus in Relation to the Church

Colossians 1:18

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.

4. Christ is the preeminent one

As a result of His death and resurrection, Jesus has come to have first place in everything. Paul summarizes for emphasis to drive home the point as forcefully as he can that Jesus is not merely another emanation from God, nor an angel.

Philippians 2:8-11

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

13

Jesus in Relation to the Church

Colossians 1:19

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

Jesus reigns supreme over the visible world, the unseen world, and the church. Paul sums up his argument in verse 19. The term translated “**fulness**” was a term used by the Gnostics to refer to the divine powers and attributes, which they believed were divided among the various emanations. Paul counters that false teaching by stating that all the fullness of deity is not spread out in small doses to a group of spirits, but fully dwells in Christ alone.

14

So What ...

Jesus is preeminent in all things and over all things! Let's review our passage.

Jesus is God. He is the Creator of the physical and spiritual universe. He is also the head of the Church.

Jesus is the **only one** who is able to redeem us from our sin.

He is not a created being, but the Creator of all things and He has made the choice to Love and Die for you.

Jesus has preeminence in all things. **Does He have preeminence in your life?**