

Who Is Jesus?

Colossians 1:15-20

TEXT

Colossians 1:15-20 “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by 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 might have the preeminence. **19** For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; **20** And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

INTRODUCTION

The question is a simple question: Who is Jesus? A lot of people have an answer to that question. Some will say He was a great teacher. Some will say He was a prophet. Some religions will give Him a very high position and still deny who the Bible says He is.

So we are going to let Colossians answer the question. Paul tells us who Jesus is, what Jesus made, what Jesus holds together, what position Jesus has over the church, what happened when Jesus rose from the dead, and what Jesus accomplished through His blood.

And there is one word in this passage that brings all of it together: preeminence. Preeminence means first place, the highest place, the place above everything else. That is where this passage puts Jesus Christ.

I. JESUS IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS — COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

Colossians 1:15-17 “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

Start with verse 15. Jesus is called “the image of the invisible God.” God is invisible, and Christ reveals God to us. Then Paul calls Him “the firstborn of every creature.”

What does that mean? Some people teach that Jesus was the first thing God created and then God used Jesus to make everything else. But verse 16 starts with “For.” Paul is explaining what he means, and his explanation is that Jesus is the One who created everything.

John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

John says, “All things were made by him.” Then he says, “without him was not any thing made that was made.” Anything that belongs in the category of things made was made by Him.

And the Old Testament helps us understand the word “firstborn.” Psalm 89:27 uses that word in connection with rank and position.

Psalm 89:27 “Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.”

Notice what is connected to firstborn there: “higher than the kings of the earth.” That is rank. That is position. And when we come back to Colossians, that fits exactly with where Paul is going—Jesus Christ has the preeminence.

Now read verses 16 and 17 again.

Colossians 1:16-17 “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

Look at how complete that is. Things in heaven. Things in earth. Visible things. Invisible things. Thrones. Dominions. Principalities. Powers. Whatever spiritual powers exist, Jesus made them. They are creatures. He is the Creator.

And everything was created “for him.” Creation belongs to Him and exists for Him. Then verse 17 says, “he is before all things.”

Jesus existed before Abraham. In John 8:58 Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I am.” And He goes farther than Abraham. Jesus prayed to the Father about the glory He had before the world existed.

John 17:5 “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

Bethlehem was His birth into this world as a man. It was not the beginning of His existence. He had glory with the Father before the world was, and Colossians says, “he is before all things.”

The Old Testament speaks about the Creator in the same way.

Psalm 102:25-27 “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. **26** They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: **27** But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”

Creation changes. The Creator remains. Colossians puts Jesus on the Creator side of that distinction.

Then Paul says, “by him all things consist.” Consist means they continue together. Everything continues under His power.

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;”

He is “upholding all things by the word of his power.” Jesus created everything, Jesus existed before everything, and Jesus continues to uphold everything.

II. JESUS HAS THE PREEMINENCE — COLOSSIANS 1:18

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 might have the preeminence.”

Now Paul moves from creation to the church. Who is the Head of the church? Jesus Christ. Every church and every preacher answers to Him.

Then Paul says He is “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” We saw “firstborn” in verse 15, and now we see it again. Does this mean Jesus was the first person in the Bible ever raised from the dead? No. People were raised before the resurrection of Christ. Lazarus came out of the grave before Jesus died.

So what does it mean? Keep reading: “that in all things he might have the preeminence.” His resurrection has first place. It stands above every resurrection that came before it.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. **21** For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. **23** But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

People had been restored to life before Jesus rose, but they died again. Christ rose as “the firstfruits.” His resurrection stands at the head of what is coming: “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

Now go back to Colossians.

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 might have the preeminence.”

Jesus has first place over creation because He made it. He has first place over the church because He is the Head. He has first place in resurrection because He is the firstborn from the dead.

Does Christ have first place when we decide what we believe? When Scripture says one thing and tradition says something else, who gets first place? When our feelings pull us one direction and Christ’s words pull us another direction, who gets first place?

Jesus already is preeminent. The question is whether we recognize the place that already belongs to Him.

III. JESUS MADE PEACE THROUGH HIS CROSS — COLOSSIANS 1:19-20

Colossians 1:19-20 “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; **20** And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Verse 19 says that in Christ “all fulness” should dwell. Fulness means the full amount, nothing lacking. And Paul explains that later in the same book.

Colossians 2:9 “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Jesus is God, and He is personally distinct from the Father. Colossians 1 says it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell, and Colossians 2 tells us that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ.

Now go back to verse 19.

Colossians 1:19 “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;”

The passage has already told us He created everything. Now it tells us the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him.

Then Paul takes us to the cross.

Colossians 1:20 “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Look at who is on that cross. The One who made heaven and earth. The One who made the visible and invisible. The One who is before all things. The One who holds all things together. The Head of the church. The One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells.

His blood actually accomplished reconciliation. Peace was made through the blood of His cross.

The next verses bring that reconciliation directly to people.

Colossians 1:21-22 “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled **22** In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:”

They were alienated. They were enemies. Now they had been reconciled through His death.

Verse 20 says “reconcile all things,” and Paul speaks about things in earth and things in heaven. That is broad language, and we should leave it as broad as God wrote it. It does not say that every individual will eventually receive eternal life. What the verse says plainly is that Christ made peace through His blood and that His reconciling work reaches across the created order.

CONCLUSION

Who is Jesus?

According to Colossians 1, He is the image of the invisible God. He is the Creator of all things. Everything was made by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and everything continues by Him.

He is the Head of the church. He is firstborn from the dead. He has the preeminence. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily.

And that same Jesus went to the cross and shed His blood to make peace.

When somebody asks you, “Who is Jesus?” open the Bible. Show them Colossians 1.

The One who made all things is the One who died for us. The One who holds all things together is the One who reconciles us to God. The One who is above everything deserves the place that already belongs to Him.

Jesus Christ is to have the preeminence in all things.

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