

**Colossians - Part 4: 1:15-17: “Christ’s Preeminence Over Creation”**  
**Sunday, October 31st, 2021**

Reading from the ESV, the English Standard Version:

**Colossians 1:15-17:**

**[15]** *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

**[16]** *For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through Him and for Him.*

**[17]** *And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

**Intro:**

Per our normal format, let’s go back quickly and review:

- Letter written by the Apostle Paul while imprisoned in Rome and who had written this letter without having visited Colossae prior to writing it.
- The church located in Colossae that was started by a man named Epaphras
- The church that it was written to had fallen into confusion about the truth of the Gospel because of the errant teachings of Jewish teachers that had been heavily influenced by a Greek-style philosophy mixed with strict Jewish dietary rules, and other additional standards that they were trying to place on these believers, trying to make them think that they had to do these additional things in order to be made **more** acceptable to God.

Paul’s primary aim in writing this letter was to correct all that and to reinforce and emphasize the truth that they were **ALREADY** made as acceptable to God as they would **EVER** be by virtue of the Person and Work of Christ. And let me stress that point: that if you are in Christ, you cannot possibly be made any MORE acceptable to God than you **already are**.

Our previous studies in Colossians, we noted:

- We've seen that we can have faith and love because of the hope that is laid up for us in Heaven.
- We have seen how we are the channels by which God has chosen to spread His plan of redemption through Christ to all the world.
- We've seen how we are to persist in our intercessory prayers for others because God has chosen prayer to be one of the means by which He affects His will here on earth.
- We've seen how we are witnesses of Christ, whether we choose to be or not, and that therefore we are exhorted to walk in a manner worthy of our Lord. Not just to talk like Christians, but to WALK like Christians too.
- We saw that we are to be filled with the knowledge of God's will for our lives and how that covers things like Wisdom, Sanctification, Thankfulness, Knowing and Applying Truth in our lives, and even Suffering.
- And then we spent our time last time covering our ADOPTION from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. And so this week, we are going to look more at the Preeminence of the Person of Christ over creation.

**Verse 15:**

And so jumping into this week's study, looking at verse 15 we see these amazing words from Paul, "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*". The invisible God. So that begs the question, "WHY"? "Why is God invisible?"

- God is spirit and He is therefore invisible.

But is there a need for Him to be invisible?

- Yes because God is Holy.

- Moses asked God to show Himself to him.
- God told him that no one can look upon Him and live.
  - Because of our iniquity, to look upon God face-to-face is surely to die.
  - Even in the very Throne Room of God, the Cherubim must shield their eyes. Even THEY cannot bear to look upon the Holiness of God.

Something changes.

- Ezekiel vision of the Throne Room of God (Ezekiel 1:26-27)
- Daniel's vision (Daniel 7:13-14).

But how is it that both Ezekiel and Daniel see a man in Heaven, in an exalted place?

- John 1:1-18
  - Jesus WITH God the Father.
  - Jesus WAS God.
    - Jesus is co-eternal with the Father
    - Jesus is co-equal to the Father.

Now we know who Daniel & Ezekiel saw in their visions: Jesus. And He dwelt among us! He "tabernacled" with us! He lived down here with us!

Back to Colossians. He (Christ) is the image of God. The word used here for image is the word that means a representation. Sort of like if you see a photograph, you can say that photo is an image of the person or an accurate representation of them. In the same way, Jesus is the VISIBLE image of the INVISIBLE God. Not "An" image of God but "THE" image of God. In every way, Jesus is like God the Father.

BUT NOT by way of appearance - contrary to paintings of Jesus during the Renaissance, Jesus didn't have a halo floating over His head, he didn't appear to be glowing, He didn't have diamond-encrusted robes, He would have appeared as a very normal-looking Jewish man. Isaiah (53:2) says that He had no particular majesty or beauty about Him that we would chase after Him by virtue of those traits. As a human, He didn't didn't appear to be all that glorious, outwardly yet in Hebrews (1:3), we are told that "*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature*". Jesus is both fully man AND fully God. So that means that whatever He did, whatever He said, where He went, whatever He commanded, whatever works in ministry He did, He was acting precisely as the Father would act in line with His divine will here on earth, accomplishing EXACTLY what He came to accomplish because He and the Father are ONE. (John 10:30) "*I and the Father are one*". God in all of His fullness dwells in the Son. And He dwelt HERE, among US.

He is to be the sole object of our affections. We ought not make anything or anyone else the object of our affections: not our spouse, not our kids, not our careers, not our ministry, not our friends, not our hobbies, not our sports heroes, not religious leaders - no one else deserves to be the object of our worship or our affections other than Christ ALONE. We ought to make Christ CENTRAL in our hearts and our affections BECAUSE He is God and He is WORTHY to receive our praise and adoration. I don't know about you but I need to hear that.

The second part of verse 15, presents us with what at first glance may appear to be a troublesome text. Speaking of Christ, it says, "*the firstborn of all creation*". The firstborn?

- Was He created?
  - No - John chapter 1 clearly states that Christ is eternal and uncreated.
  
- What is meant by "firstborn"?

- False teachers today constantly abuse this scripture
  - The Arian Heresy: an heretical doctrine that denied the very core, key truths about the true **divinity** of Christ, namely the co-eternality and co-equality of Christ **with** the Father.
  
- Original Greek word for Firstborn:
  - CAN refer to chronological birth order.
  - In context, this word is also used to mean “**preeminence**”, signifying rank and importance. And this is the sense in which this word is used, within the context of Colossians 1:15.
    - Examples: chronologically speaking, Esau was the firstborn because he was born first. That’s true. But Jacob (born later) received the **blessing** of the firstborn.
      - Uses the word “firstborn” within the context of  
PREEMINENCE.
    - Psalm 89 (beginning in verse 26), “*He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’ And I will make him the **firstborn**, the highest of the kings of the earth”.*
    - Again: Preeminence.

When Paul says that Christ is the firstborn of all creation, he is speaking of His preeminence over everything.

**Verses 16 & 17:**

Not just preeminent over people but over absolutely every single thing that was ever created including every galaxy, every solar system, every star, every planet, every plant and animal on

earth, every blade of grass, every flower, bacteria, every virus. Everything. Looking more closely at Verse 16, we read, *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him”*. ALL things were created THROUGH Him and FOR Him. But we also see that all things were created BY Him. He is the origin of all things. He is the very crossroad of creation. Everything is connected to Him and tied to Him. He handles all things. Everything therefore finds its SOURCE in Christ.

TOTALITY: Christ’s preeminence over ALL THINGS and how absolutely EVERYTHING was created through Him and for Him and by Him. Even the things we can’t see. Every visible reality and every INvisible reality. The things we have YET to see. He is preeminent over every spiritual realm. The angels, the demons, and satan and hell. (Example of when I was a kid in Sunday school).

Also, Christ is the very “agent” of creation. Remember, Paul said that all things were created THROUGH Him. So all of creation was made BY Christ, THROUGH His very hands. Consider this: there isn’t one single atom, not a single molecule in all of creation that has not been touched by the very hands of Jesus. Everything and everyone that has ever been created owes their very existence to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Every spot of dust we step on belongs to Christ. Every oxygen molecule we breathe belongs to Christ. Every drop of water we drink, every speck of food is borrowed from Christ Himself. Our blood was made by Christ, the vessels that carry it belong to Christ. The breath we use to praise God or curse others belongs to Christ. (Example of Chris’s question about praying over Hors d’Oeuvres).

- Religion vs Heart
  - Religion: Consult the laws and the rules and stick to that.
  - Heart: Say grace over everything you’re thankful for.

And not only is Christ the agent and origination of creation; He is the GOAL of creation too. All things were made FOR Him. Which is to say that everything that was ever made, was made to glorify Christ. EVERYTHING.

Looking at the end of verse 17, “...and in Him all things hold together”. Again, “ALL THINGS”.

- Spiritual realities
- Biological realities

The application points in a study (like this) which may be more theology than exhortation.

- The guiding principle in looking at the Person of Christ as He has revealed Himself to us in scripture should be deeper devotion. He is the object of our worship, the object of our adoration, the Author of our salvation. Remember that our theology should ALWAYS lead to praise, adoration, and worship. Always. In fact, if theology DOESN'T lead to praise, adoration, and worship then we've missed the point of theology entirely. If you have theology but you don't have praise, adoration, and worship, then what you have is cold, mechanical orthodoxy and that's really bad. But if you have praise, adoration, and worship but you don't have theology - then you have IDOLATRY. Because you're praising and worshiping a God who you do not know, obey, or understand.
  - It points to how overwhelmingly grandiose He is and how utterly small we are by comparison.
  - It points to His control over all things and His sustenance of all life.

But what do we DO with that knowledge?

- GREATER levels of worship, adoration, and praise BECAUSE of Who He is.
- DEEPER levels of humility seeing as how we have no cause for arrogance.
- GREATER levels of smallness in light of His GREATNESS.

- A more PROFOUND sense of dependence upon Him seeing as how we can't even take our next breath without His permission.
- GREATER joy because of His preeminence and His handle on all things.
- BOLDER levels of fearlessness and courage because **HE** controls all things.
- GREATER senses of thankfulness because everything was made BY Him, THROUGH Him, and FOR Him.