

Who is Jesus Christ?

Colossians 1:15-23

Scripture Reading

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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Introduction: While preparing for a book he wrote, *The Case for Christ*, Lee Strobel interviewed a wide variety of noted people to get their perspective on Christ. One was a man who was a gifted evangelist in the 1940s, a man whose ministry actually paralleled Billy Graham's; in fact, a man who was known by millions and actually expected to have a ministry like Billy Graham had. His name was Charles Templeton. But after he attended a liberal seminary to get more education, he shocked the Christian world by abandoning his faith. His media career in Canada gave him a lot of notoriety, and he often used that platform to express his unbelief. He no longer believed in the Jesus who could save souls.

Purpose: Every Christian must see how majestic and powerful God is and yet, how personal He is with every human being who will seek a relationship with Him

Background

- We are going to talk today about the supremacy of Christ over all gods and worlds and creation.
- According to all of the commentators I read about his section of scripture, there is no more definitive and descriptive place in scripture that gives each of us clarity on who Jesus is. There are other places that we can point to that give us information and pieces but this section of Colossians exceeds them all.
- Colossians 1:15 – 23 reveals the true identity of Christ
 - Most cults and false teachings center on a misinterpretation of Jesus.
 - How these false teachers view Christ and what they do with Him as a person will tell you the truth of what they really believe. Christ is the foundation for all of our belief. Who He is and what He has done.

Transition: Let's look first of all at His;

Power in creating – Colossians 1:15-17; Genesis 1:1; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:1-3

Colossians 1:15

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

- We see one characteristic of Jesus is that He is the image of the invisible God
 - Jesus is the physical manifestation of God because we know that God Himself is a spirit being. He does not have a physical body.
 - Image here means “likeness”. It is the word we use for icon or statue.
 - In Matthew 22:20 this word is used to describe the image of Caesar on the coin Jesus held in His hand
 - This word is used in Revelation 13 to describe the image or statue of the Anti-Christ they will create for people to worship
 - Jesus was the perfect image of God
 - Jesus did NOT become the image of God at His birth but was always the image of God in eternity past.

Hebrews 1:1-3a

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature

- Radiance of the Glory of God and the exact picture, the exact stamp of who God is
- He is the very form and essence of God

Philippians 2:6

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth

John 14:9

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

- Jesus was and is the complete, full and final revelation of God. He is God’s manifestation and representative
- A second characteristic is that He is the first born.

- The Arians and Jehovah Witnesses point to this verse as support that Jesus was a created being who may or may not have become a god.
- There were three major false teachings that attempted to permeate the Christian church in the early centuries of church history
 - Marcionism / Montanism / Gnosticism
- Paul is addressing the beginning stages of Gnosticism as it is being formed and the challenges were coming to the church and leaders at Colossae
 - Gnosticism – the idea that the material world is evil but the spirit world is holy, perfect and pure
 - Material universe controlled by evil forces
 - Only spirit is pure and divine
 - Humans contain divine spirit/spark from unknown spirit god; spark enables humans to recognize evils of material world
 - Redeemer from unknown spirit god must come to give human souls secret of escape from material world
 - Jesus the redeemer cannot really be human in the flesh, must be pure spirit appearing to be human
 - Jesus’ life, public teachings, death, resurrection matter little
 - Jesus’ secret teachings on soul’s method of escape from material world matter most
 - Jesus could not have created the material world if He were God because that would be creating evil
 - Jesus could not be human because He would be evil.
 - They denied the humanity of Christ but without the humanity of Christ, you cannot have a Savior, He must be both God and man to be the substitute for man on the cross to pay for the ransom of our sin and satisfy the wrath of God by being the final sacrifice
 - It is important to understand what Paul is precisely saying here. He is very exact for a reason and that is to answer the Gnostics false teaching.
- The Greek word here **prototokos** can be interpreted the first born chronologically but the context points us to the other interpretation and that is that means Jesus is primary in rank and authority over all things in the universe. This authority was given to Him by the Father

- “Firstborn” denotes two things of Christ: He preceded the whole Creation, and He is Sovereign over all Creation
- **Produce the universe**
 - In verse 16 – 17a, we see that Jesus is the one actively creating the universe

Colossians 1:16 – 17a

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,

- All things were created through Him and for Him
 - For His glory
 - For a personal relationship with the God of the universe
 - For God’s good pleasure and desire.
 - He is not an angel but is the one who created and is over the angels

Hebrews 1:7- 8

7 Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” 8 But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

- This shows also again, the eternity of Christ. He existed in eternity past before anything was created

Micah 5:2

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

- Jesus created the entirety of the universe and there were ranks and divisions among the spiritual beings as well as the human beings and animals on earth.
- He ranks above it all as emphasized in verse 17
- But not only did He create the universe, He perpetuates and keeps the universe running.

- **Perpetuate the universe**

Colossians 1:17b

And in him all things hold together

Hebrews 1:3b

And he upholds the universe by the word of his power

- There are so many examples I could give you from science to show how God is holding all of this universe together
 - Gravity
 - Centrifugal force
 - He keeps the universe in order and in motion
 - The structure of an atom
- He sustains the universe. He is the power behind the consistency in the universe

Illustration: Indescribable by Louis Giglio on YouTube

Application: Are we in awe and amazement of the power of God?

Transition: We look now at Jesus with His;

Pre-eminence over all creation – Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 2:14; I Corinthians 12 & 14

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent

- He holds the reigns over the church
 - Head of the Body
 - The Bible uses many metaphors describing the group of people He is gathering but the predominant one is the one Paul uses that of a human body
 - You can read more about the specifics of the body in Romans 12; I Corinthians 12 and 14 but the church is not an institution or organization, it is an organism that is alive, breathing and growing
 - Jesus is the head that oversees and controls the church. Jesus controls it, gives the church life, protects it, purifies it, preserves it and will present it to Himself as blameless which means without blemish.
 - Christ started the church with his death, burial and resurrection and He said He would continue to build it until He returns
- He holds the reigns over time
 - He is the author of time and the sustainer of it. He is the timeless one
- He holds the reigns over death
 - He holds the keys to immortality
 - He literally started a **“New World Order”** by being the first one to die and rise again. Yes, He resurrected Lazarus and others but they died at some point. He rose and is still alive today.

I Corinthians 15:20

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep

Hebrews 2:14

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil

Hebrews 7:16

Who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life

- He is the pre-eminent one because of His death, burial and resurrection. He is exalted over all things

Philippians 4:8-11

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Application: Does God hold the reigns of our heart strings?

Transition: In verses 18 – 22 of Colossians 1, we see that Jesus made the;

Payment to reconcile His creation to God – Colossians 1:19-22

Colossians 1:19-20

19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- Paul is very keen and precise in the use of Greek words here in verse 19
 - The Gnostics were coming and very persuasive. They were touting the idea that there were many gods or emanations that come from the main God. They believed that pieces of God's power were given to these gods or emanations.
 - Paul makes it very clear that in Christ, the fullness of God was within Him
 - All of God's power, not a part, not a piece, not some but entire, all, complete power of God was in Him

Colossians 2:9

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

- The reconciler paid the price for peace
 - The word reconcile is one of the significant and descriptive terms in all of scripture

- **Reconciliation** is the fact we are a sinner and as a sinner an enemy to the holy and righteous God but that through the death of Christ on the cross, we can become friends with God.
- The word reconcile means **“to change or exchange”**
 - When it is used in Colossians 1:20 and 22, Paul adds a preposition to the front of the Greek word to emphasize and intensify the meaning.
 - It means that God has thoroughly, completely reconciled
 - He is emphasizing to the false teachers that Jesus is fully God, fully man and is able to reconcile any and all men and women who want to have a relationship with His heavenly Father.

2 Corinthians 5:18 – 21

18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- That includes the world that is groaning as in pain of childbirth because of the effects and consequences of the fall

Romans 8:18 – 22

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

- The physical world is waiting for release and to be made into a new heaven and a new earth without the effects of sin.
 - The reconciler provides us with right standing before God

Colossians 1:21

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,

- What was your life like before Christ? If you were young when you became a believer in Christ, can you take time to imagine what your life would be apart from Christ? From time to time, we need to contemplate what our lives would be like without Christ

- We can do that by seeing what happens even in our own family for those who have chosen a different path in life than Jesus
- Or we can see it in the relationships we have around us with non-Christ followers or in the media.
- Paul reminds these Christ followers in Colossae of their past
 - **Alienated by condition** - by standing, by their situation as sinners with a sinful nature
 - **Hostile mind** – hateful of God by attitude
 - **Engaged in evil deeds** – not out of ignorance but willful sin. What is in the heart is borne out in behavior

John 3:19 – 20

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

- Note: God doesn't need to be reconciled to man, man needs to be reconciled to God. Look at verse 22 for the purpose of reconciliation

Colossians 1:22

22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him

- His purpose in reconciliation is to present you and I holy and pure before Him and the Father
 - **Holy** – separated from sin and separated to God
 - **Blameless** – without blemish, the blemish is removed

Illustration: Like removing scratches from a car

- **Above reproach** – going beyond blameless, no one can bring any charge against us
 - Satan is the prosecuting attorney, God is the righteous judge, Jesus is our defense attorney
- God sees us exactly as He will see us in heaven when we are glorified this very day!!

Quote: “The process of spiritual growth involves becoming in practice what we are in reality before God” – John MacArthur

2 Corinthians 3:18

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- It does not matter what anyone in this life thinks of you because you are here to please, honor and glorify God alone
 - We want to be loved and accepted. That is a human desire and nothing wrong with that except if you base your self-worth and your values in life on seeking that out at every turn, you will be heart broken
 - People are looking for acceptance on many social media platforms or in the media itself on Youtube, movies, television, etc.
 - God is the one who knows you best and look at what He thinks of you as we have just described!!

Application: Are we grateful for Jesus bridging the gap?

Transition Lastly,

Perseverance in the Gospel proclaimed in all creation – Colossians 1:23

Colossians 1:23

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

- Those who are true to the faith will continue to be faithful to God and Jesus Christ to the end
 - Those who hold fast to what saved them, the Gospel that apostles have been teaching and what Paul has been preaching.
- Profound revelation – General revelation / macro

Romans 1:20

20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

- Personal revelation – Special revelation / micro / personal

Illustration: Shaquille O’Neal on his knees, face to face with a three-year-old.

- Gaither Vocal Band – “He Came Down to My Level”.

Application: Are we amazed at the breadth and personal revealing of the Gospel delivered to us?

Illustration from the beginning: Lee Strobel went to interview this now elderly man. When he was asked about things such as his belief in the Old Testament, he was very clear in expressing why he didn't believe. Finally, Lee asked him, "What do you think about Jesus?" He could never have expected the response he got.

Suddenly, the old man, as Lee said, "teared up." And struggling to answer through those tears, he simply replied, "I miss Him."

Colossians 1:16

All things were created through him and for him.

Transition: Listen, you and I are part of this amazing grand design of creation and we were created by Christ and we were created for Him. As amazing as it is to think about the majesty, power and sheer immensity of God and Christ, He comes down to our level and connects with our heart in relationship. I hope you sense the amount of love that God has for you.

Key Thought: Is Jesus enough for your longing heart?

Questions to Ponder This Week

- 1. Are we worshipping the Creator or the Creation?**
- 2. Are we in awe and amazement at the power of God and how personal it is?**
- 3. Are we persevering in our faith with evidence of good works?**