

## Colossians 1:15—20

Sept. 15, 2019

Last week we started a new sermon series in the New Testament book of Colossians. Col. 1:1-14 called us to fix ourselves on Jesus.

Today, we come face to face with the Jesus we are to fix ourselves upon.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” <sup>1</sup>

PRAY

Talk is Cheap.

Have you ever heard that phrase? The phrase came into common use about 200 years ago. Near as I can tell, one version was, “Talk is cheap but it takes money to buy a farm.”

Do you see what that means?

It is much easier to talk about doing something than actually doing it. It is one thing to talk about buying a farm and another thing to actually buy a farm.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Col 1:15–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Usually when we say, "Talk is cheap," we are saying that someone talks but does not deliver. Promises but does not follow through. Speaks but does not do. Talks big but does not act.

Today, Colossians 1:15-20 tell us unambiguously that Jesus is supreme. That is easy to say but our section today shows us how Jesus is supreme.

The Bible—and our section today—uses a lot of superlative language to describe who Jesus is and what he has done. We hear talk like, "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."—and you might be tempted to think that this is just cheap talk.

That talk is not cheap.

Jesus does not sit back and merely say that he is supreme, he gives us proof of that supremacy. His talk is not cheap.

In fact, today we focus not so much on the words of Jesus but the proof that what he says about himself is true. We see the proof that his talk is not cheap.

PROP: Jesus is supreme over all things.

He is supreme not merely by what he says, but by what he has done.

What has he done to show he is supreme?

There are four ways. First,

1. He is: The image of the invisible God

Did you see where that came from?

The very first statement of verse 15,

**"He is the image of the invisible God..."**

What does that mean? Image can mean a great many things, but we need to understand what 'image' means here. Sometimes the best way to understand what something means is by making clear what it doesn't mean.

Image here does NOT mean:

- Jesus is bears resemblance to God.
- Jesus is similar to God.
- Jesus is a chip off the block of God.
- Jesus is a lot like God.
- Jesus is kinda like God.

We can even say that Jesus is not an image of God—but we see that he is THE image of God. It means that Jesus has always exactly mirrored the Father in his purpose, will and character.

One theologian said, "Jesus is (the) exact representation of God."

That is why Jesus can say in John 14:9 of himself, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."

Jesus is in no way less than the Father. It is not as if God the Son (Jesus) less power and authority than the Father. Jesus is not an apprentice God. Neither is he God Jr.

Verse 19 says of Jesus that he is 'all the fullness of God.' Jesus is God. As much as God is God. As much as the Holy Spirit is God. It is not just that Jesus is fully God but also the Father is fully in the Son.

God and Jesus have all the same attributes, power, character and desires.

Let's take another step. If you know your Bibles, you know the concept of the image of God shows up way back in the Genesis creation account.

Remember? Way back in Genesis 1, we read,

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”  
Genesis 1:26a

And so God created mankind—both man and woman—he created them. And mankind was made to resemble the image of God. Ever wonder what image mankind reflects?

The image of the invisible God. Who else could it be?

Jesus ever and always the son, the perfect image of God the Father perfectly reflecting the life and glory of the Father. In other words, “He is the image” we were created to resemble. He is THE image, we are made to resemble image of God.

Jesus is the archetype of mankind. That means he is the original that we were modeled after. The purpose of mankind—both men and women—was to be an image bearers of Jesus.

We all know that this world is a broken place because humanity is bound by the power of sin. God made us for himself and we ran from him. The world is fallen because humanity decided we didn’t want to merely be like God, we wanted to take the place of God.

Jesus came to draw us back but also he came as a man perfectly bearing the image of God as a man. In Jesus’ life we see authentically what God intended humanity to be. ALSO In Jesus we see how authentically God associates himself with humanity.

Jesus—the Image of God—who didn’t just appear to be a man but became an authentic man.

So what?

We must carry forth the image of God to the fallen world that knows nothing of him. We—the people of God—are the ones who are to make this invisible God visible by the proclamation of GOOD NEWS and GOOD DEEDS. We cannot do this alone. We need each other.

We reflect the image of the invisible God most accurately when our church, as a community, loves each other and loves others. No individual can represent the Trinity alone. We need each other to represent the supremacy of Jesus, the image of God.

Transition: He is the image of the invisible God.

But that is not all.

His supremacy is expressed in the fact that—

2. He is: the firstborn of creation

That comes from verse 15 as well. Did you see it?

**“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”**

You might hear the word, ‘firstborn’ and think that it means that Jesus is a created being, or that he had a beginning. If he was created or had a beginning he would not be God.

A man named Arius taught that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

What are we to make of firstborn?

At the time of the writing of this book, all the readers understood inheritance laws. All the wealth, property, status, authority and titles would transfer from the Father to the firstborn.

Firstborn meant—most important. We don’t speak that way. We would never say that Jeff Bezos is the firstborn of Amazon. It just

sounds weird. We would say, Jeff Bezos is the CEO of Amazon. We say CEO and think, most important and influential.

But that analogy breaks down. Bezos is over Amazon. Jesus at creation created all things and was separate from creation. He was not created.

It gets clearer as we read,

Vs. 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.”**

Jesus is the one who created all things, therefore Jesus has to be distinct from creation. The creator cannot also be the created. That wouldn't make any sense.

He is firstborn—supreme—over all the created order. He is supreme over those things on earth and those things in heaven. He is supreme over those things we can see and those things that we cannot see.

Whether it be the dust floating in this room or a star in the distant sky he is supreme because he created them both. Whether a leaf on a tree in Finland or Mt. Kilimanjaro rising from the desert floor, he is supreme because he created them both. Whether it be your left ring finger or an asteroid in deep space, he is supreme because he created both.

All things were created by him.

Paul even goes a step further at the end of verse 16.

**“all things were created through him and for him.”**

Not only did he create all things, but also all things are for him. He is not only the means of creation, but also he is the goal of all creation. He is the creator all things and the purpose of all creation.

He created all things for himself.

Even us.

All things were created through him and for him. Even you. This has many entailments. Here is one: Have you ever wondered—what is the point of my life? Who am I supposed to be?

You were created for him.  
Jesus is your purpose.  
You live to please Jesus.

You are for him.

I am not created for myself. Talk about something that is unAmerican. We could even say:

- You do not understand who you are unless you understand that you were made for Jesus.
- You do not understand what you are to do unless you understand that you were made for Jesus.
- You do not understand who you are to be unless you understand that you were made for Jesus.
- You cannot determine your identity if you don't understand you were made for Jesus.

All of creation gets something humanity seems to be blind to. The heavens pour forth his glory and humanity runs from him.

But right now verse 17 speaks again of his supremacy.

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

Though mankind is in rebellion it will not always be this way. The world is not doomed to a perpetual state of fallenness and decay. Jesus will recreate all things. He will restore all things.

He has already started.

But for now it is enough for us to know that Jesus is supreme and necessary for us to ask ourselves: Is he Supreme in my life?

Transition: Jesus is supreme. Why?

He is the Image of God.  
He is the firstborn of creation.

There is more.

### 3. He is: the Head of the Church

What? How does that make sense? How do we go from talking about Jesus as supreme over creation to talking about the church. But that is exactly what happens.

Vs. 18,

**<sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church.**

Let's get this order. Jesus is supreme over the entire created the order, he is supreme over the universe—why is the next thing that comes up talk about the church?

Strange.

It doesn't seem to follow.

In all the episodes of Star Trek, never once did Captain Kirk lean over to Spock and say, "You know, seeing this vast expanse of space up close really makes me think about the people of God."

Neither has National Geographic published a pictorial of the breathtaking sites of Yellowstone and how it relates to the people of God.

The idea sounds ludicrous.

But notice the connection right here.

He creates and sustains all things by the word of his power but he is connected to his body, the church. All things are sustained through his power. But the church is sustained by her connection with him, personally.

This does not just mean that if we were to draw an org chart of the church that Jesus would be on the top. It says something much more. The church—the people of God—are uniquely connected to Jesus. Jesus is the source of her life.

Christ has an organic, real life connection to his people that he does not have of creation. He is not said to be the 'head' of the Andromeda galaxy. But he is head of the church—all his people for all time. That is true for the church at large and that is true for our church as well.

Our church's is alive only to the degree that we are meaningful connected to Jesus.

Do you see that?

The people of God are the most important thing in the entire universe to bring about his will. In creation, Jesus worked alone without any help to bring about his will. In redemption, he uses the church to bring about his will in the world.

The church's words and deeds are the primary way that the kingdom expands in this world. Think about this—Jesus is supreme over creation and he is supreme over the church. Both.

That means in all the universe, among all things created—seen and unseen—no power can destroy the people of God.

Oppose? Yes.

Persecute? Yes.

Marginalize? Yes.

Terrorize? Yes.

But not destroy. The one supreme over gravity—that very one has chosen a people to be his very own—and it is more likely that the laws of gravity collapse than the protection for his church wane.

It can seem that the things the church is about are small and unimportant—that is patently false. Just because the people of God are a minority in this world DOES NOT mean that what we are about is unimportant.

How do we know? Jesus is supreme and he is our head.

There is no other group or organization; institution or society; association or assembly as important as the people of God.

- God may use politicians but he always uses his church.
- God may use social action but he always uses his church.
- God may use doctors but he always uses his church.
- God may use philanthropists but he always uses his church.
- God may use corporations but he always uses his church.

No other organization can be said to have Jesus as her head. The church is important not because we are important but because we are connected to the Lord of the universe.

He is supreme—Why?

- THE Image of God
- The firstborn of all creation
- The head of the Body

#### 4. He is: Firstborn from the dead

There is that word again. The meaning here is easier to understand—look at verse 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 is firstborn from the dead. He died and yet lives. Jesus has defeated death and lives forevermore. He proved his preeminence by defeating death once and for all.

He is supreme over creation because he created all things. He is supreme over the church because he rose from the dead. Just as he created all things—now he is about something different. By coming back from the dead, he has begun the process of recreating all things.

How?

Vs. 19,

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

Jesus made peace—opened the door for reconciliation by offering his life as a sacrifice. In a world of despair and war, Jesus has made a way for peace.

He is recreating all things starting with the regeneration of his people. Jesus has begun the process of restoring all things by making peace with God for his people. The church is the beginnings of new creation.

Because of sin—though Christ made and sustains all things—all things are not as they should be. But instead of destroying all the things that he made and starting over—he became one of his creatures and allowed himself to be destroyed.

He could have destroyed creation to get rid of the curse of sin and death, instead he was destroyed and became the firstborn from the dead to rid his people from the curse of sin and death.

The choice was destroy all things or destroy the one who made all things. He was destroyed but destroyed death and made peace.

To say that he is firstborn means that others will follow him. He is first to live again but he is far from the last. He is supreme not just because he created all things but because he is recreating all things starting with overcoming death and making peace.

He is supreme—Why?

- THE Image of God
- The firstborn of all creation
- The head of the Body
- The firstborn from the dead

If he is as supreme, is he supreme in your life? Or is something else?

Be honest.

No star in the sky challenges his supremacy—do you?