

Jesus is the Ultimate Authority

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[0 : 00] Well, our passage today I've read already, Colossians 1, 15 to 20. I'm going to be very honest. I like to stir the pot.

And John Angus or Nigel or frankly anyone who spent any time around me for five minutes know that I like to stir the pot and just mix things up.

But there's something I'm even better at than just stirring up the pot. I love to rile people up, not in a bad way, but in a good way, I hope.

And today I really hope to rile everyone up to see the ultimate authority Christ has to blow Christ up. And I don't mean that in a Northern Irish sense.

I mean that in a beginning sense that we will see the vastness of Christ, how great he is, how large he is, and that we will come to worship that.

[1 : 02] Before we do that, can we just pray very, very briefly? Father, I ask that you're with us and I ask that the Holy Spirit will be opening our hearts in our minds to see Christ's glory, to see his splendor, to see just how amazing he is.

In Jesus' name. Amen. For the last wee while, there's a lot of talks about authority. Where it comes from and who should have it.

Where that justification begins and ends. Now I've saw that divide families in two. And we could say, there's a lot of places where we could say authority comes from.

We could say it comes from governments. And the people who elect them. The church, we could say it even comes from the king, or from kings. Although that's a wee bit old. Now, how on earth did we get to a place of such division of opinion over authority?

Well, let me give you an idea of how all authority is constantly twisted. We take the created, then we elevate it to the status of godhood.

[2 : 10] Now you can do that with, well, anything. The state or people. The environment or even your social class. Once we take Jesus out of the picture, something will always fill the void that's left.

Ultimately, the twisting of authority begins when we forget who the real authority is. So we replace him with another authority. And any other authority will do.

And us Christians are no different. We can replace Jesus with other authorities in different areas of our lives. Becoming double-minded, as James says.

But above all things, Jesus must be your ultimate authority in every area of your life. I'll say it again. Jesus must be your ultimate authority in every area of your life.

Now, that sounds obvious, doesn't it? But is he? Is he your ultimate authority? Is he the very lenses you view your world through?

[3 : 20] And to that end, we go to Colossians 1, 15 to 20. In it, we see one of the highest Christological passages in the New Testament. In it, we see Christ as the supreme authority over all things.

Now, to give some background to our passage before I just lob you in somewhere new. In Colossia, there were Greeks who were adding Jesus to their pantheon.

Early heretics questioning Christ's divinity and authority. So what you have here is Paul, after the formal greeting just prior to our passage today, asserting Jesus' dominance, asserting his supremacy over everything.

And he does that through a poem, or what some people have said is an early form of a hymn. And it's because it's broken into two parts. And it's bookended.

And they reflect, each part reflects each other. So I'll begin to break the passage down today into two parts. To reflect what's going on in our passage.

[4 : 28] And work through the passage verse by verse. So we can clearly see who Christ is, what he has done, what he is doing. That Jesus is and must be supreme in all things.

And so the first section that we see is Jesus, or what we see in the first section is Jesus is author and king over all, of all creation.

Jesus is author and king of all creation. The first line says, he is the image of the invisible God. A lecturer in America said, the first affirmation of Jesus is not what he did or became, but what he eternally is.

Namely, the image of the invisible God. This is Jesus from all time, pre-cross to post-cross. This opening half of the first verse is filled with images of Genesis 1 to 3.

In the beginning was God. You have God the Father, the Father of lights. Light inexpressible. No one may see him and live. You've God the Holy Spirit. The breath of God.

[5 : 39] Described as fire and wind. Empowering believers. Carrying out the work of the Father and the Son. Then you have Jesus. The Christ God.

The Son. The image of God. He has always been the image of God. Remember in Genesis 3, then the man and his wife heard the sound of God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

I can't think of anyone else, but who must they have saw? They must have saw Jesus. Jesus is the perfect expression of God. His thoughts, his attitudes, and his love.

As Jesus said in John 14, whoever is seeing me has seen the Father. Hebrews 1 says he is the radiance of the glory of God. The exact imprint of his nature.

Jesus is the supreme image of God. There is no difference in view or attitudes with the other members of the Trinity. Thus, when Jesus says, I love him or her, the Father and the Spirit says, so do I.

[6 : 51] That actually hit me quite recently. Walking out there as I was contemplating over the Holy Spirit. Because sometimes for us, it's really easy for us to think, yeah, Jesus loves me.

This I know. For the Bible tells me so. It's a song that even my little three-year-old can sing back. But sometimes we might have a hard time applying that to the Spirit.

Many we have a disrupted relationship with our Father. And so we have a hard time applying that to the Father. But we never have a hard time seeing it from Jesus. But here's the thing.

Jesus is the supreme image of God. There is no difference in views or attitudes with the other members of the Trinity. When Jesus says, I love you, the Father and the Spirit says, so do I.

That's amazing, isn't it? Spirit loves us as much as Jesus. The Father loves us as much as Jesus. As an author writes, there's only one face that perfectly reveals the hidden glory of God.

[7 : 56] That face is Jesus. Next part of the line says, the firstborn over all creation. Now this doesn't mean what the heretic Arian thought, or just like the modern Jehovah's Witnesses think, that Jesus was created, higher than the angels but still a creature.

No, the firstborn means authority, privilege, and rights of inheritance. Now we can see this from passages like Exodus 4, 22, where Israel is called God's firstborn son.

And in Psalm 89, verse 27, where it says, firstborn, greatest of the kings of the earth. Israel was not the firstborn nation, or first nation into existence, nor were David or Solomon the first kings of Israel. Rather, it has to do with authority and privilege, as well as the right to inherit. It means Jesus is supreme, he is preeminent, and he must be first.

We now come to one of my favourite sections, and one of my favourite sections in the Bible. For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

[9 : 16] What comes to mind reading this is something a Dutch theologian called Abraham Kuyper, who said, there is not one square inch in the whole domain of human existence, over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry out, all things have been created through Christ.

All things have been created for Christ. Everything in heaven and earth currently finds its purpose and reason for being in Christ. Every kingdom, every heavenly authority, our earthly authority, all have been created through him.

Everything finds its ultimate fulfilment in Christ. Christ is the Alpha, where everything finds its origin, and the Omega, where everything finds its ultimate purpose and fulfilment.

Paul is exclaiming Jesus' supreme authority over every area, material, intellectual, or authority.

Jesus even said this to Pilate in John 19, you would have no power over me if it were not given to

you from above.

Now, for so long, Christians have shied away from engaging in the world of ideas, or the public realm, for fear that we are imposing our values on society.

[10:42] We've taken a step back. We've seen, maybe we've seen the legalism from the past and go, oh, I don't want to do that. But because of that, you leave a void, something fills it.

How many of us subtly put our faith in a box that is only for family and a private sphere? But if Jesus cries, mine, we must respond by crying, his.

No one else's. You cannot have his glory. You cannot have his authority. You cannot have his realm, his domain. That means God has something to say about politics, because the authority comes from him.

Does God have something to say about art? Yeah, he made the heavens. Does God have something to say about literature? Yes, he wrote one of the greatest stories ever penned. Music? He composed the songs of the birds. Science? Yeah. He invented the code for our DNA. He created the formula for light. Economics, mechanics, philosophy, business, farming, carpentry, journalism.

[11:55] There is not one area of life that is not within his authority. So we must ask ourselves, is he my authority in all of life?

Am I holding back areas? Is Jesus the authority, the author and authority in my politics? Or am I being more influenced by ideas that are not biblical?

I have been, I have noticed this before in my own life as well. What are we teaching our kids? If God isn't the author of creation, something else will take his place.

We cannot be double-minded, as James says. We cannot serve two masters. And we can definitely not let anyone take Jesus' authority.

I want you to ask, is Jesus the source of my finance? That is, my economy? If God isn't supreme in our view of economy, we will turn to another source for security.

[13:05] Whether that's your job, becoming a workaholic, or the state, becoming dependent on it. Who is your author? Where does your authority for all of life lie?

Because if it is not in Christ, we are replacing him with another authority. Where's your authority for truth?

Are we elevating science to the level of Godhood? Are we keeping God as the author of science? Remember, all truth is God's truth.

Because truth is found in truth incarnate. In Jesus. Paul goes on in verse 17. And he is before all things.

Now this means Christ is outside of creation. He's not bound to it. Christ created everything, but is not subject to its laws of time and space. Nature is subject to his laws.

[14:10] And in him all things hold together. Now this is an amazing line. Christ did not just create the world and leave it to spin on its own axis. Jesus, although outside the constraints of creation are time and space, he is deeply involved in it.

In fact, the reason the earth keeps spinning? Because Christ keeps it spinning. The reason the atom doesn't split? Christ holds it together.

Now to blow your mind even further. As Jesus lay in the manger. Crying. Dependent on Mary. Hebrews 1 states.

He was upholding the universe by the word of his power. And that while Mary comforted Jesus in her arms. Jesus was holding all things together.

Isn't that amazing? This is why some theologians refer to this passage as the cosmic Christ.

[15:11] The cosmic Christ. I love that term. From the first section we see that Jesus is the king. He's the divine creator. He is, always has been, and always will be the perfect image of God.

The first question now, answer to the Westminster Shorter Catechism. I'm sure nearly everyone's familiar with it, if we know any of them. Is what is man's chief end?

Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Humanity's purpose is found in Jesus. In fact, all of creation finds its purpose in Christ. Christ is the origin and the goal.

Nothing else. Nothing can replace him. This all means that Jesus is sovereign over what is happening right now. Everything is ordered to his glory. The reason that that chair that you're sitting on sustains you, Christ is upholding it.

This is the picture of Christ. Mighty, upholding the universe, keeping everything together, all for his glory. As Shia Lin, a Christian rapper, once said, The son of God, 100% divinity, self-existent, second person of the Trinity, magisterial, imperial at the helm, infinitely transcending this material realm.

[16:30] He's the one that all creation was made through. And by him, the earth's foundation was led to, as the angels they saw it in pay-per-view created Satan too. Matter of fact, he created you.

And nothing can escape Jesus' sovereign rule from the farthest galaxy to the smallest molecule. So who deserves to gain fame? By the word of his power, the universe is maintained.

In other words, put the cosmos back on the shelf. Without Jesus, reality would collapse on itself. Jesus, the marvelous author of all consciousness, but beyond what the sharpest biologist acknowledges, he needs no archaeologist or smart apologist.

He sees all hearts, omnipresent cardiologist, master of all logic, macrocosmic novelist, following any God is just preposterous. Is Jesus, this Jesus, your authority, your king, and author over all areas of your life?

The first half of the poem has stated how Christ is the author and king over creation. He is emphasizing who he is and what he has done.

[17:42] Now the poem turns to what he is doing and how he is doing it. That is creating a new creation. And in it we see Jesus is the author and king of the new creation.

And he is the head of the body, the church. Now this, this line would seem obvious, you'd like to think anyway. But in history, we've had popes, kings, and government become the head of the church.

Do not think we're no less likely today, as I'm sure most of you are aware, history has a tendency of repeating itself. We must guard Christ's position.

No state, no king, no authority, other than Jesus must rule his church. This is a serious subject that has been raised in the last year.

Articles upon articles have been written. And in the past, this very topic was discussed and thought through loads by great men like Luther, Calvin, or the persecuted French Calvinists, the Huguenots, writing a large treaty on this.

[18:56] In fact, this is a particularly important tradition of thought, especially in Scotland. You mightn't have known that. It's called a Protestant resistance theory. By such people as John Knox, James Buchanan, and Samuel Rutherford.

Now, whose thoughts went on to have massive influence on the founding fathers in the formation of the United States of America. In the free church, there is a great tradition of not allowing lords, lords, or government to usurp the place of Jesus.

In fact, that is how the free church came into existence. And a tradition that deeply moved me to join the free church. It is something we must always be on our guard against.

We cannot let anyone or anything take Christ's place as head over his church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Paul is now narrowing down into something smaller than the cosmic that was presented before us. But it is a great creation.

[20:08] And like before, he is supreme or preeminent. He's first. The God that created the universe creates a new one. The church is the new creation and the new humanity of which Jesus, like before, is the author and king.

The same Jesus that created the cosmos now creates the living body of believers, the church. It's incredible, isn't it?

You think about that very well. We talk about the big bang and, you know, the power of the four units, you know, gravity and time and all these combined into one suddenly coming apart and become, you know, creating the big bang.

We think about that power and that magnitude. Is now at work in you. It's mind blowing.

That same power is now being turned to work at you, to turn you into a new creation. It's incredible. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

[21:19] Now, Shia Lynn, the same rapper, continues, the son of man, 100% humanity. The mind stretches to understand how can it be. You've got to see what he does.

Becoming what he wasn't while never ceasing to be what he was. By faith we believe this amazing Jesus who made Uranus and Venus became a fetus.

It's such a secret that few, if anybody knew it, months later, he's covered in amniotic fluid. The cosmic Christ becomes man. The God that created the universe becomes one of us.

As Hebrews 4.15 says, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus became one of us. And now, this has blown my mind in the last wee while, the more I think about it.

[22 : 19] Because we often can say, oh, Jesus was one of us and he was without sin. And yeah, isn't that grace? But we all, great, but we subtly think, yeah, but he was God.

So he did have a wee bit of an advantage. And we minimise Jesus' suffering. We minimise what Jesus truly went through.

But when Jesus suffered, he suffered in 100% humanity. He suffered like one of us. He truly does know our pain and our suffering.

Also, one of the common criticisms of Christianity is it's just a myth. But this letter was written in the same lifetime as the apostles and first church.

It is a clear, it is a clear dramatic statement that they viewed Jesus as God right from the beginning. There's no time for myths to come about.

[23 : 23] People who knew Jesus and saw him crucified or grew up with him were still alive. Myths usually take, on average, 200 to 300 years to create and snowball.

Or at least that's what some academics said. The church knew this right from the beginning. There is no building up of this divinity of Jesus, this divinity myth.

From the first generation, from the first believers, they believed Jesus was God. The Jesus that had the power to create the universe and is now with that very power reconciling us to himself.

Again, drink that all in. All that power and it's on you. Jesus is fulfilling the purpose of the Father.

It was the Father's desire that Jesus should get the reward and glory for saving us. And not only us, Christ reconciles the universe, the new creation, which, if your faith is in Christ, you are a part of.

[24 : 54] And he does it. And he does it as one of us. And he does it with his own blood. No army, no sword, no ordering of others, but sacrificing himself.

Sometimes I don't think we... We don't see the scandal of the cross.

That someone could come with all the sins of the world. Someone like Stalin. Someone like Mao. Realize what they've done. And go, there's no way I can be saved. There's no way it can be as... There's no way it can be as simple as just put your faith in Christ. But it is. It's that simple. And it's that profound.

[25 : 56] That's how scandalous this is. There's no... There's no... There's no period of penance. There's nothing. Jesus did it all.

As the old hymn goes. We were saved by him. We were redeemed. But as...

An author called Nancy Percy said... Redemption is not just about being saved from something. But to something.

Redemption is not just about being saved from something. But to something. We return to our original work. That of the fulfilling of the cultural mandate.

Now if you've never heard of it. That comes from Genesis 1.28. Be fruitful and multiply. And fill the earth and subdue it. Now this is nothing more than a command.

[26 : 54] To make cultures. In John 1. Harking back to Genesis. Again we read that. In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him. And without him. Was not anything made that was made. Jesus is the very author of life. And all reality.

And therefore we have a responsibility. To conform it back. To our king. Every area of your life. How you vote on the 6th of May. How you raise your kids.

How you treat your wife. Or your husband. Or your in-laws. Or your neighbours. How you manage your finances. What's your view of your economy.

What's your view of art. What's your view of art. And literature. Is Jesus your authority. Which you view the world through.

[27 : 54] World through. Do you vote. Work. Educate your children. In light of this. Are there areas in your life. That we are consciously.

Because it's easier. Or unconsciously. Allowing to take Christ's place. As author.

As creator. And as supreme authority. Is Christ. The supreme authority. Over all things. In your life. Amen.

Let's pray. Our father in heaven. Help us marvel at Jesus. Help us marvel at the scandal of the cross. Help us marvel at.

At your power. And your authority. That at your largest. You rule over the cosmos. You rule over the universe. You rule over all existence. And Lord at the smallest.

[28 : 53] You're holding atoms together. And in that great. And that small. You would even care about us. That you would care. About what we think.

And what we feel. Father. Help us. To marvel. At your son. Help us to see.

All of our world. Through your son. Help us always give you the glory. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.