

Christ Preeminent

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Date: 13 September 2026

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0:00] Well, if you would please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of Colossians. We're continuing our series through the book of Colossians this morning, and we have come to what is one of the most precious passages in all of the New Testament.

And I do not say that lightly. It's Colossians 1 verses 15 through 23. Colossians 1 verses 15 through 23.

And when you found that, let's stand together in honor of the reading of the word of God.

Colossians 1 verses 15 through 23. Paul says of Jesus, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

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. And he is the head of the body, the church.

[1:12] He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

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

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.

Grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father God, we praise you for this glorious passage on the beauty and the worth of Christ Jesus.

And we simply pray, Lord, would you open our eyes so that we can really see and behold the worth of Christ this morning. Be satisfied in him and worship him as he deserves.

[2:29] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. How do you defend against the infection of false teaching?

I was recently speaking with somebody who was preparing to send their oldest daughter off to college in just a few years. They had a little bit of time, but they were preparing and thinking well about that.

And wisely, she wanted to help prepare her for the many ways that the enemy might seek to deceive her once she left that protective bubble.

And so she asked me, and there was another pastor who was there with me, what can we do?

What are some tools? Maybe some good books. Maybe some good apologetics resources. I mean, how in the world can she be prepared to fight against all those different forms and variations of false doctrine that are out there?

There's no way. There's just not enough time in the short window that we have for me to equip my daughter to be prepared to be an expert on all the lies of Islam. Or to be an expert on all the lies of the Mormons who claim to be Christians.

[3:37] Or all the lies when the Jehovah's Witnesses come and knock on your door. How can she possibly be prepared to answer all of the many things that she might hear once she leaves this bubble of the home?

I think that she was surprised by the answer that we gave her because almost in unison, my friend and I both together told her, you know, you don't have to be an expert on every strain of false teaching in order to hold fast to the truth.

The number one most important thing you can do to resist the lies of the enemy is to cling tightly to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The number one thing you can do, sure, there's a place and there's a time, there's good that can be had from educating yourself. But the number one way that you can fortify your defenses against the attacks of the enemy is to know and to treasure the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here in Colossae, the Colossian church, the body is fighting the infection of false teaching. And the antidote that the Apostle Paul gives them is this incredible passage on the glory of Jesus Christ.

[4:59] These eight verses, 15 through 23, are absolutely bursting at the seams with the worth and the beauty and the sufficiency of Jesus.

Every phrase here is like an injection of white blood cells into the body to help them to fight off the infection of false teaching there in Colossae.

And so Paul, this morning, he's showing us who Jesus is. He wants us to have this big view of who Jesus is so that we won't want to take our eyes off of him for even a moment.

So this will be our outline this morning. We have three answers to that question, who is Jesus?

Three answers to the question, who is Jesus? First, Paul tells us this Jesus is the God of all creation.

Jesus Christ is the God of all creation. We see this in verses 15 through 17. And notice it's not just creation. It is all creation.

[6:00] Did you hear that word all repeated over and over and over again in the passage? All, all, all. That word all or every, it shows up eight times in verses 15 through 20.

Eight times in just six verses. Paul wants us to understand and see that this Jesus, he rules and reigns not just over some of creation, not just over some, not just over parts, but over all.

Look there at verse 15. He says, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the image of the invisible God.

This is Genesis language, isn't it? We just heard read, Mr. Pete read for us Genesis 1, 26 and 27. It tells us that we are made in the image of God.

Human beings reflect God's glory. We reflect God's character. We reflect God's personality in a way that's unique compared to all the other creation. No other creature bears the image of God.

[7:04] We, as human beings, reflect his creativity. We reflect his beauty. We reflect his rational intelligence. We reflect his personality. We have an eternal soul given us by God.

No other created thing in all the universe bears the image of God. Every single human being. This is what gives worth to every single human being and dignity to the life of every single human being. Believer and non-believer alike. Man and woman alike. Boy and girl alike. Adult and infant alike. All of us bear the image of God. All of the religious leaders in the world bear the image of God.

Confucius and Buddha and Muhammad and Abraham and Joseph Smith. All of them bear the image of God. But Paul says there's a key difference here. Jesus not only bears the image of God in his humanity.

Jesus is the very image of God. Jesus not only bears his image. He is his image right away.

[8:10] This puts Jesus in a category all by himself. In a category above every other human. Every other religious leader. There is no greater reflection of the glory of God than we see in the person of Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews says he is the radiance of the glory of God. And the exact imprint of his nature. The exact imprint of the nature of God.

You and I can be like God in many ways. But Paul wants us to understand Jesus is not just like God. He is God. He is not just godly. He is God in the flesh.

He is not just made in his image. He is the image of the invisible God. So Jesus himself can say in John 14:9. Whoever has seen me has seen the father.

In other words church if you want to know what God is like. Look to Jesus. If you want to follow God. You must follow Jesus.

[9:16] If you want to hear from God. You listen to Jesus. If you want to love God. You must love Jesus. If you want to deny God. You deny Jesus.

Now I can't overemphasize this enough. Our view of who Jesus is matters. We need to view Jesus rightly.

Because again there are entire groups of people who claim. I am thinking here specifically of the Mormons. I am thinking here specifically of our Jehovah's Witness friends. Who claim to be

Christians.

They will tell you I am a Christian. They will knock on your door and say well I am a Christian just like you are. The Mormons in 2018 had this major rebranding effort. Where they stopped calling themselves the Mormon church.

But rather the latter day saints of Jesus Christ. And to be more closely identified with Christian churches. But the truth is.

[10 : 15] They have a completely different view of who Jesus is. Than what we see here in the pages of scripture. And if you worship a different Jesus. Then you are not a Christian.

They believe that Jesus. They get tripped up here. Where it says he is the first born of all creation. They believe that Jesus is the first to be born.

And the first created being. He is amazing. He is as close to God as you can get really. But he is a created being of God. This is not a small difference church.

This is heresy. In fact if you read your church history. You realize this is nothing new. When you study church history. You see they flow downstream.

From a man named Arius. Who was condemned as a heretic at the council of Nicaea. In 325 AD. For saying that there was a time when Jesus did not exist.

[11 : 16] And the church's response to Arius at that time. They wrote the Nicene Creed. Which we read this morning. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ. The only son of God.

Begotten from the father before all ages. God from God. Light from light. True God from true God. Begotten not made. Of the same essence as the father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation. He came down from heaven. He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit. And the virgin Mary. And was made human.

Praise God our spiritual fathers. Took this stuff seriously. Praise God that they understood. That our vision of Jesus matters.

We must insist on this church. Jesus is not a created being. Jesus is the glorious eternal creator of all.

[12 : 15] In fact you just keep reading here. And he tells us what he means by first born. Here in verse 16. It's not that he was born first. But rather he is the first born of all creation.

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. The first born is a position of preeminence.

You read three year old testament. You see this. It's a position of inheritance. It's a position that deserves the blessing. It's a position of authority. To say that Jesus is the first born of creation.

Is to say that all of it belongs to him by right. That he is the rightful ruler and owner of all creation. Why? Because he created it all.

[13 : 16] It's through Jesus. The son. Through him that the father creates all things in heaven and on earth. The sky and the sun and the moon.

The birds and the animals. It's through Jesus. Through him. That the father creates all things visible and invisible. Paul says. The oxygen in our lungs.

The air that we breathe. He created the atomic molecules that underlie all of our reality. He created the nerve endings in our fingers.

And the neural pathways in your brain. He created the microscopic life forms that you can only see under a lens in a lab. He created all of this.

It's through him even that Paul says he rules even over thrones and dominions and rulers and authorities. Meaning he rules even over this unseen spiritual realm.

[14 : 16] There is nothing. Not the angels. Not Satan. Not all the demons. Not hell itself. Nothing exists outside of the reign and rule of King Jesus.

What a comfort for us, church. And when we go through our life and it seems so chaotic and bad things happen and we face trials and we suffer.

What a comfort to know that Jesus Christ still reigns on the throne over it all. All things belong to him and in him, Paul says.

All things hold together. Which is why it is so tragically foolish to try and live your life without Jesus. If there is no Jesus, then there is no life.

If there is no Jesus, there is no universe. There is no reality without Jesus. There is no world in which we live without Jesus. There is no sunshine.

[15:18] There is no ocean. There is no breath. There is no laughter. There is no fall temperatures and pumpkin spice lattes and Sunday afternoon football without Jesus. Every single particle of our reality is held together by him.

As Hebrews says, he upholds the universe simply by the word of his power. Can you just marvel at that for a moment? This man Jesus is not just some other religious leader amongst the pack. With peers and equals and some influential guy who lived 2,000 years ago. We believe this man Jesus is God in the flesh.

It is all from him. He upholds it all. And Paul says it is all for him. All of this is for him.

It is all about him. Sometimes children ask a lot of questions. I got five of them asking me questions all the time. And they like to ask the question, why? Why?

[16:29] Why? Why? Why is the sun there? Why not here? Why is the sun that hot and not this hot? Why is the day 24 hours, not 26? I don't know. Why? Here is a cheat code for you parents.

Paul tells us that at the end of the day, at the end of every why, is the glory of King Jesus. He is the ultimate why of the universe. You wonder why human history exists?

Jesus. Why are you here? Is there a purpose for your life? Jesus is the purpose of your life. You exist for him. Why is anything here at all?

What's it all heading towards? Is there a point to all of this thing called life? Jesus is the great why of the universe. All things are from him. All things are for him.

Would you just marvel at who Jesus is? Jesus is no ordinary man. Jesus is the God of all creation.

[17:36] But not only this. Paul says second. He is also the God of redemption. Jesus is the God of redemption. We see this in verses 18 through 20.

Look there with me starting in verse 18. Paul moves from creation there at the beginning now to God's plan for creation. From creation now to redemption.

And so Paul says Jesus is the head of the body, the church. Now that can become familiar language to us if you've been in the church for any bit of time. You've heard this language that we are the body of Christ.

But can we just pause for just a moment and think about how glorious that is? Jesus, this infinitely glorious creator God who made all things, who is worthy of all praise, who is the point of all creation. This glorious God has taken it upon himself to unite himself to a people called the church. And we are so intricately connected that he can use this metaphor of a head and a body.

[18:45] How connected is your head to your body? It better be connected. There is this organic unity between Jesus and his people. This is the plan of God from before the ages began.

Paul says Jesus is the head of the body. Meaning in one sense, he is the ultimate authority of the church. Your head tells your body what to do.

As you get older, I hear it doesn't work so well all the time. It doesn't always listen. But that's how the relationship is supposed to work, right? Your head tells your body what to do. When your head tells your feet to go, they go.

And when your head tells your hands to raise up, they raise up. Jesus is the head of the church. Meaning the church takes its orders from him.

The church submits to him. We get our instructions and our marching orders from him. Not the false teachers in Colossae, Paul says.

[19:46] Not even from Paul the apostle. He has no inherent authority on his own. He speaks on behalf of the head. Not from Epaphras, your faithful pastor. He's not your ultimate authority.

His job is to bring you to Jesus. We have to remember who runs this thing called the church. It's not the Pope in Rome. It's not the influencers on social media.

It's not you. It's not me. It's not the ever-changing demands of our culture around us. We get our marching orders from the head, Jesus Christ. In another sense, to be head, it means we can't live without him.

He's the source of our life and our existence as a church. He's our authority, yes, and he's our source of life. The body has no life apart from the head.

This is biology 101. Some of you growing up on the farm learned this in many different ways early on, right? You cut off something's head, what happens? There's no life.

[20:49] And Ms. Priscilla shared a story with me last week about a so-called pastor who came to the retirement home where she plays on Sunday afternoons.

to see it, and you start to talk to other people about it and say, I want to see that.

Jesus' resurrection was the first preview of the resurrection age to come. His resurrection from the grave was proof that God was, in fact, bringing a new world to existence.

It is coming soon. He is truly reconciling to Himself all things. He is truly making all things new. It has come into the present age at the first coming of Christ, and He has promised He's coming soon to bring it in full when He comes again. But until then, the church, the redeemed, is the ongoing preview of that resurrection age to come. The church of Jesus Christ, all those who have been reconciled to God through Christ, we have been given peace with God by the blood of His cross. We have been given new resurrection life right now. We have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life right now. You know what? When the church lives joyfully under the authority of King Jesus and marvels with His big vision of who He is, we give the world around us a preview of what's to come when He returns.

We give the world a sneak peek of what's coming next. We are a living testimony of the fact that Jesus Christ is preeminent in life and in death because in Him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things. Do you see this big view of Jesus we're supposed to have?

this is a massive view of Jesus. Is your view of Jesus this big? Paul has given us the big picture. He's given us this zoomed out cosmic view of Jesus here in verses 15 through 20. But then our third and final point, and I promise I'll be briefer here. He moves from the universal to the personal. From who Jesus is in all the universe to who is Jesus to you.

[29:00] Third, who is Jesus? We see Jesus is our God. You know how when you ride an airplane and you get that view from thousands of feet up in the air and you literally are up in the clouds. You can see for miles and miles and miles this big picture view of the world.

You look down and the ground looks like it's kind of like a quilt. It's all patched together with these squares and sectioned off and little divisions. But then when you start to descend and it starts to get personal again and you start to reenter your city and you're looking for your house, aren't you? Can I see it?

And then you land, you get out of the plane, you get into your car, you drive to your neighborhood, you get into your home, you kiss your wife, you hug your kids. Verses 15 through 20 gives us the view from the sky.

Verses 21 through 23 give us the view from the ground. And here's why this is so precious. It's because this Jesus is not just a distant historical figure that we read about from 2,000 years ago. One that has little to no impact on your lives. For those who know the resurrected Jesus by faith, this is deeply personal. Because we know he has done this very work of reconciliation for you.

[30:25] Look there to verse 21. Paul says, this Jesus has created all things. All things are for him.

He has accomplished this cosmic work of reconciliation. All creation will be made new. And then he turns and looks us right in the eye. And he says, and you, and you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.

Do you remember that? Paul does. Do you remember what that was like to not have peace with God? To be alienated from him, to be his enemy? He says, and you, he has now reconciled you in his body of flesh by his death.

In order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. Christ has done this work for you, church.

He has done everything needed to present you holy and blameless before God on the last day. He has done everything needed to reconcile the greatest sinner in the world to this God who is holy, holy, holy.

[31:44] Who will by no means pardon the guilty. How? He has paid the price by his own blood at the cross. For you. What can these false teachers give you that Jesus can't?

What can they do for you that Jesus hasn't already done? He has done it. For you. You stand reconciled to God in Christ.

But there's a warning. There's a warning that we need to hear. The passage ends with a warning here in verse 23. If.

If. If. 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.

[32 : 47] You stand reconciled to God in Christ. If. You continue. In the faith. In other words.

Do not leave Jesus behind. Hold fast. To the head. Do not take your eyes.

Off of Christ. Do not do as the Colossians were tempted to do. Do not do as these false teachers are leading them to do. And start off with Jesus.

And be very excited about Jesus. And this is great. I'm in with Jesus. And then leave him behind.

And move on to bigger and better things. And think you're secure. The truth is, of course, you cannot lose your salvation.

It's impossible. If you are born again, genuinely, you cannot be unborn again. If the Holy Spirit resides in you, you can never not have the Holy Spirit residing in you.

[33 : 56] You cannot kick him out. You cannot be unborn again. You cannot unregenerate yourself. But. Paul knows that there will be some.

And there are some there in Colossae. Who give off the appearance of belonging. But who are very tempted to shift from the hope of the gospel.

There are some who may be getting a little bit bored with this preeminent Christ. And a little bit tired of all this Jesus talk. And have moved on to other things.

Maybe they made a profession of faith a long time ago. And they walked an aisle. They signed a card. They prayed a prayer. But now they're all into this new exciting teaching. And they've left the gospel behind.

Paul says, don't leave it behind. Some of you may be hearing this gospel message even for the first time this morning.

[35 : 00] And you're seeing for the first time this big glorious vision of who Christ is. He is God in the flesh. He is the only hope for your salvation. If that's you, the call of this passage is to put your faith entirely in Christ.

Meaning trust Him. And cling to Him. And love Him. And devote yourself to Him fully. That may be you for the first time this morning. But church, the call for every Christian from that moment on.

Guess what it is? Trust Him. Cling to Him fully. Love Him. Devote yourself to Him. Worship Him.

Keep your eyes fixed on Him. Don't leave Him behind. Continue in the faith. Stable and steadfast. Not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

He alone is your creator. He alone is your savior. He alone is your God. He alone is worthy of your worship.

[36 : 07] Let's pray. Father. We pray that this church would heed that call to not shift from the hope of the gospel.

Would you give us so big a view of Christ that we would not be tempted to leave Him behind.

Father, consume our hearts with the glory of Jesus.

Remind us who He is and what He's done for us. Lord, help our hearts to praise Him as He deserves and to love Him as He deserves. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.