

September 19, 2021

“Christ over All” Colossians 1:15-20

FCF: The ongoing need to see Christ over all

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Christ is over all.

(anchor) This is the first thing we need to know.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

I want to start by saying how grateful Sarah and I are to the Lord for providing our time away this summer. It was more needed than we knew. It was good to step back, reflect, recalibrate our instruments, and get some rest. Let me also add an aside of how appreciative I am to those here who stepped up and into new roles. I trust that you grew and were blessed in that.

We’re not jumping into a new series this week. The text is simply one that has been much on my mind. Its emphasis, as you’ll see, is on the absolute supremacy, pre-eminence, and ultimacy of Christ over all things. All things. And this is as surely needed today as it was then.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Colossians 1:15-20](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

In 325 A.D., some 300 bishops gathered in Nicaea, a city in NW Asia Minor, to address divisions that threatened to rend the early Church asunder. The main problem came from the teachings of a priest named Arius who held that Jesus was created, that He is not God, that “there was a time when he was not”. This was no small matter. A great deal was on the line here.

Saint Nicholas, the bishop of Myra, was in attendance. Arius’ heresy enraged him. So much so that Nicholas got up, walked over to Arius, faced him squarely, and slapped him in the face. Why? If you know his story, you know Nicholas was a faithful follower of Jesus, a heart given to mercy and justice for the poor. So he wasn’t going off half-cocked. Nicholas knew that the personhood of Jesus is vital to the Christian faith, to the very message of the gospel.

Now I’m not suggesting we should go around slapping people. But we do need to take this seriously. As much now as then. Just who is Jesus Christ? The church at Colossae was dealing with heresies, false and destructive teaching. Now you might think Paul would go after these things one by one. He doesn’t. Instead, he goes to the root. He burrows down beneath the foundation of these falsehoods and plants a theological bomb. He takes his readers to essentials, back to first things. Christ is over all. He is preeminent. This is the first thing we need to know.

How do we see this preeminence here? How does Paul set this before us? In two ways. First, in Christ’s lordship of the cosmos. And, second, in Christ’s lordship of the Church.

I. LORD OF THE COSMOS

Christ’s preeminence is clear in His lordship of the cosmos ([READ Colossians 1:15-17](#)).

A) God in the Flesh

How do we even begin to unpack this? Let’s start with this. Jesus is God in the flesh.

1. The image of the invisible God

He is “the image of the invisible God”. He is the visible manifestation of God. The nature and character of God are perfectly revealed through Christ. Think back to His earthly ministry - His miracles, His teaching, His interactions with so many people. In Him we see what God is like.

2. The firstborn of all creation

He is also “the firstborn of all creation”. Not that He has a beginning. No, not at all. This is harkening to the ancient custom of primogeniture – the family rights and rule given to a firstborn son. Which makes Christ not supreme within the creation but rather supreme over the creation.

B) Creator of All Things

So Christ is God in the flesh. And He is the creator of all things. Think back to Genesis.

1. All inclusive

(**READ Genesis 1:1**) What then is Paul saying? This is all inclusive. Christ is the Creator of all in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. The reference to the invisible realm speaks to the focus at the time on the angelic realm. Do you hear? Again, all inclusive. Nothing is left out.

2. Sweeping prepositions

Note also the sweeping prepositions. “By Him” or “in Him,” meaning nothing was made apart from Christ. “Through Him,” meaning Christ is the agent. “For Him,” meaning He is the goal.

C) Sustainer of All Things

Christ is God in the flesh, the creator of all things. And the sustainer of all things as well.

1. Preceding all

We see this in v.17 where Paul says Christ is “before” all things. Meaning that He precedes, He is eternally before all things. He is supreme over all things. There never was a time when He was not. Time has a beginning and end. But not Christ. He precedes all. Think about that.

2. Providence

Paul presses this further and says that not only do we owe our origin to Christ. We owe our ongoing existence to Him as well. Not just that He provides for us but that He sustains us. He holds us and all things together. This is not the deist vision of a great watchmaker who puts it all together and then steps back to let it run on its own. This is what is often called providence.

So who is this? Who is Jesus Christ? Who is this One born in the manger, who walked this earth, was nailed to a cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sent us His Spirit, and has assured us of His return? What is Paul saying? This is the Lord of the cosmos, of all things.

Illustration:

It’s like the wet in the Smokies. There are times when the air is so humid, the rain so constant, nothing gets dry. Even your towel. Jesus’ lordship is like that, like wet in the Smokies.

He is over every particle in your body, every star in the universe, every drop in the ocean, every moment in time and your story. He is over every headline in the news, every decision in the courts, every vote that is cast, every message in your inbox. He is over it all. No exceptions.

Application:

What do we do with this? Let's get some clarity. This was not something the early church made up. Within a mere 30 years of Jesus' resurrection, language like this was in normal vocabulary among the churches to describe Him. Which shows that there never was a time when the highest honors of the Trinity were not given to Jesus. This was known from the start.

We can know that with confidence. This is what they knew. But there's another kind of confidence that this points us towards. And that has to do with our trust in Christ, the extent to which we can rely on Him. Think with me. He is the supreme Lord over all. And, because of that, He is also our sufficient Savior. His eternal supremacy assures us of His daily sufficiency.

Put another way, if He made it all and holds it all together, then He is worthy of our trust. And not just once for all but every hour of the day, each thing through and through. To this Jesus we then can look towards and lean upon in our worries for our finances and families, our careers and our children, our culture and our health. We can trust Him in all things. Without exception.

Christ is over all. He is preeminent. This is the first, most vital, thing we need to know.

II. LORD OF THE CHURCH

For He is Lord of the cosmos. And Lord of the Church (**READ Colossians 1:18-20**).

A) Head of the Body

Again, how do we begin to unpack this? Let's start with this. He is the head of the body.

1. The body

The body – speaking to the wondrous, ongoing, and ordinary common life of the church, her shared relationship, her shared partnership, her fellowship, interdependency, and community.

2. The head

And Christ is the head – not just the source of her life but the source of her direction. He is our authority, our ruler, our sovereign king. It is His lead we follow. To Him only we bend the knee.

B) Recreator of All Things

For He is the head of the body, the Lord of the church. And the recreator of all things.

1. The beginning

He is “the beginning” – alluding to a new creation, one which again is in, through, and for Him.

2. The firstborn from the dead

He is “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” – the resurrection and the life, the founder of a new humanity, the first rising from the grave, the firstfruits guaranteeing our own rising as well.

C) Reconciler of All Things

He is head of the Body, the recreator of all things, and the reconciler of all things as well.

1. The fullness of God

The “fullness of God” dwells in Him. What an assertion! Just as in the Old Testament era with the tabernacle and the temple, Jesus embodies the presence of God. He is not a God far off but near, with us. All His qualities, all His fullness. Jesus is fully God. And God is fully in Jesus.

2. The Prince of Peace

The fullness of God dwells in Him. Which is why the reconciliation of all things comes through Him. By the rule of the Prince of Peace, all rebellion will cease. He is the agent of creation and re-creation. He heals the rift we made. How? “By the blood of his cross”. His death in space and time, taking what we deserved in full. And so now peace has come and is coming in full.

Who is this? Who is Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph and Mary’s boy? Lord of the Church.

Illustration:

How far does that lordship go? Again, it’s like wet in the Smokies. It knows no limits.

Application:

He is Lord of the Church. What do we make of this? Thinking back to the last point, we can trust in Him without any exception. But we must also yield to Him without any exemption. And how quick we are, how adept we are, how practiced we are at finding those exemptions.

This is something we need to slow down and ponder upon. Who was Paul writing to? Not the general populace of Colossae but the church in Colossae, to professing disciples of Jesus. And yet, when you consider some of the commands he spells out later in this letter, it’s pretty clear that Paul could see that their behavior undercut that claim to actually be following Jesus.

It must be Jesus’ lead we follow and His alone. It must be to Him we bend the knee. Not to our political preferences. Not to the whims of the crowd. Not to the pressure of peers. Not to the rush of our hormones. Not to convenience, pragmatics, custom or tradition. Our identity is in Jesus. Our allegiance must be to Jesus. For He is Lord of the cosmos and of the Church.

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CONCLUSION:

Think of Hurricane Ida. Ida ripped across over 1,500 miles from the Gulf Coast to the Northeast, setting records and leaving a terrible trail of destruction. Like a wild beast, Ida caused the most damage with its entrance and exit. It was one of the most well-forecast storms in recent memory. But forewarning didn’t dissipate the force as it made landfall. Its winds snapped trees and tore roofs as the floodwaters blocked roads and submerged cars. It dumped up to 2 feet of rain in some areas and brought a 7 foot storm surge. More than 1 million people in Louisiana were without power. But this too is worth noting. As it roared ashore, Ida’s force was so strong that it reversed the course of the Mississippi River where it enters the Gulf. It’s what is referred to as a “negative flow”. The Mississippi River - think of the force it would take to reverse that.

This is what Jesus does as His presence makes landfall in our lives. The river of your life, the deepest currents of your heart, will change course. Some levies will hold. Others won’t. The whole landscape will change. What and who we rely upon will change. What and who we follow will change. How can it be otherwise? Unless we’re playing games, that has to be. And if we hear this rightly, this is good news. For it’s good to know such change must and can come.

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