

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
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**March 2, 2025**  
**COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory**  
**The Preeminent Jesus**  
**Colossians 1:15-20**

Of all the questions in this world that demand an answer, none is more important than, “Who is Jesus?” Some facts about Him are almost universally accepted. He was a man who lived 2,000 years ago. He was a poor carpenter from an obscure little village called Nazareth. He lived at a time when there was no mass communication or mass transportation. He lived in a world in which there was almost no opportunity for upward mobility. His public ministry lasted only three years and culminated with His death on a Roman cross.

Yet, He changed this world. Human history is divided into two distinct periods of time: the years before Christ’s birth and the years after His birth. Billions of people around this planet will take gather in groups today to sing praises to Him, offer prayers in His name, and hear teaching from the book that is all about Him. He changed my life, and I suspect most of you would say He has changed yours, as well.

It’s safe to say there is no one like Jesus. But, why? Who is Jesus? And there may be no better passage of Scripture to succinctly answer that question than the next passage in our verse-by-verse study of the book of Colossians.

***Colossians 1:15–20***

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

Church, it doesn’t get any better than this. If you love Jesus, this passage of Scripture likely holds a special place in your heart. It’s all about Jesus. It’s all about who He is and what He does.

It’s not so easy to see in our English translations, but in the original language of the New Testament, the language and format of these verses are unlike the rest of Paul’s letter. That’s because this is widely believed to be a hymn that the early church sang in worship to Jesus. Most scholars believe there are two stanzas that have two distinct themes.

- Verses 15-18a focus on Christ’s relationship to all Created Things.
- Verses 18b-20 focus on Christ’s reconciliation of all Created Things.

So, my plan is to take the next two Sundays to look at this text through those lenses. This morning, we will consider who Christ is in relationship to all created things. Next week, we will consider Christ’s reconciliation of all things to Himself.

And before we dig in, let me give you our Big Idea.

**Big Idea: Because Jesus is who He is, He is Preeminent in everything.**

The plan and purpose of God in everything is that Jesus would be preeminent. That's exactly what verse 18 says. The word "preeminent" means "to hold the highest rank; to be supreme." Saying Jesus is preeminent in EVERYTHING means Jesus is the most important person who has ever walked the face of this earth. It means He rules over all things in the place of highest authority. It means He is worthy of glory and honor and worship in all things at all times. It means He is worthy of our devotion and obedience and surrender in all things at all times. Because He is who He is, He is preeminent in everything.

Now, let's walk through those verses and see who Jesus is and why that makes Him supreme and preeminent in and over and through everything.

## 1. JESUS IS PREEMINENT BECAUSE HE IS GOD.

### ***15 He is the image of the invisible God...***

The word "image" translates the Greek word "eikon." It's where we get the term icon. Image is a good translation of that word. It means, that which has the same form as something else. It's a word that carries 2 ideas: representation and manifestation. The context helps determine which one of those is being emphasized. For instance, that word is used to describe a coin with the image of Caesar on it. In that context, representation is being emphasized because the image on the coin was the manifestation of something that represented Caesar. It wasn't Caesar himself. It was the manifestation of Caesar's image.

But, in this context and in the context of the whole of the New Testament, Jesus came into this world as the manifestation of God Himself. What Paul is saying is that Jesus is the invisible God made visible.

- *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- *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 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'?"*
- *Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

Jesus came to this world to show us what God is like. He represents the Godhead to us as the manifestation of God among us. That's why He is called "Immanuel, God with us." If you want to know what God is like, then look to Jesus because Jesus is God. And this sets Jesus apart from anyone who has ever lived.

- Buddha isn't God.
- Confucius isn't God.
- Mohammed isn't God.
- Gandhi isn't God.
- No religious, political, military, or social leader in all of history can top that.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is God. And because He is God, He is preeminent in everything.

## 2. JESUS IS PREEMINENT BECAUSE HE IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS.

**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.**

Jehovah's Witnesses use these verses to say that Jesus isn't really God. They say the word firstborn implies that Jesus was created by God before the rest of the universe and then used Jesus to create everything else. While the term "firstborn" can refer to the timing of someone's birth, most frequently in the bible, it refers to the position, or rank, someone occupies in a family. The firstborn is the one who has the right of inheritance. He is the one who occupies the most important role in a family.

And that's what Paul is celebrating here. In Jesus, God entered creation. He took on flesh and truly became one of us without ceasing to be God. He is fully God and fully man. Just like He is the manifestation of God to represent God to us, He is the manifestation of humanity to represent us before God. The Bible refers to Jesus as the second Adam. When the first Adam sinned, all of humanity fell and forfeited the right to inherit the blessings of creation. So, Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came to earth as a Son of Man to restore our inheritance. He is the second Adam who is able to reclaim, redeem, and restore what was lost in the first Adam's sin. And, in doing so, He opens the door for everyone who trusts in Him to become children of God. We'll talk more about that next week.

And Paul is saying that Jesus is fit to occupy the most prominent and important role in all of creation, among all God's children, precisely because He is the Creator of all created things who has entered His own creation. And that in itself reveals that Jesus is God. If all created things were made by Jesus, that inherently means that Jesus isn't a created thing. He's the Creator. And, as Creator, He outranks the rest of His creation.

And this is important in the book of Colossians because one of the heresies Paul seems to be confronting in this letter is something called Gnosticism, or at least the early teachings that would become Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was a system of belief rooted in various philosophical and religious ideas. The word Gnostic comes from the Greek word "gnosis," which means "knowledge." Gnostics essentially taught that the suffering and evil of this world could be escaped through acquiring secret, divine knowledge.

Some components of Gnostic teaching were:

- Dualism: The belief that the spiritual realm is inherently good, and the material world is inherently evil. They believed in many gods and that the one who created this world was an imperfect being who is not the true God.
- Docetism: Says that Jesus was not truly human but simply appeared to be human. They thought if Jesus really became a flesh and blood human, He would be inherently evil as part of the material world.
- Asceticism: Was the strict self-discipline and the denial of physical pleasure. This stemmed from the belief that the physical world is inherently evil.

Paul directly addresses some of that in chapter 2, but he is laying a foundation here at the start that confronts the heresies within Gnosticism. The material world is not inherently evil. It was made to be good by the One and only holy God. That God entered into His own creation in the person of Jesus. He really is fully man, and He really is fully God. As such, Jesus ranks above all created things as the firstborn, the One to whom it all belongs.

And before we move on, just think about the impact of this on our lives.

- Do you live like everything belongs to Jesus?
- What are the things you really think belong to you? Your time? Your dreams? Your future?
- Verse 16 says that everything was made for Him. Everything exists to bring Jesus glory and honor and worship. Is that the desire of your heart?

Let me challenge you to do something. Think about something that has occupied your thoughts this week. Whatever it is...a family member, a life decision, a health issue, a project at work...it can be anything. What would change about your approach to it if believed it all belongs to Jesus and is made to display His glory?

### 3. JESUS IS PREEMINENT BECAUSE HE IS THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS.

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

Jesus didn't simply create all things; He holds all things together. Can you guess what all things is referring to? All things. Think of something. Anything. Jesus is holding that together.

Every molecule is held together by the active power of Jesus. There are an estimated 30 trillion cells in the average human body. And Jesus holds them all together. There are 8 billion people on planet earth. And Jesus holds them all together. The sun at the center of our solar system produces the energy of 15 billion thermonuclear bombs every second. And Jesus holds it all together. Scientists estimate there are between 100 and 400 billion stars like our sun that are part of our Milky Way galaxy. And Jesus holds them all together. There are an estimated 100 billion to 2 trillion galaxies like our Milky Way. And Jesus holds them all together.

I literally can't do two things at once. I can't order at a drive through window while my family tells me their orders. I can't read my wife's lips as she tries to tell me something while I try to have a conversation on the phone. I can't stay on task for more than 15 minutes without having to fight distraction.

So, what in the world would make me think I'm better qualified than Jesus to keep my life from falling apart? If you were able to be truly honest with yourself this morning, you would admit that deep within your heart and scattered all around your life there is a long list of things you're trying to keep from falling apart. Listen to me friend. If a thing will be held together, it will only be held together by Jesus.

What are you trying to hold together today and what would it look like if you looked to Jesus to be the Sustainer of that thing?

### 4. JESUS IS PREEMINENT BECAUSE HE IS THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH.

#### ***18 And he is the head of the body, the church.***

As I was studying for this morning, I decided to look up the definition of this term "head" in one of my favorite Greek lexicons. I found the first entry to be rather insightful: the part of the body that contains the brain.

I'm not a smart man, but I know that brainless bodies don't live long even though they might have extended careers in congress. The head is the control center for every part of the body. It supplies instructions for life and healthy function. It's disastrous for a part of the body to lose connection with the brain.

And all those things are infused into this idea of Jesus the head of the body. He's the One in authority. He's the One in control.

And this is a great place to stop and say some things out loud. I'm not the head of this church. Jesus is. Our pastors aren't the head of this church. Jesus is. Our committees aren't the head of this church. Jesus is. Our government isn't the head of this church. Jesus is. Our culture, or our community, or public opinion aren't the head of this church. Jesus is.

And He has spoken through His word to His people. What that means is that the way we make our decisions and determine our direction is by looking to Jesus in faith and trusting in His word. And, as the day approaches when pressure and persecution increasingly try to persuade us to align with the systems of this world (like so many mainstream denominations already have), may we rejoice in our suffering and be faithful to the point of death rather deny the one who bought us with His blood. We are Christ's body. Jesus is our head...so that in everything He might be preeminent.

But what makes us think we will be faithful on that day if we are not willing on this day to say, "Jesus, your will be done in me"? What do you need to lay down in surrender to the headship of Christ and say, "Jesus, your will be done in this just like it's done in heaven?"

## 5. JESUS IS PREEMINENT BECAUSE HE IS THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD.

***18b He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.***

We will talk more about these verses next week.

But remember what we said about Jesus as the firstborn. He is the highest-ranking, most important member of His family. That term is used here in connection with His resurrection from the dead.

In other words, the death of Jesus is the most important death of any person in the family of mankind. Because in His death, He represented fallen humanity. He died in our place so that our sins could be punished by His death on the cross. Verse 20 says He made peace between us and the Father by the blood of His cross. The death of Jesus is the most important death in the history of the universe because it forever impacts the relationship between God and all of creation, especially God's people.

But it isn't just His death that is being referred to here. Paul says Jesus is the firstborn *FROM* the dead not of the dead. Jesus is the most important man to ever die because when Jesus died, He didn't stay dead. He conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave. And verse 18 says His resurrection from the dead brought about a new beginning. The God who created this world didn't throw us away when the world went wrong. He entered our world to bring about a new creation, the start of a new world, a new kind of humanity, a new eternal kingdom. Jesus rose again and His resurrection is just the beginning. One day, He will raise us from the dead and that will just be the end of the beginning when the story is just getting started.

Jesus is the God of new life and fresh starts. He's the God of forgiveness and redemption. He's the God of restoration and reconciliation. He's the God of resurrection. That's who Jesus is. And because He is who He is, He is preeminent in everything!

We'll pick up there next week. But, before we go, let's respond to the truth of God's word.

## 1. TRUST

Are you trusting in the power of Christ's life, death, and resurrection to give you a new life in Him? If you've never placed your faith and trust in Jesus, I invite you to do that today.

2. WORSHIP

Praise Him. Be amazed by Him. That might be the most practical application of these truths. Worship Jesus.

3. PRAY

Ask God to stir your heart to an ever-increasing love and wonder toward Jesus. Ask Him to give you spiritual wisdom and understand in how to better align your whole life around Jesus.