



Community Group Discussion Guide

The Preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ
September 10, 2023 | Colossians 1:15-23

MOTIVATE

Starter Questions:

- ⇒ *Knowing that the church in Colossae was being troubled by false teaching, why do you think Paul focused so intently on teaching the truth about who Jesus is and why He came?*
- ⇒ *List out all of the truths you know about Jesus. How do you know each of these to be true?*

DISCUSS

What a beautiful picture of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we see on display in this passage Paul authored in Colossians 1:15-23. Sometimes referred to as the “Colossians Christ Hymn,” we can identify the doctrine of Christology on full display throughout these verses. Christology is the study of the person, nature, and role of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of Christology is a critical element of Christian teaching and is vital for our understanding of salvation and the hope we have in the gospel.

- ⇒ *Why is an understanding of Christology so vitally important for believers?*

The main theme we see reoccurring throughout this passage is the supremacy of Christ who reigns over and sustains all creation. He is supreme over creation, head of the Church, and the Lord of redemption and reconciliation. This should both direct our attention toward worshipping Jesus and remind us of the saving work He did on the cross to reconcile us to a restored relationship with God.

Colossians 1:15-17 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.

This first section of the Colossians Christ Hymn teaches us that Jesus is the Lord of creation. He did not just take part in creation and then leave it alone. He is intimately involved in sustaining creation as well. The description of creation here parallels the wisdom we see in passages like Proverbs 8:22-31.

Paul opened this section by describing Christ as the “image” of God. With the use of this term, Paul referred to Jesus as the living manifestation of God. Jesus makes what is otherwise invisible to us, visible (see also Hebrews 1:3 and John 1:18). Paul followed up this description of Christ with the acknowledgement that He is also the “firstborn of all creation.” Paul didn’t use this term to speak of the physical realm, as if Jesus had to be created. Paul was referring to the rights and privileges of a firstborn son.

- ⇒ *Can you give an example of what Christ makes visible to us?*
- ⇒ *In biblical times, what rights and privileges did firstborn sons have?*

Paul continued his theme of Jesus being Lord over creation in verse 16, describing Jesus as both the agent of creation as well as the goal of creation. In other words, Jesus both created the earth (“by him all things were created”; “all things were created through him”) and is the point of creation (“all things were created...for him”). Because creation was created “by him” and “through him”, we are reminded that Jesus has existed from eternity past.

We also see the totality of His reign over all creation in the contrasting extremes of “heaven” and “earth, “visible” and “invisible,” and “dominions or rulers or authorities.” Because creation was created “for him” we are reminded that He is God and that His glory is the ultimate goal (see also Philippians 2:10-11).

Paul wrapped up his discussion of Jesus as Lord of creation in verse 17 by again acknowledging Jesus’ preexistence (“before all things”) as well as His sustaining role in creation (“in him all things hold together”).

What a picture of Jesus we see here as the Lord of creation. He is the agent of creation, the goal of creation, and the sustainer of creation.

- ⇒ *What is so significant about Jesus being the “image of the invisible God?”*
- ⇒ *Why is it important to understand that Jesus was the agent of creation (“by him” and “through him”)?*
- ⇒ *Likewise, why it is important to understand that Jesus was the goal of creation (“for him”)?*
- ⇒ *How does knowing that Jesus is the Lord of creation lead you to more deeply love and worship Him?*

Colossians 1:18 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.

In verse 18, we see Jesus is the head of the Church as Paul alluded to the picture of the Church that is described more fully throughout 1 Corinthians 12. This builds on the previous verses, showing that Jesus is not just Lord of physical creation, but also over spiritual creation. When Paul described Christ as head of the Church, he was showing that Christ is the leader of the Church and that Christ is the sustainer of the Church. Paul goes on to again describe Christ’s superiority by referring to Him as:

- “The beginning” which alludes to creation in Genesis 1:1.
- “The firstborn from the dead” which alludes to Christ’s death and resurrection in anticipation of His coming full and final reign (see also Colossians 3:1-4).

All of this gives us a picture of what our response should be given that Christ is head of the Church. We should follow His lead in submission, obedience, and service to the Church.

- ⇒ *Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-20. How does this help us understand our role within the Church, in light of Christ being described as “head of the body?”*
- ⇒ *What is the significance of Jesus being both the “beginning” and “the firstborn from the dead?”*
- ⇒ *Jesus is described as being “preeminent” which means He has first place in everything. What implications does this have for the way we live?*

Colossians 1:19-20 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.

Having established Christ as the Lord of creation and the Church, Paul now shifts toward the work that Christ did, and how this makes Him the Lord of redemption and reconciliation.

In verse 19, Paul said that “all the fullness of God was please to dwell” in Jesus. This statement affirms that Jesus is fully God. It gives us a glimpse of the Trinity, in that God is three persons in one. Paul reiterated this same idea in Colossians 2:9 where he wrote that “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” in Jesus. The fullness language in both verses recalls imagery from the Old Testament in which God is described as filling the temple with His presence (Ezekiel 44:4).

Paul continued in verse 20 by pointing to the work Christ accomplished because He was both fully God and fully man. Because of this and the work of the cross, Jesus has “reconciled” believers to God, and made peace by defeating the destruction of the enemies of God.

- ⇒ *Why is it so important to understand that Jesus was both fully God and fully man? What are the implications if one or both were not true?*
- ⇒ *Why was the work Jesus did on the cross only possible because He was both fully God and fully man?*
- ⇒ *What is the encouragement to believers knowing that Jesus has reconciled everything to Himself?*
- ⇒ *How does this result in a peace for those that trust in Him?*

Colossians 1:21-23 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 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, 23 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.

Paul continued the theme of reconciliation and redemption by describing how Jesus reconciled the Church to God. In this section, we see the contrast between the pre-Christian and post-Christian status of believers in the language Paul used of “once were” and “has now.” Paul showed us that before Christ’s work on the cross, we were “alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.” Since Christ reconciled us through His death on the cross, we are now presented “holy and blameless and above reproach.” Paul’s wording here is similar to the language used in the Old Testament to describe the unblemished animals priests would bring for sacrifices to God.

Paul closed this section in verse 23 by expressing his confidence that the Colossians will continue steadfastly in their faith. The “if” used here by Paul is not one of doubt, but conveys the idea that Paul was confident that true believers in Christ will no doubt continue in their faith. This is similar to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:24-27 about those who build their house on the sand or the rock. Paul reiterated that for those who build their house on the rock (Jesus), they will remain “stable and steadfast” and have eternal hope in the gospel.

- ⇒ *According to Paul, what did our lives look like before becoming Christians?*
- ⇒ *How is our identity changed as a result of Jesus death on the cross?*

- *Why was his death necessary for this to be possible?*
- *Read Matthew 7:24-27. What does it look like to remain stable and steadfast in our faith?*

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application:

The church in Colossae was not dissimilar to the church today. There are still false teachers arguing that God did not come to earth in bodily form, that God did not create the earth, that Christ was not the Son of God, and the Christ is not the source of salvation. However, Paul refutes each of these claims both for the instruction of the church in Colossae, as well as for the instruction of the church today. Paul affirms that Jesus was God who came to earth in bodily form, created the earth, was the Son of God, and is the source of salvation. These truths allows us to be confident in our faith, knowing that Jesus has reconciled believers to Himself and restored our relationship with the Father.

- ⇒ *Consider how this passage reminds us of one of Henderson Hill's values: Life-Giving Hope: We reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ with delight by building relationships and environments infused with grace and joy.*
- ⇒ *Discuss the following quote, "The urgency of our mission is determined by the authority of Christ, due to humanity's need for Christ, and ultimately, for the glory of Christ."*
- ⇒ *How does this encourage you as you seek to "live sent?"*

2. Pray: Thank God that He has reconciled us to Himself through His Son. Pray that our hearts would be drawn toward worshipping Jesus, knowing that He is the Lord of Creation, the Church, and redemption. Ask God to lead you to tell others about Jesus, knowing that He is preeminent in all things, and is the hope for the world.

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *ESV Study Bible*, pages 2294 – 2295.
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pages 318 – 320.
- *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Colossians and Philemon*, pages 28 – 41.
- *NIV Life Application Study Bible*, page 2008.