



Christ Above All (Colossians 1:15-19)

If someone asked, "Who IS Jesus?" What would you tell them? Where would you point them? Today we discover the incredible identity of Jesus that will help us see why He is CHRIST OVER ALL.

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teachingnotes

* All Scripture is from CSB (Christian Standard Bible) unless otherwise noted.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

❖ **"image of the invisible God"** This same Greek term for **image** is used when referring to the stamped portrait of Tiberius Caesar on first-century coins (e.g., Mat 22:20, Mk 12:16, Lk 20:24).¹

The Old and New Testament teach that no one has ever seen God. Consequently, God's people were commanded to NEVER to form a statue or coin to represent His image (Ex 20:4). While God told Moses to put cherubim (angels) on **the Ark of the Covenant**, he was to leave a blank space in between for the "mercy seat", but NO IMAGE OF GOD (Ex 25:18-22).



John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. The one and **only Son, who is himself God** and is at the Father's side —**he has revealed him**.

The God who has never been seen by human eyes, *is seen* in Jesus. **"He is the image of the invisible God"**.

❖ **"the firstborn over all creation"** What's THAT mean?

🕒 This is one of the first passages that a Jehovah's Witness will twist to try to dilute the deity of Jesus. They take that to mean that Jesus is 'first created' by "Jehovah" (*Yahweh* is God's true name). In fact, they teach that Jesus was first known CREATED as Michael, the Archangel.² (This is not found in the Scriptures.) This is actually a very old heresy (false teaching) by **Arius** (about 250 years after Paul).

☀️ **Arius** pastored a church in Alexandria and claimed "there was a time when the Son was not".³ By this he meant that Jesus was the most highly exalted of all created beings.

• **Alexander**, the bishop (of Alexandria), declared Arius a heretic in a local council in 321, & Arius was excommunicated.⁴ Arius left for Palestine and continued to teach that Jesus was a created being, and therefore not equal with the Father.

• **Council of Nicea** (A.D. 325) a group of 318 bishops from all over the empire gathered to discuss the teaching of Arius in Nicea. Arius argued that Jesus was not God, but the most exalted creation of God. Arius was banished and the **Nicene Creed** - signed by all but Arius and 2 bishops.

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 117.

² **Michael the Great Prince—Who Is He?** The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom—1984, 26. (<https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1984927#h=1>) "For many years Jehovah's Witnesses have taught that Michael is a heavenly name for the only-begotten Son of God, who was named Jesus while on earth."

³ James White, *What Really Happened at Nicea?* <http://www.equip.org/articles/what-really-happened-at-nicea/>

⁴ Ibid.

...But as for those who say, **There was when He was not**, and, **Before being born He was not**, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change - these the Catholic [meaning "universal", not Roman Catholic] and apostolic Church anathematizes [accursed and kicked out].⁵

- 👉 The early church did not believe that Paul intended "firstborn" to mean "first created". In fact, Paul could have used a word to mean just that (Greek *prōtoktistos* "first created"), but did not.⁶

Firstborn does not always refer to the one BORN FIRST, but to one who is in authority over others.

Psalm 89:27 I will also make him my **firstborn**, greatest of the kings of the earth.

David wasn't even the **firstborn** in his family! Chronologically, he was the LAST BORN (1 Sam 16:3-13). **Firstborn** isn't referring to **birth order** but to **supremacy over all others - the One to whom all others must submit to**.

Jesus is Large and In Charge!

Colossians 1:15-16 ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For **everything was created by him**, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— **all things have been created through him and for him**.

Think about the significance of the statement. **Genesis 1** states:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning **God created the heavens and the earth**.

Yet Paul, a Jew who believed the Old Testament scriptures, states that **all things** were **created by him** [Jesus].

❓ So WHO created all things - God or Jesus? **God created all things & Jesus is God!**

Jesus created **everything** in the universe - **heaven and on earth**, what is **visible** (stuff we see - e.g. trees) and **invisible** (stuff we don't see - e.g. oxygen). He created the sun, planets, moons, and stars.

Consider the size of the solar system, galaxy, and universe.⁷ Let's start with our Solar System.

- Our sun hold 1.3 million planets the size of earth inside it.
- The star *Betelgeuse* has a diameter of 100 million miles, which is larger than the earth's entire orbit around the sun.
- It takes sunlight, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, about 8.5 minutes to reach earth. Yet that same light would take more than 4 years to reach the nearest star, *Alpha Centauri*, some 24 trillion miles from earth.
- The Milky Way, contains hundreds of billions of stars, 1 galaxy among millions, or even billions of galaxies.
- What astronomers can see leads them to estimate the number of stars in the universe at 10²⁵, a similar estimate to the number of all the grains of sand on all the world's beaches.
- Jesus also created our incredible **earth** and everything on it - the plants, animals, humans, and all the fine tuned elements within it that allow us to live (water, the atmosphere we breathe, the temperatures we can live in, our gravitational force, oceans with tides impacted by moon...and over 100 fine-tuned designs that MUST EXIST for us to EXIST.

Paul also writes that Jesus created **thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - visible** kingdoms on earth and in the **invisible** authority of angels including those angels who rebelled and now stand against him, including Satan. **ALL thrones, dominions, rulers, & authorities...are UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THEIR CREATOR = JESUS!**

All things have been created through him and FOR him! Can you IMAGINE that claim being made about us?

Colossians 1:17-19 ¹⁷ He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, **so that he might come to have first place in everything**. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

❖ **He is before all things.** Jesus existed before anything. **Dr. RC Sproul** used to say something like this: *Jesus is not only God over everything, He is also God over nothing...* because NO MATERIAL THING - no time, matter, or space existed until He made it. He was still God when no universe and no person existed.

⁵ http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/creed_of_nicaea_325.htm

⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Colossians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 46.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

❖ **By him all things hold together.** Jesus is the GLUE that makes the universe “a cosmos instead of a chaos.”⁸ He created all the complexities of gravity, fusion, ocean tides, rain, photosynthesis and more. Jesus created all things and causes all that to continue to **hold together**...but what if He decided to turn off oxygen right now? Or what if the orbit of the Earth was suddenly disrupted and we began to spin off further and further...or closer and closer to the sun? Friendships, families, marriages are held together by Him.

❖ **He is also the head of the church.** HE is the authority over us. What Jesus says goes, regardless of cultural pressure that we face.

❖ **He is the firstborn from the dead.** Jesus is not the 1st to resurrect - remember Lazarus and several others? But Jesus IS the 1st to resurrect with an immortal body. Lazarus died again. Jesus never did. One day, everyone who followed Jesus will gain an immortal body like Jesus. But **HE is the firstborn from the dead.**

❖ **He might come to have first place in everything.** Paul's point is clear - **CHRIST OVER ALL!** The Creator put on skin, lived a pure life, and died a brutal death....for us! He should have 1st place in all things! He is WORTHY!

❖ **God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.** As should be obvious by now, Jesus is NOT a created being, an exalted angel nor exceptional human. Jesus is God the Son -

God from God, light from light, true God from true God...begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth

❓ **BIG QUESTION: You were made for HIS [JESUS] GLORY. Are you fulfilling your job description?**

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heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help?...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives:** Steve & Debbie Bass (673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (973-0047), Jere & Darlene Burnette (673-1888), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (673-1387), Jim & Derita Pinkard (229-834-4307), & Fain & Linda Poppell (464-1282).

discussionquestions

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. Read back through today's teaching passage - **Colossians 1:15-19**. Take your time walking through the text and share what most challenged or surprised you from today's teaching. What do you need to do to apply God's Word to your life this week?
2. **Read John 1:18**. How has Jesus revealed God to us? What are some evidences that Jesus is **himself God**?
3. If someone asked you to explain who Jesus is to them, how might this help? How would you respond to the Jehovah's Witness who says, "Jesus is the firstborn, meaning first created"?
4. Name 2 people you have been praying for this week, that they might grow in knowledge & obedience to God. How is that impacting your prayer life and desire to see yourself grow to maturity? As anyone praying for YOU? If not, who might you ask to pray for you that way?
5. Share other prayer needs and lift one another up right now.