

For the last 5 or so years I've worn a bracelet around my right arm that says, "I am Second." It has been a fascinating conversation starter. It confuses our culture.

This past week I was donating blood, and the nurse was taking my pulse, and she grabbed my I am second bracelet and started trying to spin it around. I asked her what she was doing. And she said, I was looking for the rest of what it said. I thought it was going to say, "I am second to none."

Many in our overly competitive culture ask, "Why does your bracelet say I am second. Don't you want to be first?" And I always say, well I may want to be first in a lot of things, but this bracelet reminds me that God is first in everything, so I am second. It's a call to my rightful place in relation to God. It's a call to humility. It's a reminder of my humanity. It's a reminder that Jesus is first in all of life.

[Transition] - Our text today is a clear of a statement about why I am second, and why you are second...and why Jesus is first...he surpasses everything and everyone...he is preeminent. Today's text tells us why. Turn in your Bibles to Colossians 1.

Before we unpack them, I want you to know these verses are a kind of poetical hymn to Christ. It was developed to help reaffirm several powerful affirmations about Jesus and clearly differentiate the truth claims of Christianity in contrast to all the other worldviews, philosophies, and religions of the day. Truth matters. This is why this study is still so important for us today. And these truths became a regular part of the early church worship language.

The first thing we learn about Jesus is he reveals God to us. The first phrase in verse 15 says, "The Son is the image of the invisible God...."

1. Jesus reveals God to us.

The word used for Image here is, "Εἰκών" (our word, Icon). This is not referring to a physical replica. It's not like twins. It emphasizes likeness to and equality with the invisible God.¹

The nuance of the word, "Εἰκών," here goes beyond the idea of a simple representation of God. Instead, it carries the meaning, "**manifestation.**" When the term was used, it meant that the symbol was more than a symbol. The symbol brought with it the actual presence of the object.

Paul is saying Jesus is a "*visible expression*," of God, meaning Jesus brought God into the human sphere of understanding. The terminology is similar to Heb 1:3, where the writer states that Jesus is called the "exact representation" of God. That is, he manifested God. Jesus is *the in the flesh essence, nature, and character of God the Spirit, the visible revelation of God the Father*.

[Mirror **Illustration**]- We can understand it this way. (Use a large mirror to show my own reflection.) Our reflection in a mirror is only an image of us, but not us. Image here in this verse is pointing to more than a reflection or representation. Jesus is an exact manifestation of God.

The point is that *in Christ* the invisible God became visible. He shared the same substance as God and made God's character known in this earthly sphere of existence. The revelation of God in Christ means that you and I

¹ John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Colossians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 20.

can actually see God, even with all of our limitations.² John 14:9 Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

[Transition] - The second thing we learn about Jesus in the last half of verse one is that he is preeminent over all creation. Paul calls Jesus, "... the firstborn over all creation." - Col. 1:15b. Now, Paul's wording here can be misleading. So, I want to be clear about this.

2. Jesus is preeminent over all creation.

The Greek word "firstborn" here is used only 8 times in the Bible. Only once is it used to refer to an actual human or animal birth. So, I want you to think of the word in terms of *first in priority* rather than *first in time*.³ Most often the word was used to refer to birthright--a rite (ritual) that accorded the first son a special place in the family.

So, the purpose of the birth metaphor is to distinguish Jesus from creation, not tie him to it by placing him within creation. "Firstborn" is not suggesting Jesus was created. He was not created, but he existed before anything was created, he was before all things, even angels. Therefore, he has preeminence (meaning he surpasses all others), he has priority over, and authority over all creation. In this way it is perfectly accurate to say, "It's all about Jesus."

[Transition] - Now in verse 16 Paul begins to elaborate on why Jesus is preeminent...Read verse 16, "*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*"

² Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 215.

³ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 216.

REASONS JESUS IS PREEMINENT:

a. Jesus created it all.

- *In him* -means Jesus conceived of creation and its complexities. Creation was his idea. He engineered it. He designed it.
- *Through him* -means creation came to be through his power and ability. He is the effective agent of creation
- *For him* - This teaches us everything exists to display Jesus' glory

[Illustration] - Think about it this way...It's like an artist who produces a sculpture.

>Originally the idea and details of the sculpture come from the mind of the artist. He builds the proportions, the perspectives, the figures, and the emphases desired from the statue.

>Then, the sculpture is constructed by the artist as he and he alone can "see" it, or conceive it.

>Finally, those who admire the finished work think of the artist who imagined, planned, and accomplished the work of beauty. As long as the sculpture stands, people remember and appreciate the artist.

In the same way, Jesus is the central point of all of creation, and he rules over it. Again this is why it is perfectly accurate to say, "*It's really all about Jesus!*"

To be ultra-clear, Jesus is even preeminent over all spirit beings, "things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities." Paul wants to emphasize these spirit beings are also created by the power of Christ and conquered by the power of the cross.⁴

The cumulative effect of this catalog of powers is to emphasize the immeasurable superiority of Christ over whatever rival might, might be

⁴ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 220.

promoted by the false teachers or culture at the time.⁵ Again, it's right to say, *"It's all about Jesus."*

[Transition] - He's preeminent because it's all about him, and he's preeminent because he holds it all together. Look at verse 17. *"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."*

b. Jesus holds all things together.

"He is before all things," clearly teaches Jesus existed before anything else.

To say, "In him all things hold together" is to say, the work of creation included the continual sustaining of what was created. This means Jesus keeps things in order. He sustains all things. The creator has not forgotten the creation. He daily maintains a balance in the universe.⁶

[Illustration] -Several years ago Pastor Louie Giglio met a molecular biologist in Texas and learned some amazing details of the creation of our human bodies. The Biologist described a 'glue' that serves us in holding the cells in our bodies together; it is called Laminin.

Laminin is a protein that is part of the extracellular matrix in humans and animals. The extracellular matrix (ECM) lies outside of cells and provides support and attachment for cells inside organs (along with many other functions).

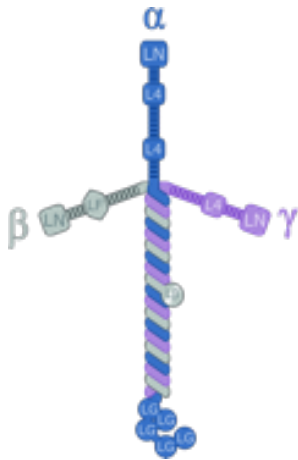
The Laminin protein has "arms" that associate with other laminin molecules to form sheets and bind to cells. Laminin and other ECM proteins essentially "glue" the cells to a foundation of connective tissue. This keeps the cells in place and allows them to function properly. The

⁵ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 220.

⁶ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 220.

structure of laminin is very important for its function (as is true for all proteins).⁷

What's interesting about this protein, when you see a diagram of it, here's what it looks like. And often with an electron microscope, it looks like the picture next to it...the protein that serves as the glue in our bodies is shaped like a cross.



In a way, it's somewhat of an oversimplification of this protein, but in light of Col. 1:17, it is kind of interesting to think about. You could say that in a way, we are held together by countless tiny crosses in our bodies. Again, it is appropriate to say, "It's all about Jesus."

[Transition] - Now, having shown us why Jesus is preeminent over all creation, in verse 18, Paul now explains Jesus is also preeminent over the new creation—meaning the re-creation of our souls, our redemption, our salvation.

Look at verse 18... *"And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."*

⁷ <https://answersingenesis.org/biology/microbiology/laminin-and-the-cross>.

3. Jesus is also preeminent over our spiritual lives.

The metaphor of the church as “the body” was common for Paul. The head, of the body is, of course, superior to the rest. Verse 18 emphasizes his priority, and prominence...within the body, his church. A body can survive without a number of different parts or organs. But it can't survive without a head.

Three Reasons why Jesus is preeminent over our spiritual lives:

a. He is the first to be resurrected.

Paul says, “He is the beginning, the first born from among the dead.” Together these emphasize the preeminence of Jesus because of his resurrection. In Christ there is a new order of existence. Life eternal. As he was raised, so shall those who follow him be raised. He was first and he shows us the way.

b. He is supreme in everything.

Jesus is supreme in everything because he is a kind of model and an integration of the two realms...creation...and also the new creation or our redemption. Jesus integrates or ties the two together in his person. He is a kind of model in that he embodied both the old order, in a physical body, and the new order, in a resurrection existence. As we have seen in these verses, both dimensions owe their existence to him, the preeminent one.⁸

[Transition] - Paul now ties it all together in verse 19-20, “*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*” Third

⁸ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 223.

reason Jesus is preeminent over our spiritual lives is because he reconciled all things to God.

c. He reconciled all things to God

“God was pleased to have all of his fullness dwell in him.” As we saw verse 15, this means that the totality of God...the full measure of deity was present in Jesus. Again, this reaffirms Jesus was completely God. Everything that God is, Jesus is. And God was pleased to take human form in Jesus. And it’s important to know that the word “dwell” is in the form that stresses an ongoing reality.⁹

In other words, Jesus was, and he continues to be fully divine.

“To reconcile all things through him,” indicates that the scope of reconciliation included the material creation in total; the animal world, humanity, and spiritual beings. It may be tempting to think of reconciliation as affecting humanity only; but these verses teach us reconciliation goes far beyond that. Paul is clear, Jesus reconciled “all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”¹⁰

To be clear; sin affected every area of creation, and the work of God in redemption extends likewise to every area of creation. Nothing lies outside the realm of Christ’s reconciling work.

“Making peace through his blood shed on the cross.” This reminds us God’s justice required sin to be punished. The blood of Jesus spilled out on the cross met the just demands of God’s holy law. He paid our debt. He died our death, so that we could live. And by shedding his blood and taking the punishment required for sin, he reconciled all sin-trashed creation with its holy and righteous creator.

⁹ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 224.

¹⁰ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 225.

He made peace possible through his shed blood. Peace brings order and harmony into what is otherwise chaotic and distorted. The reconciliation of all things, means restoring of harmony to all things, and the many dimensions of existence (“things on earth or things in heaven”).¹¹

[Conclusion] – So, now...what are the implications of these crucial truths about Jesus for our lives? First...as I’ve been reaffirming throughout the message... “It’s all about Jesus.”

1. It’s all about Jesus. Think about any area of your life...any area where you are prone to think, “That’s mine...that’s about me...that’s about what I want...your job...your marriage...your kids...your money...your future...your retirement plans. This text reminds us...it’s all about him...and what he’s doing ...and what he wants.
2. He is first and foremost in everything—in creation AND in our re-creation. He alone is worthy of all our worship.
3. It’s reasonable to trust and obey him—It stands to reason that our lives are to conform to him...cuz it’s all about him.
4. It’s reasonable to find peace and seek protection in him—he’s supreme.
5. For these reasons...since it’s all about him...I am second...you are second—just like my wrist band reminds me.

¹¹ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 227–228.