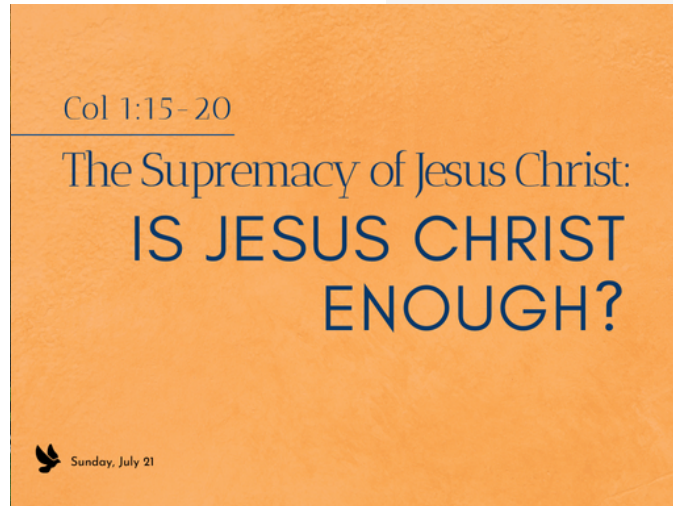


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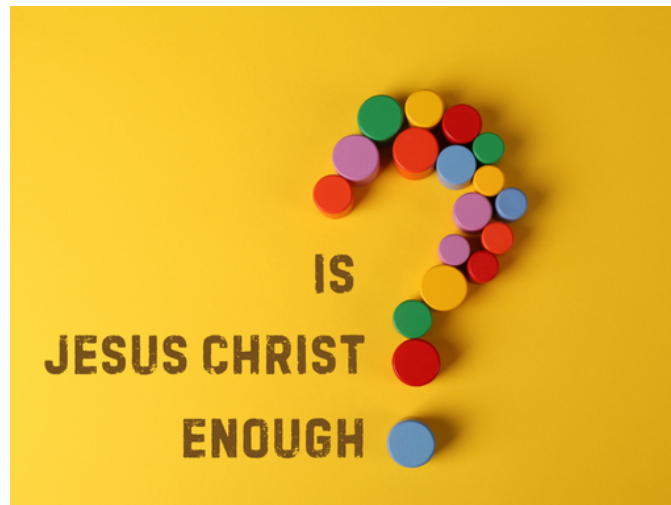
SUNDAY JULY 21, 2024
COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

PASTOR DUANE MILLER

THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS CHRIST: IS JESUS CHRIST ENOUGH?



We are going to read the **verses 15-20**, and as we read this ask yourself the question, “Is Jesus Christ enough?”.



If you have an eye for literature, you may have noticed that these verses are poetry. Some think that this may have been a 1st Century hymn, although there is no evidence for that.

Paul is the author, sometime between 59-61 AD he wrote this letter while he was on house arrest in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar. This letter appears to be in response to some things he has learned about the Colossian church spiritually. We don't know exactly what those things were, but from the content and themes of Paul's letter in response to what he learned about the Colossian church, it seems pretty clear that the believers in Colossae had an inadequate understanding of their identity in Christ. Identity in Christ is an understanding of who you are based on who Jesus is - that affects your understanding, perspective, behavior related to who you are and your role in this world. Again, your identity in Christ is based on your understanding of who Christ is.

The title “Christ” only applies to one person. Just like there is only one US president at a time, there is only one “Christ”. However, the “Christ” has no term limits, it is an eternal position, it never ends.

And the one who determines who bears the title “Christ” is God the Father.

Thus if your understanding of who Christ is, is less than what Christ really is, then your life in Christ will be proportionately less than what it could be.

Less purpose, less stability, less focus, less love, less service for the kingdom, less, less, less. The good news is, that we can turn the less, less, less to more, more, more by simply learning more about who Jesus really is. Which we do by studying God’s word – Colossians 1:15-20 is one such passage that helps us learn more about who Jesus is.

Verse 15 starts with the word “Christ”. This word is a title not a name. Similar would be a title like “president”, as in “President Abraham Lincoln, President Woodrow Wilson etc. It’s a title, not a name. The title “Christ” is from the Greek work “Christos” which mean the “Messiah” or “the Anointed One”. “Anointing” is a ritual that symbolically elevated a designated person and set them apart for a specific duty. Like King, Priest, prophet.. common in Old Testament.

The idea that God is the Father of Jesus kicks off new information about who God is. What is implied in the statement “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is that Jesus is God’s Son.

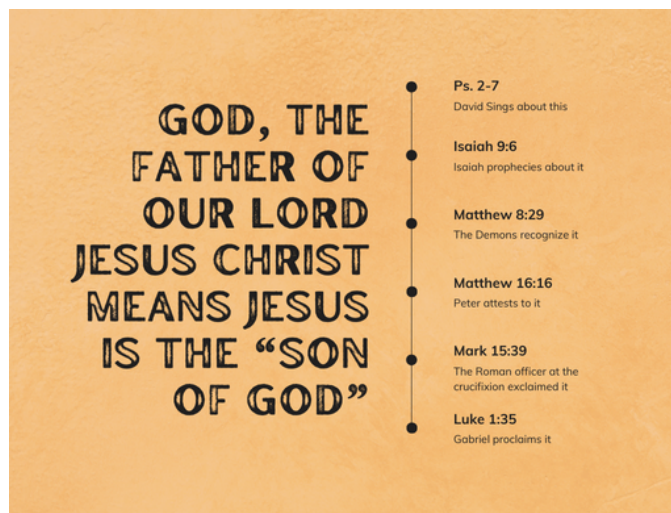


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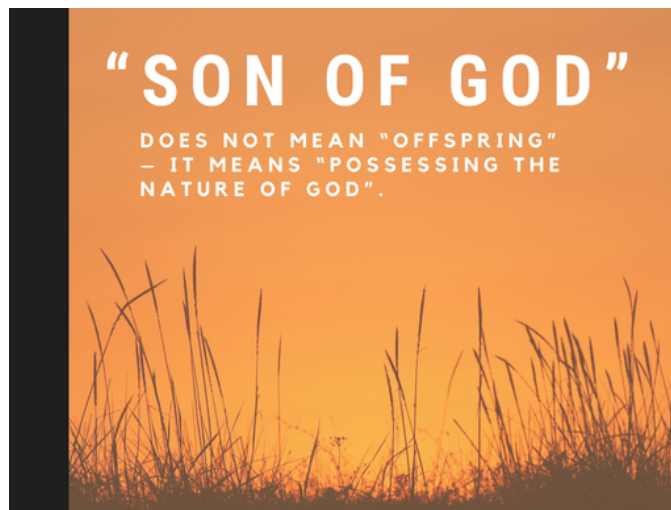
And in **verse 15** we know that the title “Christ” applies to Jesus, because Paul already said it back in **verse 3**. This verse also informs us that God is the Father of our Jesus the Christ.

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To be the Son of God meant that Jesus was God, equal to God. This is the doctrine of the deity of Christ – bedrock truth – truth that you can die for. Jesus is God.

Now the language of Father and Son is often misunderstood. The phrase “Son of God” does not mean “offspring” – it means “possessing the nature of God”.



Now with that understanding, let’s build on the word “Christ” in **verse 15**. The verse says “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.”

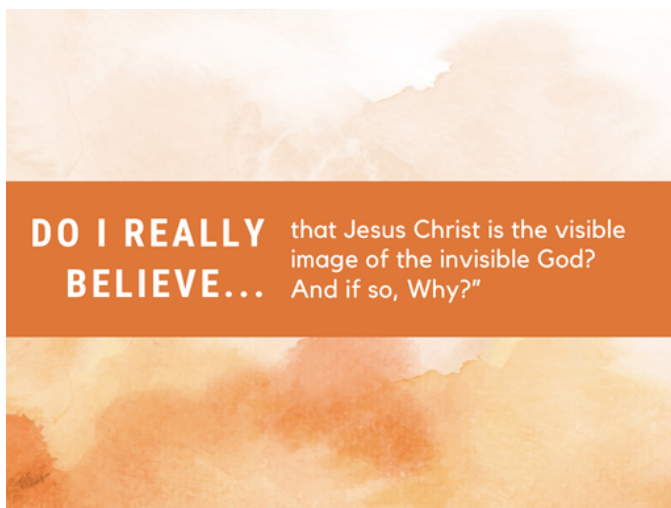
If something is “visible” it means that it can be seen, but not just “seen” it means it can be “witnessed”. So Christ was both “visible and witnessed”. We see this clearly in **1 John 1:1-3**. John and the other apostles including Paul were all witnesses to this visible Christ.

And what they witnessed was that Jesus Christ was the “visible image of the invisible God”. When you take a selfie, you may not like the selfie image, but the selfie image is undeniably you.

Likewise these witnesses all testify that Christ as the visible image of the invisible God, is undeniably God. Well how did they know? If they couldn’t see God how did they know Jesus was the “visible image of the invisible God”?

I believe through a combination of fulfilled prophecy, witnessing miraculous signs, listening to teaching from Jesus that had real authority to change lives, actually living with and walking with Jesus, seeing the love and compassion of Jesus, and seeing his self-sacrifice, and witnessing his intimate prayers with the Father, all helped them come to that conclusion.

So at the end of the first line of verse 15a we are left to answer the question for ourselves, “Do I really believe that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God? And if so, Why?”



The word “image” in **verse 15** is worthy of defining. “Image” here does not mean physical appearance. Rather the word “image” here means “his nature, his personality, his essence, his character, his thoughts, his purpose.”

“Image” in Greek means “fully manifest”.. meaning “all of God is what you see in Christ”



Colossians 2:9 supports this.

Hebrews 1:3 supports this.

So how much of the “invisible God” is represented in the “visible Christ”? All of God!

Now because I know you all ask good questions, let me preemptively answer this question “Why was God invisible?”. My answer is “I don’t know”. Some commentators like Bob Diffinbaugh think that God was invisible as not to detract from us believing that Jesus is 100% man and 100% God at the same time. You can chew on that one for the next week or so...

Colossians 1:15 continues “He existed before...” The **verse 15 NKJV** “the firstborn over all creation”.

This “firstborn” language can be confusing. “Firstborn” typically means “oldest child, first child”, first created child. Why it can’t mean that is because we already established that Jesus was God, and as God, Jesus Christ had no beginning. If he had no beginning, it means that he was not “created”. So “firstborn” doesn’t mean “oldest child” and it doesn’t mean “first created”.

Rather the word “firstborn” has to do with authority and authority structures. The Greek word used here for “firstborn” means “preeminent rank”, or “supreme ranking officer”. Think of our military, the highest ranking officer is “commander in Chief”. Paul says Jesus Christ is the “supreme commander, supreme authority”.

But “supreme authority” over what? **Verse 15** tells us “all creation”. To quote Pastor Thom, the Greek word for “all” means “all”. As in “all creation”.

So Duane, this verse is telling me that there is a “supreme ranking authority” over all creation? Everything I see and know has a supreme ranking authority? Yes.

And the fact that Christ is the “supreme ranking authority” over all creation is to your benefit. We will get to that.

In the first line of **verse 16a**..Who gets credit for creating everything? Jesus Christ! And thus as creator he has authority over all creation.

Here’s the connection between “creator” having authority over creation. If you take a lump of clay, spin it, shape it, and make it into a vase, bake it in a kiln, paint it. Can the completed vase ever change who its creator is? No! The creator of the vase is the creator.. you can never change that. And being creator gives it authority over the vase.

Some of you remember this story. This painting was painted by my oldest Son Korin when he was like 4 or 5. Sheri framed it for me for my birthday. I took it to work and hung it in my office. One day Sheri brought my son Korin in to see me at work and he walked into my office looked at the painting and said, “Dad, it's upside down!” I looked at the picture, looked at Korin, apologized and rehung it the right way.

Now wasn’t Korin the creator of the painting? Yes. As creator he knew what was up and what was down. Who was I to question the authority of the creator?

But if I had argued with my young son what was up and what was down I would have in essence been rejecting him as creator and thus as authority on his painting.

Now this gets personal. Are you a created being? If so, then by definition according to v15 you are under the supreme authority of Jesus Christ the creator. That means that if we have questions about which way is up and which way is down, we should ask Jesus Christ. It means that what Jesus Christ says about us is truth. It means that whatever Jesus Christ thinks is best for us is truth. He knows, why? Because Jesus is the creator, thus the “supreme ranking authority” over creation that includes you and I.

Verse 16 says “in the heavenly realms and on earth” Heavenly realms means, sky, sun, stars, space, universe etc. “On Earth” means trees, mountains, water, dirt, everything made from elements. Everything you can see with your naked eye, through a microscope or proven to exist by observation. **Verse 16** says God created all of that through Jesus Christ.

But the next line expands that to also include the things we can’t see. “Such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world”. The **verse 16** in the NKJV reads... “thrones, dominions, principalities and powers”. This is talking about the spiritual real.

Let's look at a few examples of Jesus' authority over both physical and spiritual realms.

1. **Mark 4:35-41** Jesus Christ "rebuked" the wind, and "calmed the waves" with his words? That's authority over the physical realm.

2. Now an example of Jesus authority over the spiritual realm. **Mark 5:2-13**

"Came out to meet them" - that's a very eastern way of presenting yourself before authority.

"no one was strong enough to subdue him"

"bowed low before him".. this is all imagery of authority and rank.

"evil spirits begged him"

This account clearly shows Jesus Christ's supreme authority over the spiritual realm.

Now back in Colossians 1 the last line of **verse 16** though adds so much more to this, it say, "everything was created through him and for him." We get the "created through him" part, but what does the "created for him" mean? It means that all creation which is under the authority of Jesus Christ has purpose. And the purpose is "for him". Have you ever wished your life had more purpose? Tired of emptiness? Meaninglessness? Well, are you a created being? Yes, so therefore from these verses Jesus Christ has "supreme authority over you, you were created for him, thus your purpose is in him, and only in him. It means that you as a created being will only have purpose in him, everything else will result in emptiness.

Romans 11:36 says it this way, "For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen."

Ephesians 2:10 adds to this... "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." "Masterpiece" has an artistic meaning behind it, in that is has a sense that we are God's "poetry". Carefully crafted for God to delight in, to be used for Him.

So in summary of **verse 16**..everything in the physical realm, and spiritual realm was created for His purpose.

Verse 17. So not only is Christ the creator, and not only is He supreme over all physical and spiritual creation, and not only is all creation created for him, but he is also "holds all creation together".. keeps everything in place, in rhythm, keeps it from flying apart, keeps it working.. he hold all creation together. I was blessed yesterday at the wedding of Brent and Jess to see that the pens they were giving out had Col 1:17 on them. I didn't even know I was teaching on this till Friday evening. God just worked that out. The application of this for marriage is that it is Jesus Christ who holds our marriages together. That's my prayer for Brent and Jess and all of you that are married.

Sometimes we tend to think of the creator like a clock maker. So the clock maker makes a clock, winds it up and it just runs... But that is only part of the picture of creation. Secular scientist have long known that "the clock" we call creation, the known world to them, would actually disassemble, fly apart, if it were not held together by some force. Secular scientist have long wondered why the known world and universe doesn't fly apart. **Verse 17** tells us what that force that "holds all creation together" is.. Jesus Christ. Picture Jesus with his arms around all of creation.. holding it together.

If you look closely at language used in verse 16 you will also notice that the spiritual realm also has an authority structure - as there are no thrones, dominions, principalities and powers without a ranking authority structure. By definition alone those things would not exist without an authority structure. This would be the realm of angels and fallen angels, including Lucifer, that are active in our world today. Angels and fallen angels are created beings, Lucifer, Satan, is a created being. Thus v16 indicates that all angels, and fallen angels and Satan are under the supreme authority of Jesus Christ as is all physical creation.



So, Paul then in **verse 18** takes all of those truths from **verse 15-17** and now applies all those truths to the Colossian church that he is writing to.

“Head of the Church” meaning “Jesus Christ is the creator of the church and the supreme authority” over the church. The church, then exists for his purpose, and is held together by him. The NT definition of “church” is those who confess that Jesus is the “Messiah”, confess that Jesus is the “Christ”, they are called out of a worldly identity to be a gathering of believers, a spiritual family, that Jesus Christ equips for his purpose. He is creator of the church, he has authority over it, he holds it together and it exists for his purpose. And we are to belong to that gathering.

The end of **verse 18b** takes it one step further. And when those believers, that are part of his spiritual family, when they die, they will rise from the dead, like Jesus did, in essence following Jesus out of the grave to glorified bodies.

So the story of creation doesn't just end with Jesus Christ being the creator and having supreme authority over all creation, and who holds all creation together, and that gives creation purpose. That's not the end.. we know that creation - us rebelled against God, the creator. We rejected him as creator, we rejected his authority, we rejected his purpose - and consequently were doomed to spiritual death - eternal damnation. How can you reject the creator and still have life? There is no life apart from the creator, only death.

Well **verse 19 and 20** summarizes God's resolution to save his creation. This is the “gospel story”, the good news of the story of Jesus coming to earth to redeem creation. When Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to earth by God the Father to redeem mankind, the “fullness of God” (**verse 20**) lived in Jesus. Jesus obediently went to the cross to pay the consequence of mankind rejecting God. The consequence of rejecting God's authority is death. Again, how can there be life apart from the creator. Jesus paid that price, the consequence for all mankind.. everyone, through his blood and death. And in that act of obedience he “reconciled everything” to God the Father. The purpose of Jesus paying the price was reconciliation to the Father - restoring what should have been. The blood of Jesus Christ, as it says in the end of **verse 20** “made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross”. Thus as Jesus rose from the dead first, (**verse 18**) those that put their faith in trust in him will also rise from the dead to eternal life with him.

So my question to you remains... Is Jesus Christ enough?

Today we saw that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

That Jesus Christ is the supreme authority over all creation, that includes you and me.
The Jesus Christ is the sustainer of life, he holds it all together.
And that Jesus Christ is the giver of purpose in life.
We also saw that Jesus Christ is in his obedience reconciled us to God, his blood on the cross.
bought our peace with God the Father.

Paul captures these truths so beautifully in **Act 17:28 NIV**

This is my witness, my testimony to you.
I know that I am a created being, created by Jesus Christ.
I know under whose name and by whose power I operate, Jesus Christ.
I know that I am sustained, held together by Jesus Christ.
I know that I only have purpose in Jesus Christ.
I know that I am reconciled to God the Father thru Jesus Christ.
I know that I have peace with God the Father thru Jesus Christ.

Is Jesus Christ enough?

Let's close with reading **Colossians 1:21-22** together. We changed the pronouns to make this a personal prayer.

This includes **me** who was once far away from God. **I** was His enemy, separated from Him by **my** evil thoughts and actions. Yet now He has reconciled **me** to Himself through the death of Christ in His physical body. As a result, He has brought **me** into His own presence, and **I** am holy and blameless as **I** stand before Him without a single fault. **Col 1:21-22**

