



SCRIPTURE:

Colossians 1:15-20

RECAP:

Our mission statement here at the church is to show Jesus as incomparably glorious. What do we mean by that? We mean that the glory Jesus possesses is beyond any comparison. He has no rival, no equal, no match, no competition. There is no measuring up to the glory Christ possesses. And our reason for existing as a church body is to show that, both here locally, and to the ends of the earth. This is why missions exist. This is why we gather to worship. This is why we pursue deeper discipleship. Because we want to see the glory of Christ, savor the glory of Christ, and show the glory of Christ.

The mission of this church isn't to be a cool place that bucks against traditions. It's not to be trendier than our sister churches. It isn't to offer you more goods and services so that you'll pick us over other options. It isn't to tell you how great you are and how you can round out your greatness by adding some Jesus to it. It's not to offer five easy steps for improving your life. No, our aim is to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:19). You see, once we were not a people, but now we are God's people. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy (1 Peter 2:20). So we gather each week to lift up Christ to you, that you might behold him in all his beauty, grandeur, greatness, and glory. We lift up Jesus in our songs, our prayers, our preaching, our teaching of kids, students, Young Adults, life groups, local and global missions, Recovery ministry, Hope Beyond Abortion...everything. Christ, and his glory, is our aim.

And here is the reality, we don't have to do anything to make him look bigger, better, or more beautiful than he really is. The role of the church isn't to put Jesus under the microscope to make him look larger than he is, as if he was some small thing. I think in a culture like ours, that is a Christ-minimizing world, we often think we have to make Jesus seem like a bigger deal than he really is so we can get the world's attention...or even just professing Christians' attention. No, we don't put Jesus under the microscope. We get the telescope out, and we look at Jesus through that. Telescopes take massively large

objects that often appear small to us, and gives us the ability to see them more for what they truly are.

Our passage today is a telescope type passage. Through this text we will get a truer picture, and clearer picture, than we often have in our minds about the beauty, glory, and greatness of Christ. The name of the message today is: **The Supremacy of Christ.**

Exegesis: Colossians 1:15-20

Before we walk through our verses today, we need to see that they follow from his words in verses 13-14. He highlights that the Father delivered them from the domain of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of his beloved Son, Jesus, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. So it is through Jesus that we are saved. His atoning work on the cross redeems us from Satan's tyranny and sin's penalty. From the work of Christ in saving us, he launches into these magisterial words about Jesus.

V 15 -- "**He**" is Jesus. Jesus "is the image of the invisible God." God is a spirit and does not have a body like us. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are invisible. That is until the Incarnation. The Incarnation is when the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, became a man. The invisible God became a visible man. And when we see Jesus, the human being born of Mary, raised in Nazareth, and crucified on a Roman cross, we are seeing the eternal God in flesh and blood.

"The firstborn of all creation." We have to discuss this statement. When it says firstborn of creation, it does not mean he is the first thing ever created in creation. This is what Mormons/ JWs like to say. The firstborn of all creation designates his status. Just like the firstborn son in the ancient world held the privileged rank, so does God's Son hold the same over all creation.

"Firstborn of creation" doesn't mean he is created. He is God, not part of what God made. When it says "of creation" it doesn't mean he is a part of it. For example: How many of you have coached your children in some sport? Many of you. When you said, "I'm the coach of my daughter's soccer team," did it mean you were one of the players running around in the blob of humans chasing the ball around?" No. Because "coach of" means "over." The coach over your daughter's soccer team. That is what Paul is referencing here. Jesus is the firstborn, the position of prominence, of (over) creation.

V 16 -- "**Him**" is still Jesus. By him, all things were created. So we are seeing that Jesus predates creation. He is eternal, and Paul clarifies (just as the disciple John does) that Jesus is the agent of creation. **All things are created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, by him, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things are created through him, and for him.** What does he mean by thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities? That Greek word for domain in verse 13 (exousias), for domain of darkness, is the same word used for "authorities" here (exousias).

These are the designations for evil powers in the world, both invisible (Satan and demons) and visible (wicked nations and leaders). Why does he mention this? It's easy to think his rule only extends to the willing. It is easy to think his rule only includes those that submit to it. No, it includes everything. This is why it shouldn't shock us to read the Gospels see Jesus calming winds and waves, turning water to wine, casting out demons, healing lepers, and raising the dead. He's over all things. There are serious implications to this for us to wrestle with, but we'll return to that later.

Why does he add "**for him**" to this? What does that mean? It means that the goal of creation is for the glory and satisfaction of the Eternal Son of God. Creation exists for him. This doesn't mean it is created for him to meet his needs, as if he lacked something. We'll see in a moment in verse 18 what it means that it exists for him.

V 17 -- "**He**" is still Jesus. He "**is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**" So we know he predates all things, but what does it mean that all things hold together in him? It means he not only brings all things into being, it means he holds everything in being. Don't miss this. It means the planet keeps spinning at just the right speed, tilted at just the right angle, at just the right proximity to the sun, because he holds it in being. It means your body's molecules and atoms continue to bond together in such a way that the thing called "you" keeps intact and existing, because he holds it together. He holds together your beating heart, your vehicle, the oxygen molecules you breathe, and the constitution of the sun with its heat. You are totally dependent upon Christ for your entire existence, and for your every moment, even if you deny his Lordship and scorn his name.

V 18 -- "**And he is the head of the body, the church.**" He is the head of the body. He is the representative head of his body, the church. He supplies for our every need. He is our help, our hope, and our righteousness. "**He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.**" Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. His death and resurrection served as the first fruits of something still to come. Notice, all of this: his being the creator, creation existing for him, his death and resurrection, is all in

service to his preeminence. This means everything exists to put his glory on display, or you might say, **"to show him as incomparably glorious."**

V 19 -- In **"him,"** Jesus, **"all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."** The Son who is now incarnate possesses the fullness of God in his person. He is fully God. Make no mistake, Jesus was fully human with a human nature. He wasn't part God and part man. He was truly a human being, just like us. But what differentiates him from any other human that has ever lived is that was simultaneously fully God. He wasn't a man that became God. He was the eternal God who became a man.

V 20 -- **"and through him,"** that is through Jesus, **"to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven."** What does it mean to reconcile to himself all things? First, it means to supply the forgiveness of sins to everyone who believes. Second, it means to defeat and disarm Satan and all human enemies from condemning God's people, and eventually casting them into outer darkness. There is a small group of people who like to quote this passage to say that all people, including Satan and demons, will one day be reconciled. This is called universalism. They say that "all things" has to mean every single thing without exception. The text doesn't claim that, and nowhere else do we see Paul (the author) make such a claim. This is just a very sloppy way of interpreting a text.

"making peace by the blood of his cross." The peace that Christ has made at the cross is he has won our peace with God. He overcame the enmity we had with God. We were enemies. He has reconciled us. We were destined for eternal destruction, children of wrath like the rest of mankind, but he reconciled us, making peace by his blood. The blood of the Savior was shed in our stead. His blood was applied over the doorframe of our life and the wrath of God passes over us. We have peace with God.

Application:

I. Find peace and reconciliation through Christ's blood.

There is only one person who makes peace with God for man. It is the one who the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and who came to reconcile us by his sacrificial death on the cross. He made atonement for our sins.

The peace we seek is found in the sacrifice made by Christ. The cross served as an altar where the Lamb of God was slain. Jesus' invitation to all who would hear his voice and

come is peace for your weary soul. Your sins are gone. Union with Christ and peace with God. Come.

II. Seek comfort in the sovereign sustaining of Christ.

Jesus is the one who is over all things. He is over all rulers, thrones, dominions, authorities. This should help us as we think about two particular things.

A. Jesus' sovereignty over evil, wickedness, hardship, afflictions. When Paul highlights that Jesus is over all these things, he is not saying it with "quotes around it" like "kind of" or "in theory." He means that the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Jesus, who is creator over all things and all the fullness of God dwells in, is supreme over even his enemies.

This could lead to questions like: Then why does Jesus allow Satan and demons to cause harm, destruction, and chaos in the world? Why does Jesus allow His bride to endure hardships?

Revelation 2:10 -- *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Notice that Jesus tells them that this is going to happen. It hasn't happened yet. But it is going to happen. Rather than stopping it or saying, "don't worry, I'm not going to let it have any effect on you." He tells them to endure to the end, even to death, and they will inherit the crown of life. Jesus says "stay faithful, even if it costs you your life, because you have something greater that awaits you."

So why does Jesus allow these things, permit these things, plan these things? It's safe to say he possesses an eternal perspective, a cosmic perspective that we don't often have. We think here and now. We think about our little life, not God's great plan. Another thing is to recognize that these things are a part of the plan, not a detour from the plan. It is through these things that Christ brings about his will. Satan, demons, and evil men are like streams of water in his hands, he turns them where he wills.

B. Jesus' sustaining of your life. He holds all things together, and that includes your life. He keeps us and sustains us. You don't have to be strong, because your Savior is for you. You may be shouldering a heavy load. You may be burdened by the weight of sin or sorrow. Lean on Christ. Turn to Christ. He will hold you fast.

III. Study to see Christ more clearly.

There are depths of knowledge that none of us have even scratched the surface of yet. You will spend eternity learning and growing in the knowledge of God and even then, you won't exhaust your study or reach the bottom. The more you grow in the knowledge of Christ, the more you should grow in your love for him, your awe of him, and your reflection of him. Read. Listen to podcasts and sermons. Take courses. Find people to converse with. Push yourself to go deeper.

I promise you, regardless of how far along you may be in comparison to your neighbor, you are still standing at the base of the mountain, and Christ is Everest.

IV. Worship the Christ who is God.

What is left for you to hear? What could possibly delay you from living your life to honor, worship, and glorify Christ. He made you, sustains you, and saves you. He alone is worthy of being preeminent in your life. Repent of any Christ-minimizing tendencies or habits. Lay down your life as a living sacrifice for the one who is the visible image of the invisible God.

Behold the glory of Jesus Christ. He has created all things. They all belong to him, and he holds them all together. He supplies everything his body, the church, needs for life and godliness. He has forgiven us of our sins by making peace through the blood of his cross. He is the firstborn from the dead and assures us one day we will rise in glory to a new heaven and new earth. All of this is so that in all things he might be preeminent. Behold your God! Glory in the God-Man. Find peace, joy, and hope in the supremacy of Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Paul mean by he is the image of the invisible God (John 4:24)?
2. What does it mean that he is the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:18, John 1:3, Psalm 89:24-28, Hebrews 1:1-3)?
3. What does it mean that all things were created by him? Through him? For him?
4. What does it mean that he is the firstborn from the dead (Romans 8:29)?
5. What did the death of Jesus achieve in verse 20 and what does that mean (Ephesians 1:7-10)?