

Summit Woods Baptist Church
First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

Colossians 1:15-20

In celebration of Christmas, Pastor Bret will spend the next couple of Sundays focusing on the Incarnation of Christ. This week we look at Colossians 1:15-20, which talks about the preeminence of Christ.

❖ Day 1

Background: “When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he was countering a clever company of false teachers who sought to replace the Colossians’ enthusiastic devotion to Christ with only a mild approval of him. They didn’t encourage anyone to forget Jesus altogether; they just said he wasn’t the only show in town. According to these false teachers, Jesus got equal billing with a vast number of emanating spirits flowing out of God. They said Jesus could be prominent, but he certainly wasn’t preeminent. In contrast, Paul—along with telling believers the truth about the gospel and pleasing God—tells us the truth about Jesus.” (Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 282–283.)

Read Colossians 1:15-20.

- ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God,
the **firstborn** of all creation.
¹⁶For 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.
¹⁷And he is before *all things*,
and in him *all things* hold together.
¹⁸And 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.
¹⁹For in him *all* the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself *all things*,
whether on earth or in heaven,
making peace by the blood of his cross.

1. In verse 15, to whom does “he” refer, and where did you find the answer? (Hint: Look at the verses preceding our passage.)

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2. IMAGE: Commonly in ancient times (long before a king could broadcast his face and voice to his subjects over the airwaves), a king would erect a statue of himself to serve as a visible reminder of his authority. Similarly, a king's image stamped into a coin served to indicate its authenticity and jurisdiction. (See Daniel 3:1-7 and Matt 22:20.)

The Scriptures repeatedly speak of Jesus as the image of God. Look up 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:3; and Colossians 2:9-10.

How do these verses help you understand what it means for Jesus to be "the image of the invisible God" (verse 15)?

3. In verses 16-17, what three evidences are given to demonstrate that Jesus is the firstborn of creation?

4. What three prepositions does Paul use in verse 16 to describe how Jesus relates to creation?

a. How does each preposition describe a different way Jesus relates to creation?

5. FIRSTBORN: 'Firstborn' often, but not always, refers to the one born first in chronology. It can also refer to one's superiority, authority, and right to rule or inherit. For example, look at Psalm 89:20, 27. There, God calls David His firstborn, even though David was neither the first son of Jesse nor the first king of Israel. Verse 27b clarifies that God was saying he would grant to David a special superiority over other kings.

How does this help you understand what it means for Christ to be "the firstborn of all creation" (verse 15) and "the firstborn from the dead" (verse 18)?

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6. Do you think “he is before all things” in verse 17 refers to time, or rank, or both? Explain.
7. Verse 17 says that “in him all things hold together.” If Jesus is holding all things together, how important does that make him?
 - a. What would happen if he stopped holding all things together?
8. If Jesus was before all things, does he need them in order for him to exist?
9. If Jesus is holding all things together, do they need him in order to exist?
10. Who is more powerful, the self-sufficient one or the dependent one?

❖ Day 2

Read Colossians 1:15-20 again.

11. Verses 18-20 describe how Jesus relates to the new/redeemed creation. Do you think “the firstborn from the dead” refers to time, or rank, or both? Explain.

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12. According to verse 18, what is the ultimate goal in all of this?

13. What does 'preeminent' mean?

14. What two reasons are given for why Jesus should be preeminent?

15. How extensive is his preeminence supposed to be, and what phrases in the passage inform your answer?

16. How did Jesus "reconcile ... all things"? (see verse 20)

17. When was Jesus' preeminence first challenged?

18. How do you see Jesus' preeminence challenged in the world around us today?

19. Will Jesus' preeminence be challenged when he completes the new creation? (see Revelation 11:15-18; 21:3-4, 22-27; 22:3-5)

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❖ Day 3

Read Colossians 1:15-20 again.

20. What effect did Paul want to have on the Colossians? (Remember that the false teachings in Colossae were challenging the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ.)

21. In what areas are you contesting Jesus' preeminence?

a. What impact should this passage have on you in these areas?

22. In what ways does this passage prompt you to praise God?

23. In what ways does this passage impact your thoughts about Jesus during this Christmas season?

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24. Fill in the blanks in the box to summarize the passage. (The first letter for each answer has been provided.)

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| <p>Passage Summary:</p> <p>Jesus' relation to God: i _____</p> <p>Jesus' relation to creation: f _____</p> <p>Justifications:</p> <p>Jesus c _____ a _____ t _____</p> <p>Jesus is b _____ a _____ t _____</p> <p>Jesus h _____ a _____ t _____ t _____</p> <p>Jesus' relation to the church: h _____</p> <p>Jesus' relation to new creation: f _____</p> <p>Justifications:</p> <p>God's f _____ d _____ in him</p> <p>Jesus has r _____ a _____ t _____ through the c _____</p> <p>Purpose: that in e _____ he might be p _____</p> |
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In preparation for Sunday, pray that Jesus would be preeminent in ourselves, our families, our church, and all of creation.