

EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Colossians 1:15-19

The Bible is **THE** book about the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The **Old Testament** records the *preparation for His coming*.
- The **Gospels** present Him as *God in human flesh*...having come into the world to *save sinners*.
- In **Romans** we have *basic Bible doctrine* given as *foundation for truth*.
- In **Acts**, the message of *salvation in Christ* begins to be *spread throughout the world*.
- The **Epistles** detail the *theology of Christ's work* and *personification of Christ* in His body...the *Church*.
- Finally, **Revelation** presents *Christ on His throne*, reigning as **King of kings** and **Lord of lords**.

Every part of Scripture testifies about Jesus Christ.

“Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

~Luke 24:27

³*“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me.”*

~John 5:39

Of all the Bible's teaching about Jesus Christ, none is more significant than **Colossians 1:15-19**. This powerful passage removes any *doubt* or *confusion* over Jesus' *true identity*. It's vital to a proper understanding of the Christian faith.

Much of the *heresy* that threatened the **Colossian** church centered on the **Person of Christ**. The heretics *denied His humanity*, viewing Christ only as one of the many *lesser spirit beings* that emanated from God. They taught a philosophical form of *dualism*...that *the spirit is good* but *matter was evil*. Therefore, the thought that Christ could ever *take on a body of evil matter*...that God Himself could *ever become man*...was absurd to them. As a result, they denied Christ's *deity*...and in turn, *denied* that Christ was adequate for *salvation*.

Now **Paul's** moves from his *prayer* and *petition* that the **Colossians** would be *enlightened* about *God's redemptive work* in their lives, to his main emphasis in writing this epistle...*the exaltation and preeminence of Christ*.

In this section, **Paul** mentions several unique characteristics of **Christ** that *qualify Him* to have **supremacy** and **sovereignty**.

The fact that Christ is:

- **The image of the invisible God.**
- **The Firstborn over creation.**
- **The Creator of the universe.**
- **Head of the Church.**
- **The Firstborn from the dead.**
- **The fullness of God.**
- **The Reconciler of all things.**

No comparable listing of so many *characteristics* of Christ and His *deity* are found in any other scriptural passage. Christ is the *supreme Sovereign* of the universe!

I. CHRIST IN RELATION TO GOD: (vs. 15)

By far...the most serious aspect of the **Colossian heresy** was its *rejection of Christ's deity*. As previously mentioned...the *heretics* viewed Jesus *as one among many lesser spirits*...all *inferior* to God. **Paul** refutes that with *two* powerful descriptions of who Jesus really is...**the image of the invisible God** and **the firstborn of all creation**.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (vs. 15)...

Image...Gk. *eikon*, besides the obvious meaning of *likeness*...implies *representation* and *manifestation*. Like the head of a sovereign imprinted on a coin (like **Caesar's** image that was on the coin in **Matthew 22:20**). so Christ is the *exact manifestation* and *representation* of the Father. We get the **English** word **icon** from it ...it refers to a *statue*.

“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature...”

~Hebrews 1:3a

“The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

~II Corinthians 4:4

As Jesus said, “...*he who has seen Me has seen the Father...*” (John 14:9). Anyone who saw Jesus, *the visible manifestation of the invisible God*, has thus seen God. Paul wrote of the *invisible God* (1 Timothy 1:17), but Christ is the perfect *visible representation* and *manifestation* of God the Father...the very *substance* or essential *embodiment* of Him.

“*Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*”
~Philippians 2:6-7

Christ is the perfect *resemblance* and *representation* of God...the *full, final, and complete representation* and *manifestation* of God.

The firstborn of all creation...While **firstborn** can mean the *first born chronologically*, it primarily refers to *position* or *rank*. Here **Firstborn** denotes *two* things of Christ:

- **He preceded the whole Creation...**His *position* as preeminent.
- **He is sovereign over all Creation...**His *rank*...Lord of all.

In the Old Testament a **first born** child not only had *priority* of birth but also the *dignity* and *superiority* that went with it (Exodus 13:2-15; Deuteronomy 21:17). When Jesus declared Himself **the First and the Last** in Revelation 1:17...He used a word that means *absolutely first*. **Firstborn** implies *sovereignty*.

So **Firstborn** implies both Christ's *priority to* all Creation (*in time*) and His *sovereignty over* all Creation (*in rank*).

II. CHRIST IN RELATION TO CREATION: (vs. 16-17)

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him (vs. 16)...

Thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities...refers to the various ranks of *angels*. The **Colossian heresy** taught that Jesus was on the same *level* or *rank* as *angels*. But Scripture is clear that Jesus isn't an *angel*...but the creator of the *angels*. He is above the *angels* ...in fact *angels* worship Him and are under His authority.

Paul gives four reasons for Jesus' preeminence over creation (3 in verse 16 and 1 in verse 17).

- **He is the Creator...**All things were created by Him. This indicates the *entire universe*...both *material* and *immaterial*. Created...Gk. *ktizo*, along with the Hebrew, *bara*, means *to constitute and establish out of nothing*.

So **in (by) Christ**, all things were *produced out of nothing that previously existed...in the heavens and on the earth (creation was in Christ from the beginning)*...all things were created through Christ...to be lifted “unto” Him (for) for His glory and praise!

“*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*”
~John 1:3

“*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*”

~Hebrews 1:1-2

Jesus is God...and **by Him**, He created the *material universe*.

- **He existed before all things...**All things have been created through Him. When the universe began...He already existed.
“*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*”
~John 1:1-3

- **All things have been created for Him.** For Him is the Greek word for “unto”...Unto Christ...Unto the Lord.

Christ isn't only the One through whom all things came to be... but also the One by whom they continue to exist.

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (vs. 17)...

- **And in Him all things are held together.** Not only did Jesus *create* the universe...He also *sustains* it. He maintains the delicate balance necessary to life's existence. He is the power behind every consistency in the universe.

“And He...upholds all things by the word of His power...”

~Hebrews 1:3b

III. CHRIST IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH: (vs. 18)

Besides being the *Lord of the universe*...He is also the **Head of the Church**.

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything (vs. 18)...

Paul presents four great truths about Christ's relation with the Church.

- **Christ is the head of the Church...the Body of Christ.**

There are *many metaphors* used in Scripture to *describe* the Church. It's called a *family*...a *kingdom*...a *vineyard*...a *flock*... a *building*...and a *bride*. But the most profound metaphor, one having no Old Testament equivalent, is that of a **Body**.

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

~Ephesians 1:22-23

“...Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

~Ephesians 5:23

This concept isn't used in the sense of the *head of a company* (CEO), but rather looks at the **Church** as a *living organism*... inseparably tied together by the living Christ. He controls every part of it and gives it *life* and *direction*. His life lived out through all the different member parts that make us the **Body**, provides *unity* of the **Body** (**I Corinthians 12:12-20**).

Christ *energizes* and *coordinates* the *diversity* within the **Body**, a *diversity of spiritual gifts* and *ministries* (**I Corinthians 12:4-13**).

- **Christ is the source of the Church...He is the beginning.**

The **Church** has its *origins* in Jesus Christ. It is He who gives *life* to His **Church**. As the *beginning*...He is its *originator*.

The reference here is to the *universal Church* into which *all believers* are baptized by the **Holy Spirit** the moment they *repent* and *trust* in Christ (**I Corinthians 12:13**; **Galatians 3:26-27**). This work of the **Holy Spirit** began on the **Day of Pentecost** (**Acts 1:5**; **Acts 2:1-2**; **Acts 11:15-16**). It's a special *body* in which there is no *distinction* or *discrimination*...

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

~Galatians 3:28

The Church is called a **mystery** in Scripture because it was never revealed to men in previous generations (**Ephesians 3:4-5**; **Colossians 1:26**).

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.”

~Romans 16:25-26

- **Christ is sovereign over the Church...The firstborn from the dead**...Christ was the first to rise in an **immortal body**. As such He is **Sovereign** and He marked His *triumph over death*.

He was the **Firstfruits** of those who *die* since, *unlike others*, He *rose never to die again*.

“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”

~I Corinthians 15:20

All others who were *awakened from their death* could best be described as having been *resuscitated*. They were *brought back to life*, but *eventually died again*.

Jesus Christ was declared with *power* to be the **Son of God** by His *resurrection from the dead*.

“...Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

~Romans 1:4

- **Christ is preeminent in everything...So that He Himself will come to have first place in everything...Christ is sovereign over all creation.**

“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

~Philippians 2:9-11

Christ reigns *supreme*...over *creation*...over His *Church*.

IV. CHRIST IN RELATION TO EVERYTHING: (vs. 19)

For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him (vs. 19)...This is one of the most powerful descriptions of Christ’s deity in all the New Testament.

Fullness...Gk. *pleroma*, means *completeness*. This is a key word used though out the **Book of Colossians**. It is a noun that is used in a wide range of things...including the **fullness of: God’s being (Ephesians 3:19)...****time (Galatians 4:4)...****grace (John 1:16).**

This *full* and *complete* **Deity** is said to **dwell in Christ**.

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.”

~Colossians 2:9-10

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Jesus Christ is God INCARNATE...the complete manifestation of God in every way.**
- **We don’t need anything but Jesus and Jesus Christ alone for SALVATION.** We don’t need angels...good works...other religions...any human effort...
- **When we are saved...all the FULLNESS OF CHRIST becomes available to us.**