

Jesus Is Everything

Colossians 1:13-23

Intro: 1) On October 1, 2006 I had the opportunity to speak at a worship service to a small group of classmates at my 30th high school class reunion. It was a happy and sad time all mixed together. It was great seeing old friends and renewing those relationships. It was heartbreaking to learn that more than 30 of my classmates were now dead, a significant number due to suicide. There were a number of tragic stories about alcohol and drug addictions, multiple divorces, broken families, children gone astray. Standing on the lawn with Stone Mountain to my back I simply told my former classmates and friends, "I now understand better than ever that Jesus Christ means everything. He loves you, he died for you, He rose from the dead, he wants to have a relationship with you. Jesus means everything. He really does make all the difference."

2) Paul had the same message for the Colossians. They, like so many in our world today, were being seduced by the deceptions and lies of the evil one. Colossae, located in the Lycus Valley in what is today modern Turkey, was being assaulted by a fusion, a blending of Greek philosophy, pagan mysticism and legalistic Judaism. A Gnostic like heresy held that matter is evil and mystic knowledge is the means of climbing a spiritual ladder for salvation to an utterly transcendent deity. How one could be rightly related to God then was blurred. Just who God is and what He is like received many different and confusing answers. Just how Jesus Christ factored into all of this was unclear. If matter is evil what do you do with creation? If matter is evil what do you do with Creator God of Gen. 1-2? If matter is evil what do you do with the incarnation? In the midst of all of

this Paul takes up his pen and in bold strokes declares, “Jesus Christ is everything! He is all you need to see God and He is all you need to get to God. In Him all the fullness of God is present and He, and He alone, has the right to be Lord over everything; and that everything includes you and that includes me.

Trans. In 5 powerful propositions Paul makes the argument why Jesus Christ is preeminent over all things and should be preeminent in your life.

I. He Is The Savior 1:13-14

- David Garland calls 1:3-23 the “thanksgiving section” (p. 64)
- 1:9-14 is a continuation of a prayer that begins in v. 3.
- Verses 13-14 prepare us for the beautiful Christ hymn of 1:15-20, and along with vs. 21-23, bracket the hymn with the theme of salvation.
- Here Paul notes 4 marvelous aspects of the salvation we have in the Christ who is everything.

1) Through Christ God delivers us 1:13

He – a reference to God the Father of v.12

Delivered – rescues, liberated, released from captivity

Power (*ESV*, “domain”) *exousia* (“authority”)

Of darkness – death, evil, the world of ethical, moral, and theological wickedness and futility.

- God through His Son invaded the enemy’s territory and set us free from his tyranny and authority. Once in a kingdom of darkness, we

now live in a kingdom of light as those who share in the inheritance of the saints (v. 12).

2) Through Christ God relocates us 1:13

Conveyed – transferred, removed from one location and setting to another.

Formally residing in the kingdom of darkness, I now have an address in the kingdom of His beloved Son (ESV).

- Today, right now, I have a new home. As Paul says in Philippians 3:20, “our citizenship is in heaven.”
- God loves His Son, and all of those who live in His kingdom are the recipients of that love as well. (cf. the Father’s words at Christ’s baptism and transfiguration). Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father.

3) Through Christ God redeems us 1:14

- In whom – a reference to the Son of v.13
- Redemption – this is the language of the slave market, of prisoners of war. It speaks of the payment of a price to secure freedom.
- We have affirms this “emancipation” is our present possession and blessing. By the blood of His cross (v. 20), I am free from the power of darkness and 4th...

4) Through Christ God forgives 1:14

- The forgiveness of sins. Only here and in Eph. 1:7 does Paul speak directly to the forgiveness of sins. Drawing upon the “New Covenant” language of Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:16-36, Paul affirms that by His

Son, God has removed our sins from us and sent them away never to bring them up again!

- In Christ I am rescued from darkness, given a home in the kingdom of the Son of God, set free from sin's slavery, and forgiven of every single sin I have or ever will commit. To all of this I can only say, "Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

II. He Is the Revealer

1:15

- Verses 15-20 constitute what I believe is an early Christian hymn. Like twin theological towers the Lordship of Jesus Christ is affirmed over Creation (vs. 15-17) and the Church (vs. 18-20). Drawing on the O.T. themes of Creation (Gen. 1) and Wisdom (Prov. 8), Paul reveals how these O.T. concepts find their climatic fulfillment and understanding in Christ. Curtis Vaughn notes, "The affirmations of the passage are all the more remarkable when we remember that they were written of One who only 30 years earlier had died on a Roman cross" (p. 36).
- In a Slate.com article entitled, "Jesus Christ: Choose Your Own Savior" (10/3/06), the author writes of the "multiple Jesuses" in the Bible as well as in various cultural perspectives. Today he claims what is in style is the "Manly Jesus," "Warrior Jesus," "Rocky Jesus." There is also the "Blue-State Jesus," and even the "Party Jesus" who turns water into wine just to keep the night rockin'. The author then concludes and notes,

“Which of these Jesuses—and the countless others that exist—is the real Jesus? In a sense, they all are. The emergence of Jesus as a computer programmer in *The Matrix* shows how he can be reinvented for any age, even the future. But in another sense, none of them is the real Jesus. He remains a mystery.

Scholars have sought out the Historical Jesus in an effort to solve the riddle. The consensus is that he was a Jew who lived between 4 B.C. and A.D. 30, that he thought the end of the world was at hand, that he was considered a healer and miracle worker (“of a sort well known in Judaism,” E.P. Sanders wrote in the *New York Review of Books*), that he used parables to teach about God and ethics, that Pontius Pilate ordered him crucified, and that his followers believed he rose from the dead. But historians can’t answer the most pressing question: Was he the Son of God?

The Historical Jesus wasn’t the Jesus who inspired Paul, the salesman of the new religion of Christianity, who never met Jesus of Nazareth. On the road to Damascus, Paul encountered the risen Jesus, the so-called **Living Jesus**, the Christ of faith. That’s the Jesus that most Christians seek to know and to understand.”

- You ask which Jesus is the real Jesus? I will tell you that is easy, it is the Jesus of the Bible. It is the Jesus of history who is Christ of faith. It is the Jesus who took Paul down on the Damascus Road and who

came into my life as a young boy. It is the Jesus Paul says in Col. 1:15 is “the image of the invisible God.”

1). He is the representation of God

Image is *eikon*, also used by Paul of Jesus in 2 Cor. 4:4. Jesus “is an exact, as well as visible, representation of God” (Garland, 87). If you like He is “the human face of God.” Andrew Sullivan may write in Time (10-09-06), “As humans, we can merely sense the existence of a higher truth, a greater coherence than ourselves, but we cannot see it face to face” (p. 60). Paul would respectfully disagree. To see Jesus is to see God. To look into the face of Jesus revealed in scripture is to look into the face of God Himself. As Jesus Himself said in John 14:9, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.”

2). He is the manifestation of God

Image (*eikon*) also conveys the idea of the outward illumination of an inner core, essence or reality. “The nature and being of God are perfectly revealed in Him.” (Vaughn, 38).

- Jesus Christ makes visible the God who is invisible. Whatever it is that makes God God, Jesus is. As God’s representation and manifestation, Jesus clears up our confused and misguided ideas about who God is and what God is like. Humans may be created in God’s image, but there is a special sense in which Jesus Christ is God’s image. He is the very person of God, the revelation of who God is and what God is like.
- John Calvin: “Christ is the image of God because He makes God visible to us. Because of this we must be careful not to seek God

elsewhere, for outside of Christ all that claims to represent God will turn out to be an idol” (p. 312).

- If God became a man we would expect Him to come miraculously. Jesus did. If God became a man we would expect Him to be sinless. Jesus is. If God became a man we would expect Him to perform miracles with ease. Jesus did. If God became a man we would expect Him to speak the greatest words ever. Jesus did. If God became a man we would expect Him to love perfectly. Jesus did. If God became a man we would expect Him to exert the most powerful influence of any person who ever lived. Jesus did.
- If you truly want to know what God is like then look to Jesus. He makes visible for all to see the invisible God.

III. He Is the Creator

1:15-17

Two key words unlock the wonderful truths of these verses:

1) Firstborn and 2) all (8x in vs. 15-20). The all encompassing nature of His Lordship over Creation could scarcely be more clear.

1) He made everything

1:15-16

- He is the firstborn over all creation. “Firstborn” (*prototokos*) is a word that can emp. chronology and priority in time as in Luke 2:7 when it says Jesus was the “firstborn” son of Mary. However, in the O.T. it is more of a title or designation expressing position or status. It has this meaning in Psalm 89:27-29 where the Psalmist says of David’s greatest son the Messiah, “And I will make him my firstborn, the

highest of the kings of the earth...His seed also I will make endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven". This is the meaning Paul has in mind. The Lord Jesus has sovereignty and supremacy over all creation. He is before them in time and above them in authority.

- Verse 16 addresses the extent and magnitude of His creative agency.

The scope is breathtaking. For by him all things...

- heaven and earth (up there and down here)
 - visible and invisible (what you see and what you don't see)
 - thrones, dominions, principalities, powers (all the heavenly host, both good angels and evil demons)
- By Him, through Him and for Him. He is creation's location, its agent and its goal. Warren Wiersbe says, "When it comes to creation, Jesus Christ is the primary cause (He planned it), the instrumental cause (he produced it), and the final cause (He did it for His own pleasure)" (p. 49).

2) He sustains everything

1:17

All things – big/little, great/small, macro/micro, complex/simple, He was before them and in Him they consist (*ESV*, "hold together"). Day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second, He maintains and sustains every galaxy, every molecule. He truly has the "whole world in His hands." H.C.G. Moule said it best, "He keeps the cosmos from becoming a chaos" (*Colossians Studies*, 1898, p. 78).

- From these verses a number of staggering realities are evident:

1. If He made everything, He, Himself cannot be creature.
2. Paul, a 1st century Jew, would only know the God of Genesis 1:1 as creator.
3. The Watchtower's *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* sees the problem and changes the Bible to fit their heretical theology. The word "other" in brackets appears five times in vs. 16-20. They change God's word to fit their theology. Do you? Do we?!
4. The spiritual world/the material world: He made them. Spiritual beings that terrorized the ancient world and fascinates the modern world: He made them. All things were made by, through and for Him. That includes you and that includes me. Everything that exists, exists for Jesus.
5. The Father is the author of creation. The Son is the architect of creation. The Spirit is the agent of creation. But it all finds its meaning and fulfillment in Jesus.

IV. He Is The Leader

1:18-20

Paul now moves from Christ's Lordship over the material creation to His Lordship over the spiritual or new creation: the church. These are enormous implications for how we view the church and how we do church.

1) Only Jesus is to have first place

1:18

Jesus Christ is first over creation because He made it.

Jesus Christ is first over the church because He saved it.

- Head – He is the sovereign over the church.

He also is the source of the church. The latter idea is confirmed by the phrase firstborn from the dead.

Jesus Christ is the first in a new order of existence: resurrection existence. As Jesus said in John 14:19, “Because I live, you will live also.”

- All of this then leads to cosmic and personal realities every one of us must weigh and consider.

All of this has a goal – that in all things He may have preeminence (1st place, the supreme position)

Jesus, not the pastor, is to be first.

Jesus, not the deacons, is to be first.

Jesus, not the choir, is to be first.

Jesus, not the youth, is to be first.

Jesus, not the wealthy, is to be first.

Jesus, not anyone, is to be first.

Jesus is not interested in being the co-pilot of your life, the runner-up of your beauty contest, the vp of your corporation.

In our worship, he is to be first.

In our witness, he is to be first.

In our work, he is to be first.

In our wants, he is to be first.

Warren Wiersbe notes a needed warning: “few would deny the importance of Jesus Christ. They would simply dethrone Him. They would give Him prominence but not preeminence.”

2) Only Jesus has the fullness of deity

1:19 (cf 2:9)

- There is an irrefutable logic to Paul’s argument. He is the head of the church. He is to be preeminent in everything. Why? Because it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness (*pleroma*) should dwell (be at home, take up residence). Col. 2:9 fills out what Paul is saying: “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” In the OT God chose a place to particularly manifest Himself, the tabernacle, the temple. Now He chooses to make Himself at home in a person, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is not just a sketch of God. He is deity all filled in. Calvin again is our helper: “Whatever God has He has conferred it upon His Son” (p. 154).
- And the great Princeton scholar B.B. Warfield captured Paul’s emphasis when he writes,

“The very Deity of God, that which makes God God, in all its completeness, has its permanent home in Our Lord, and that in a “bodily fashion,” that is, it is in Him clothed with a body. He who looks upon Jesus Christ sees, no doubt, a body and a man; but as he sees the man clothed with the body, so he sees God Himself, in

all the fullness of His Deity, clothed with the humanity.” (*P&W of Christ*, p. 46).

3) Only Jesus is fit to make reconciliation

1:20

- Paul now introduces the theme of reconciliation, a doctrine he will develop further in vs. 21-23. By Christ the Father has reconciled, (abolished disorder and established harmony) all things to Himself, by Him [inclusio]...on earth and in heaven, having made peace through the blood of the cross, by the brutal and violent death of His Son.
- This reconciliation is cosmic and universal, though its realization and experience will not be the same for all. This is not a peace treaty won applied to all without distinction. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11). However, some bow in salvation, others in judgment.
- Ill. The unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany brought an end, a cessation of the hostiles, of W.W. II in Europe. Still, a Nuremberg judgment awaited those who authored the evil that inflicted such sorrow and destruction. How one responds to the blood of Christ and His cross is the decisive factor.
 - Delorres Williams does not think this blood is important. In Nov. 1993 at “Re-imagining 1993” she said, “I don’t think we need a theory of atonement at

all...I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff.' She was joined by self-professed lesbian feminist Virginia Mollenkott who added, "I can no longer worship in a theological context that depicts God as an abusive parent and Jesus as the obedient trusting child."

- Williams in the book *Sisters in the Wilderness* (p.61) concludes, "there in nothing divine in the blood of the cross."

Contrast that with the words of William Cowper:

“There is a foundation filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”

Or the words of Lewis Jones:

“Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There’s power in the blood, power in the blood.
Would you o’er evil a victory win?
There’s wonderful power in the blood.”

V. He Is The Master

1:21-23

- Vs. 21-23 is a single sentence in the Greek text.
- Complementing vs 13-14, it allows the doctrine of salvation to bracket the doctrine of Christology, drawing together in beautiful balance the person and work of Christ.

- The Christ who is Lord of the cosmos and Lord of the church is also the Lord of every individual Christian.
- His universal work of making right the disorder and dysfunction of a world gone wrong, themes found in text like Is 11:6-9 and Rom 8:18-25, has particular application to the Christian. In particular 2 truths are affirmed.

1) We are set apart for His glory 1:21-22

- The Past/Then

Alienated – estranged, separated, did not belong, outside the sphere of God’s blessing. The ways of God were strange, distant to you.

Enemies in your mind – actively hostile towards God (cf. Rom. 5:10; James 4:4). We made ourselves His enemies. We reject the very thought of God as God in our lives!

Wicked Works – thought lead to actions. In attitude and action, belief and life, we rejected God’s will for our lives. We were sins’s lackey, its willing pawn.

- The Present/Now

Reconciled – at peace and in harmony (Rom 5:1) with our God. We were God’s enemy. Now we are friends, even family.

Holy – set apart, cleansed from all sin. Relates to God. Set apart from sin. Set apart for God.

Blameless – faultless, without blemish. The world of sacrifice is the background. Relates to self.

Above Reproach – above accusation. Relates to others.

In His Sight – the only place that matters. How He sees us is what counts.

2) We must be steadfast in the gospel

1:23

We have been reconciled; now we must continue.

- You continue – Paul is confident, hopeful, we will. Peter O’Brien, “If it is true that the saints will persevere to the end, then it is equally true that the saints must persevere to the end” (p. 64).
- The Faith – the deposit of sacred truth in the Gospel.
- Grounded – stable, founded securely, as on a rock; “have a sure foundation.”
- Steadfast – settled, having a steady and firm resolve; “Have a firmness of structure.’
- Not Moved Away – not shifting (presense), constantly moving; “stay here and never move.” It is the only safe harbor!
- Preached To Every Creature – This gospel was the same gospel preached in every city. Wherever the gospel had been preached, it is this gospel, and no other, which had been proclaimed.
- I, Paul – emphatic esp. “It may reflect Paul’s sense of wonder at his being commissioned a minister.”
- Minister – (*Diakonos*) a “gospel deacon”

Conclusion

“The Victory of the King”

The Lord said yes to the death of the cross, cried it is finished, bowed and died. In the Kingdom of Darkness the devils celebrated, “we’ve destroyed the King!” he cried.

But amidst the celebration footsteps were heard walking the corridors of hell. Then the shouting stopped when a voice rang out, a voice that rang like a bell.

Satan then trembled as he recognized Him, who came to deliver His own. “Shut and lock the gates!” he cried. “Don’t let Him ascend to His throne!”

So the gates swung shut in the face of the King, to prove God’s salvation untrue. But He shook Hell’s gates and cried, “lift up your heads, the King is coming through!”

Then out of the devil’s prison house came a procession led by the King, “our Lord came down to save us. By His blood we’ve been redeemed.”

Jesus truly is everything. It is my prayer He is everything to you.