

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. In Just 11 days we will celebrate the most celebrated holiday...Christmas.
2. This day generates more attention, more excitement, and more anticipation than any other day.
3. Even the advertisers anticipate it by offering their products earlier each year.
4. If you really think about, we could say that Christmas transcends national and cultural barriers.
5. Most people celebrate Christmas.
6. But the apparent truth of this day is very few understand what it really commemorates.
7. Christmas commemorates a divine event and a divine Person.

8. It is a celebration of the miraculous birth of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The eternal, sovereign God came to earth as a human being to live a righteous life among His people and then to die as a perfect sacrifice to deliver from the wrath of God all who repent and believe.
10. Since that is the case it is important that we not trivialize this historical event.
11. Nor should we ignore the truth of who Jesus is and what He accomplished for sinners.
12. Please take your Bibles and turn with me to Colossians chapter 1.
13. This morning we are looking at chapter 1, verses 13-17.
14. **Read Colossians 1:13-17.**

15. As Paul writes this letter to the Colossians, he addresses a head on attack to the deity of Jesus Christ.
16. J.B. Lightfoot says because of this “The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here stated with greater precision and fullness than in any other of St. Paul’s epistles.”<sup>1</sup>
17. The false teachers that had infiltrated the church attacked the person of Christ as well as His deity.
18. Internal evidence in the letter indicates that the heresy with which Paul is dealing, contains two elements that are fused into one system.
19. His mention of the observance of sabbaths and new moons, his distinction between meats and drinks, and his reference to circumcision, all

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

point to an element of Judaism in this system.

20. His reference to a self-imposed humility and service of angels, the hard treatment of the body, and a superior wisdom, indicates that he is dealing with a Gnostic element.
21. The word “Gnostic” comes from the Greek *gnōsis* which means “knowledge.”
22. It is the name designating an intellectual oligarchy (small governing group), a few who set themselves above all others as possessing a superior knowledge.<sup>2</sup>
23. So Paul responds to this heretical group in verses 13-17 by stating two things God did and then closes the chapter by identifying who Jesus is.

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

24. As he begins this epistle, you'll notice in the first 12 verses he praises God for them.
25. He praises God for how they received the Gospel and what it was doing in them.
26. Paul says in verse 4, "Since we heard of your faith and in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."
27. In other words, your faith was "in Christ Jesus" (1:4).
28. Your "love" was "for all the saints" (1:4).
29. And your "hope" was "laid up for you in heaven" (1:5).
30. How did they hear of the Gospel?
31. Verses 7-8 says "Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and

he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.”

32. Paul praised God for Epaphras who originally preached this gospel to them.
33. Now in verses 9-14, he launches into his prayer for them by praying for 5 things for them.
34. First he prayed that they would grow in the knowledge of God (1:9).
35. Then in verse 10 he prays that they would please God and bear fruit.
36. Next he prays that they would be strengthened by God (1:11).
37. He concludes in verse 11 by praying that they would be thankful to God.
38. Then he connects what he has just prayed with what follows in verse 13 and states what follows as a foundation to what he has just prayed.

39. If you think about it, without this foundation, there is no hope of Christmas.
40. There is no “Child who is God.”
41. We are still in our sins and have no hope of forgiveness or deliverance.
42. But if you’ll notice in verses 13-14 Paul states two things God did when Christ died on the cross.
43. First, He rescued us and second He transferred us.
44. And what do those two truths tell us about Jesus Christ?
45. Verse 15 says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” (NASB)
46. Notice verse 13 where it says, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness.” (NASB)

47. Who “rescued us”?
48. The context of the previous verses says God.
49. Verse 12 states it specifically when Paul prays for them to “joyously [give] thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.
50. Then verse 13 says, “For He.”
51. Also verse 13 says, “He transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”
52. So, *God rescued us!*



## I. God Rescued Us (v.13a)

### A. This is the New Birth

The word “rescued” (rhoumai) means “to draw to oneself” and refers to the believer’s spiritual liberation by God from Satan’s kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

In making us “qualified ... to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light,” God has delivered us from the power of darkness.<sup>4</sup>

The psalmist has the same idea when he said in **Psalms 86:13 (NASB)** For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And **You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**

John Calvin said, “Mark, here is the beginning of our salvation — when God delivers us from the depth of ruin into which we were plunged.

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<sup>3</sup>MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Col 1:13). Nashville: Word Pub.

<sup>4</sup>MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Col 1:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

For wherever his grace is not, *there* is darkness, as it is said in Isaiah 60:2

*Behold darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the nations; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

In the first place, we ourselves are called darkness, and afterwards the whole world, and Satan, the Prince of darkness, under whose tyranny we are held captive, until we are set free by Christ's hand."<sup>5</sup>

So, to be "rescued...from the domain of darkness" is the new birth.

We are not gradually, progressively delivered from Satan's power. When we placed our faith in Christ, we were instantly delivered.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: Colossians* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Col 1:13). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

<sup>6</sup>MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). *Colossians* (39). Chicago: Moody Press.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Since we have been delivered, we “need to act as those who have been delivered.”<sup>7</sup>

**Romans 6:11 (NASB)** Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

When God “rescued us” in Christ, He destroyed Satan’s authority over us.

This idea of being rescued is...

## B. This is the Crushing of Satan

Paul says, “He rescued us *from the domain of darkness.*”

The word “domain” (*exousias*) could be translated “power,” “jurisdiction,” or “authority.”

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<sup>7</sup>MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). *Colossians* (39). Chicago: Moody Press.

Our Lord used the phrase **domain of darkness** (*exousias tou skotous*) to refer to the supernatural forces of Satan marshalled against Him at His arrest (Luke 22:53).

The triumph of the domain of darkness was short-lived, however. A few hours later, Jesus forever shattered Satan's power by His death on the cross.

You need not fear that power, for "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Through His death, Jesus crushed Satan and delivered us from his dark kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

**1 John 3:8 (NASB)** the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

Not only did He rescue us but Paul says...

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<sup>8</sup>MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). *Colossians* (39). Chicago: Moody Press.

## II. God Transferred Us (v.13b)

### A. The Meaning of Transferred

AV has “translated”. A better word is “transferred” (methistemi) means “to remove or change.”

It is used in Acts 13:22 to speak of God’s removing Saul from being king.

It was used in the ancient world to speak of the displacement of a conquered people to another land.

The verb speaks here of our total removal from the domain of satanic darkness to the glorious light of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

**When God rescues us He then transfers us out of one kingdom to another—the kingdom of His Son.**

Jesus said in **John 5:24 (NASB)** "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and

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<sup>9</sup>MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). *Colossians* (39). Chicago: Moody Press.

believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, **but has passed out of death into life.**

John said in **1 John 3:14 (NASB)** We know that we have **passed out of death into life,** because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

The “kingdom of His beloved Son” or “the Son of His love” is a reference to a spiritual reality right now.

**Romans 14:17 (NASB)** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, **but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

The kingdom is the special relationship men in this age have with God through Jesus Christ.

Not only did He rescue and transfer us into “the kingdom of His beloved Son,” but He redeemed and forgave us.

### B. The Meaning of Redemption (v.14)

The word “redemption” (apolutrosis) means “to deliver by payment of a ransom,” and was used to speak of freeing slaves from bondage.

Paul uses this word in several places in the New Testament to speak of Christ’s freeing us from slavery to sin.

**Ephesians 1:7 (NASB)** In Him *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses*, according to the riches of His grace.

**1 Corinthians 1:30 (NASB)** But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, *and redemption*.

**Romans 3:24 (NASB)** being justified as a gift by His grace *through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*.

Redemption results in...

### C. The Meaning of Forgiveness

“Forgiveness” (aphesin) refers to a pardon. It comes from apo, “from,” and hiemi, “to send.”

Because Jesus redeemed us, God has sent away our sins; they will never be found again.

**Psalms 103:12 (NASB)** As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

**Micah 7:19 (NASB)** He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, *You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

So Christ’s death on our behalf paid the price to redeem us.

On that basis, God forgave our sins, granted us an inheritance, delivered us from the power of darkness, and made us subjects of Christ’s kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). *Colossians* (41). Chicago: Moody Press.



Paul now reveals the person of our redemption in verses 15-17.

Basically he says...

### **III. Jesus is God (vv.15-17)**

People don't mind adoring a baby in a manger but they do have a problem if that baby is God incarnate.

Since these false teachers were attacking the deity of Christ, Paul gives a fuller explanation of who Jesus is.

He says in verse 15...

#### **A. He is the Image of the Invisible God (v.15a)**

The word "image" (eikon) means "copy" or "likeness."

**Hebrews 1:3 (NASB)** And He is the radiance of His glory and *the exact representation of*

***His nature***, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

“the express image of His person” (NKJV)

*Charaktēr* (“exact representation”) refers to an engraving tool, or stamp.

Jesus is the exact likeness of God.

He is in the very form of God (Phil. 2:6).

That is why He could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

In Christ, the invisible God became visible, “and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>MacArthur, J. (1996, c1992). *Colossians* (44). Chicago: Moody Press.

By describing Jesus in this manner, Paul emphasizes that He is both the representation and manifestation of God. Thus, He is fully God in every way.<sup>12</sup>

**Colossians 2:9 (NASB)** For in Him *all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.*

**John 8:58 (NASB)** Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, *I am.*"

**John 10:30-33 (NASB)** <sup>30</sup> "*I and the Father are one.*" <sup>31</sup> The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" <sup>33</sup> The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."

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<sup>12</sup>MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Col 1:15). Nashville: Word Pub.

**Hebrews 1:8 (NASB)** But of the Son *He says*,  
"**YOUR THRONE, O GOD**, IS FOREVER  
AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS  
SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS  
KINGDOM.

B. He is the Firstborn of all Creation (v.15b)

“Firstborn” (prototokos). The Greek word implied two things, *priority* to all creation and *sovereignty* over all creation.

In the first meaning we see the absolute pre-existence of the Logos.

Since our Lord existed before all created things, He must be uncreated.

Since He is uncreated, He is eternal.

Since He is eternal, He is God.

Since He is God, He cannot be one of the emanations from deity of which the Gnostic

speaks, even though He proceeds from God the Father as the Son.<sup>13</sup>

So the term *firstborn* does not refer to time, but to place or status.

The Jehovah Witnesses teach that Jesus Christ was the first person God created, thus firstborn.

Jesus Christ was not the first being created, since He Himself is the Creator of all things. They, like the Gnostics, erred on their understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ.

The word *firstborn* simply means “of first importance, of first rank.”

Solomon was certainly not born first of all of David’s sons, yet he was named the firstborn (Ps. 89:27).

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<sup>13</sup>Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (Col 1:15). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

*Firstborn of all Creation* means “prior to all Creation.” Jesus Christ is not a created being; He is eternal God.<sup>14</sup>

Notice how Paul illustrates those two statements in verse 15.

He says, <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> He is **before** all things, and in Him all things hold together. (NASB)

Paul begins verse 16 with the word “for” which could be translated “because.”

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<sup>14</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Col 1:15). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of all *because* He created all things.

It is no wonder that the winds and waves obeyed Him, and diseases and death fled from Him, for He is Master over all.

“All things were made by Him” (John 1:3).

This includes all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible.

All things are under His command.

Everything exists *in* Him, *for* Him, and *through* Him.

Jesus Christ is the Sphere in which they exist, the Agent through which they came into being, and the One for whom they were made.<sup>15</sup>

So as God, Jesus created the material and spiritual universe for His pleasure and glory.

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<sup>15</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Col 1:15). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

When the universe had its beginning, Christ already existed, thus by definition He must be eternal.<sup>16</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

1. Just a baby in a manger?
2. I don't think so!
3. He is God in flesh Whom God the Father sent to "rescue us from the domain of darkness."
4. God has "transferred us in to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin."
5. Does that describe you this morning?
6. The greatest of gifts has come.
7. His name is Jesus Christ.

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<sup>16</sup>MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Col 1:16). Nashville: Word Pub.



## Jesus is God

Colossians 1:13-17 (Preached on 12/15/13 © 2013)

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8. To receive His redemption and forgiveness, you must repent and believe in the gospel (Mk.1:13).
9. Let's pray.