

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "Jesus Holds It All Together"

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 12/6/2009

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We're continuing today in our study of the book of Colossians at chapter one, verses 16 and 17. One thing that we've emphasized, and we will continue to emphasize all through this series, is the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the theme of the book of Colossians.

And today in our study of the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ, we come to these words beginning at verse 16: "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

Exposition

As we consider these verses together, I want to first give you an exposition of them from the original Greek. The Lord has placed some rich truths here for us. And then, once we've looked at the passage expositionally, I want to draw your attention to some points of application. What is the significance of these verses for you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, right here, right now, right where you are, in the situation in which you are living?

So first, the exposition. Paul under divine inspiration says that "by Him" – Jesus Christ – "all things were created." The Greek could also be rendered "in Him" – and I believe that is the true force of the words here in context. Paul is speaking not only about the fact of Jesus himself being the creator of the universe. He is also declaring

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that Jesus Christ is the central focus of the creation, what the creation is all about. And as we'll see, the rest of the verse bears that out.

Paul says that by Jesus Christ all things "were created." In the Greek this is an aorist verb, and that means that it speaks of a definite historical event that happened at a specific point in time, not something that was done over a long span of time. This verb speaks of the fact, and affirms the fact, that the creation of the universe – a perfect universe – took place just as Genesis says it did, in six literal and contiguous days just a few thousand years ago, not through long ages of death and struggle.

And Paul says that Jesus Christ created "all things." In the Greek, there's a definite article that is not translated in our English Bibles. Literally, Paul is saying, "the everything" – was created by the Lord Jesus Christ. The entirety of the universe, nothing left out. Just as John says it in the Gospel of John chapter one, verse three: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Paul then reinforces this point with his next phrases here in Colossians one, verse sixteen. He tells us specifically what he means by "all things" – "the everything."

He says that it includes the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. These two phrases tell us that Jesus Christ is the creator of all things in every locality – everything in the fullest extent of the heavens, and everything upon the entire earth. Everything in all of space and in all of time.

Paul then goes further. He says that "the everything" that the Lord Jesus Christ created includes both the visible, the things that are open to view, and the invisible,

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things that are not open to human view. These two phrases tell us that Jesus Christ is the creator of all things in every classification, whether they are materially visible to the human eye, or not. This tells us that there are, in fact, invisible things in the creation. In the sentence construction of the Greek language used in this verse, the words "visible and invisible" refer to the things on earth. But this is not merely a reference to things that cannot be seen with the naked eye, such as microscopic organisms, or molecules, atoms, protons, neutrons, and electrons.

The next phrases in this verse tell us what Paul under divine inspiration means by the things created by Jesus Christ that are on the earth, that in some cases are visible and in other cases are invisible. He says these things are all created by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it literally reads like this, "whether they are thrones (that is, seats of governmental authority and power), whether they are lordships (that is, the delegated authority exercised from that seat of power), whether they are principalities (that is, the sphere or the extent of that delegated authority), whether powers (that is, the right to possess that delegated authority). Here Paul goes to great lengths to reinforce what the Lord Jesus Christ himself said in Matthew 28:18 – "all power" of every kind and extent – nothing excluded – "has been given unto Me, in heaven and on earth."

And then Paul adds that all things (literally, "the everything") "were created by Him and for Him." Created "by Him" means that Jesus Christ is the ground of, or the reason for, the creation. Created "for Him" means that Jesus Christ is the goal of the creation, the purpose of the creation.

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And then in verse 17, Paul adds this, and again, let me give you a literal rendering of the Greek: "He Himself is before all things in time, and all things in Him are comprehended and hang together." Jesus Christ is the eternally existent God. As the Second Person of the Trinity, He existed in eternity before He Himself created time, and everything else. And He is the central focus of, and the purpose for, the entire creation and the created order, and it is by Him that it all hangs together.

I heard a news report recently that said that scientists really don't know why the atoms, the basic components of which all matter in the universe are made, why the atoms don't just fly apart. They really don't understand why the most basic components of the material world hang together. Well as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know the answer! He is the reason! If the Lord Jesus Christ were to take His little finger off of this creation for one split second, it would disintegrate into chaos. We ourselves would cease to exist. But Hebrews chapter one, verse three tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ upholds all things by the word of His power. That word "uphold" means that He literally bears up, and keeps from falling apart, the entire creation.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the Creator of the entire universe, of everything in every location and of every classification, whether visible or invisible. It all exists because of Him, and the existence of the creation is all about Him. This is the Savior who died for our sins, and rose again from the dead. This is the God we serve as believers. This is the Son who intercedes for us with the Father. This is the One who is even now preparing an eternal dwelling place for us. This is the One who is coming again. That is the meaning, and the importance, of Colossians 1:16-17.

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Application

Let me move now into the area of application. I want to make four points in the time we have remaining.

Point Number One: Jesus Christ and His Word are the Christian's source of power and authority. Paul has gone to great lengths to reinforce what the Lord Jesus Christ himself said in Matthew 28:18 – that "all power" – nothing excluded – "has been given unto Me, in heaven and on earth." And then Jesus says to the disciples, "Therefore" – because this is true, because I am the source and center of all power in the universe – therefore, "go and preach the Gospel to all nations, baptize those who believe in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We as Christians carry out the Great Commission under Christ's authority, and by His power. If we seek to do anything to build the church by any other power or by any other authority, by definition, we have failed the Lord.

Point Number Two: Christians are involved in a warfare against an invisible enemy. We read this in Ephesians chapter 6 beginning at verse 10:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that

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you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..."

We need to remember that even as we battle for righteousness and truth against what we perceive as visible enemies, the real enemy is the unseen one, the forces of Satan.

In 2 Kings chapter six, beginning at verse fourteen, we read that the king of Syria "sent horses and chariots and a great army" to the place where the prophet Elisha was. He wanted to capture and kill him. "And they came by night and surrounded the city [where Elisha was]. And when the servant of the man of God [Elisha] arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

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That is why the Psalmist in Psalm 46 says, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." And in Psalm 84, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!" Nearly 300 times in the Old Testament, Jehovah is called "the Lord of hosts" – the Lord of the unseen armies that are arrayed in battle against our unseen enemies in Satan's realm.

Point Number Three: Jesus Christ has won the victory over the unseen forces of the enemy. We read this in the next chapter of Colossians, chapter 2 beginning at verse 13: "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Even as Jesus Christ was hanging and dying on a cross, He was defeating the principalities and powers of the evil one. He was triumphing over them in His cross. The cross was not a place of defeat, it was the place of Christ's victory over sin and death and Satan on our behalf. Never forget that.

Point Number Four: The culmination of Jesus Christ's victory on the cross will be the redemption of the entire creation. In Ephesians 1:7-10 we read this:

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and

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prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him." Paul is saying this: At the decisive moment in God's all-wise and eternal plan — "in the dispensation of the fullness of the times" — Christ will come again.

What will happen when He comes? What is the end goal of God's plan that will come to fulfillment at that decisive moment? Paul says that God the Father will "gather together in one all things in Christ". The great plan is being carried out in Christ, and through Christ. And here we have the central point of the entire plan.

The word that is translated "gather together" in most English Bibles is actually a compound word in the Greek. It means, not simply to "gather together" — but to "gather together again". Not to gather together for the first time, but to re-gather that which has been disunited. The sense is that all the things that were once under the headship of Christ will be under His headship once again.

Now, what does that imply? It implies — and Scripture makes it clear — that all things were once in a perfect condition under the headship of Christ. That was the condition of the original creation before the fall of man. The universe is not now in that original condition, but God is going to make it so once again.

What was that original condition? We read of it in Colossians chapter one, the passage we've been considering: "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the

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firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

That was creation's original condition — perfect, and under the headship of Christ. "All things were created through Him, and for Him." That's the way things were when God made man in His own image and placed him in the garden of Eden to walk with Him and to have dominion over this world. All was in subjection to Christ, and under His authority man was given the stewardship of this earth. Adam walked with God, and there was perfect harmony in the universe.

But we know from Scripture that this original state of perfection did not continue. The Bible tells us that first of all there was war in heaven itself. Satan, who was created by God as an exalted angel, rebelled against his Creator and fell into sin. A large number of the angels joined that rebellion and fell with him. We read of this in Isaiah chapter 12, Jude verse 6, and elsewhere.

Many commentators believe that Revelation 12:7-10 recapitulates this great battle of the past even as it speaks of future warfare in Heaven: "...war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

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Satan, after he was originally cast down from heaven, came in the form of a serpent and tempted our first parents to rebel and disobey God. And when they sinned, they unleashed all the effects of sin that we see in our present world. The pride, hatred, murder, warfare, disease, death, decay — all the evils we see around us, and the evil that is in our own hearts — all of it is the result of that rebellion.

Human beings were not the only ones affected by sin. In Romans 8:16 Paul tells us that the creation itself suffered the effects of the curse, and that it groans and travails in birth-pangs, awaiting its deliverance. The earthquakes, weather upheavals, plagues, and other natural disasters that we see around us — the death and decay that we see every day in the material world — all are a result of that curse upon the earth, and upon the entire universe, brought about by sin.

The Future Restoration

The original harmony of the universe under the headship of Christ is gone — but not forever. It is only as we see the ruin of this universe and of our own selves from God's perspective that we can understand the mystery of God's will, the great truth of Ephesians 1:10. God is going to re-gather all things under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is how we can truly understand in all its fullness what Paul means when he tells us, in 2 Corinthians 5:19, that at the cross "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

This is how we can also understand, as Paul tells us in the same chapter, why we ourselves also groan within in ourselves. We want heaven. We are aliens in this sin-

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cursed world. We know in the depth of our souls that ultimately we do not belong here, because we have been redeemed.

Let me leave you with this question today: Are you resting in the victorious Christ today – the One who created it all, the One who has power and authority over all, the One who is going to redeem and renovate not only believers ourselves, but the entire universe – He is going to give us a new, perfect universe in which to live with Him forever, free from the power and the presence of sin and death for eternity?

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