

## The Preeminence of Christ

If you would be turning with me in your Bibles to the book of Colossians. We are going to be in chapter 1 today. Most of you know in this service we are typically going through the Gospel of Mark, but as it is a lengthy study I have been trying to give you some breaks along the way. Today of course is one of those days.

You know as we go through the Gospel of Mark we find that it is a book all about Christ. All about his good news. All about showing us that he is the Son of God who died and rose again for the remission of our sins. To show us all these things so that we might believe. That's the point of the Gospel we have been studying. We expect the gospels to be all about Christ.

Well, this afternoon we may be taking a break from the Gospel of Mark, but we aren't going to take a break from preaching Christ. We aren't going to take a break from preaching the good news of the gospel.

This afternoon we will preach Christ not just because it is our duty, but also because the book that you have on your laps is a book all about Christ isn't it? In the Old Testament he is presented as the one that will come from Genesis to Malachi. Whether it be in types, shadows, or prophecy he is the hope of the Old Testament.

In the Gospels his ministry, death, burial and resurrection is declared. In the Acts he is preached to the Jews and to the world. In the Epistles he is taught in doctrine, truth and practice so that we might serve him. In Revelation it is he who is worthy and is coming again.

This is a book about Jesus. It is Jesus centric.

Why is it Christ centric? Because Christ is preeminent above all things. He is worthy of praise and glory and honor above all of creation.

He is more worthy than your earthly father of your adoration and respect. More worthy than your child for praise. His splendor greater than the highest mountain or any other sight this earth affords.

Christ is above all creation. And this book is all about him and we too should be all about him for what he has done for us.

And what is it that he has he done for us? Look here in chapter 1. This isn't our text for the day, but this leads up to our text of the day.

*Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

*Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

The He here is the Father. God our father in heaven has moved us from the domain of darkness that we were once lost in when we knew not our Savior and has transferred us into the light of the Kingdom of his beloved Son.

It wasn't a move that could be made by simply moving us like chess pawns from one board to another. No! It wasn't that simple.

You see a God ordained price had to be paid and the price that was paid was the death of His only begotten Son for the sins of his elect. A ransom had to be paid for us to have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

We weren't worthy of that. Our Brother Joe said that yesterday on a couple of occasions. We weren't worthy. Our sins were many, they still are many in the eyes of men, but yet I stand before you in the eyes of God whiter than snow because he took the dirty filthy rags of my sin

soaked life to the cross and nailed them there while putting on me the glorious robes of his own righteousness.

Is he worthy of my praise today? You better believe it. Is he worthy of your praise today? No question about it. Is he worthy to be magnified over all of creation? Ahh yes, my friends over all creation.

So, following this statement which is part of Paul's prayer for the church at Colosse Paul now begins to praise Jesus the Christ. Praise him for who he is.

And just who is this man Jesus? This same man that Mark in his gospel has been presenting to us week after week as the Son of God. Well this man Jesus was no ordinary man was he? He wasn't someone who was an average Joe that God indwelt with the Christ at the Baptism like many of the Gnostics thought.

He wasn't just a good man and a prophet. He wasn't an angel sent from heaven to do the will of God.

No he was more than that because it took more than that to save me from my sins.

You see it took God himself in the person of Christ to come to this earth to live a life we couldn't live. Free from sin. Free from guilt. Without a single spot or blemish. It took God in the flesh to lower himself and put on the robes of flesh to die an atoning death for his people.

And in him and him alone is the hope of all mankind. Not Buddha. Not Mohammed. Not any other name under heaven. He alone is our hope and he is worthy of praise, honor, and glory and that's not because I say so or any other preacher says so. But rather because scripture says so. And it says so right here.

Beginning in verse 15 Paul begins to explain the Preeminence of Christ in heaven and earth and

that is what I would like to look at with you today.

Let's read our text first in its entirety.

*Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

*Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

*Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

*Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

*Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

*Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

Now let's unfold our text here starting in verse 15,

*Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

The who here is Jesus. That is who we were speaking about in the last two verses. The Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul teaches us here that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. That is he is the image of the God we cannot see.

What does it mean to be the image? Well the word here means copy or likeness. It is the same Greek word that we get icon from. Jesus is the visible likeness of an invisible God to us and he is the likeness of God in every way.

I've been reading a lot this week in Hebrews. In Hebrews Chapter 1 it says of this likeness that Christ is of the Father.

*Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

That phrase express image means a perfect imprint. That is what Jesus is. He is the perfect visible imprint of the Father. Jesus Christ the night before he was crucified when Philip asked him to show us the Father and Jesus replied, *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*

How could Jesus say that? Because Jesus was the express image of the Father. And by the way he is the express image of God because he is God right?

*Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Pilippians,  
*Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

Jesus is the image, that is the physical manifestation of an invisible God because he is God. Emmanuel- God with Us.

There are a lot of people out there that day that don't believe that truth. I'm not just talking about atheist, agnostics, and other world religions.

I'm talking about some who lump themselves under the umbrella of Christian. They believe Jesus was sent from God. That he was an angel or something like that, but they don't believe that he is God.

Listen, the bible teaches us that God loved us enough to come to this earth to die for us himself. He didn't send someone else to do it for him. He didn't pass the buck. He sent himself to save us from his own wrath. Folks that ought to be a sobering fact to all of us here.

Look back to our verse,  
*Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

Now those that don't believe in the deity of Christ will say look here it says he was the firstborn. The first of all God's creation. A super angel so to say.

It is true that firstborn can mean just that one that is first born just as Austin is my first born.

But firstborn in Greek also and actually most often speaks of preeminence. That is rank. So in order to know the difference between the uses we have to look at the context. We can't just read the verse and stop. We have to look at the context of the verses around verse 15 and the context points to not a first created being, but rather to his preeminence over all creation as we see revealed to us in the next verses.

Look here,  
*Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

This verse lends to the preeminence of Christ as firstborn in position because all things in heaven and earth were created by him. And think about this for just a moment. You can't be made and yet make all things.

Jesus was not made by the Father. He has always been with the Father. Always been with the Spirit. Again in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. By the way what does John go on to say,

*Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.*

*Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

That is the same thing that Paul is saying here. All things were made by Jesus.

By the way Paul wrote this book before John wrote his gospel. Scripture tells us that Paul was taught not by Apostles but by the revelation of Jesus according to Galatians.

Paul and John make these statements independent of one another both being taught by the same Christ- Lord over all creation.

Look at verse 16 again. Look at the completeness of everything that was created by him and for that reason he is sovereign over them all. The potter has power over the clay. That is what is being conveyed in this verse. He is over all. Preeminent.

So, what do we see here? First, we see that all things in heaven were created by him. Tonight, when you see the moon in the sky it is because a preeminent Christ put it there. When you see that North Star that doesn't move it is because a preeminent Christ put it there.

And the heavens we cannot see. The very abode of God where the streets are gold and the gates are of pearl. All created by him and through him and for him.

I love when it says he created all the things in earth- visible and invisible. You know that Paul never looked through a microscope at a mitochondria or a virus or a telescope to gaze at the rings of Saturn.

He didn't know all about that stuff, but the Spirit moved him to write that Jesus created a lot more on this earth than we can see and things outside of earth that are even yet to be seen.

Now notice this as well. Jesus the preeminent one over all things made- because he made them all- also in his sovereignty as God created governments and powers.

You know today the United States exists because a preeminent Christ willed it? You know what else the same is true about North Korea, Iran, Syria, and China. We may not understand it, but it doesn't change the fact that God the Son is sovereign over all of creation and nothing exists good or evil outside of his sovereign will. The very things Austin was talking about this morning.

Let's read on,  
*Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

Our verse here again speaks of his position. He is before all things. He is preeminent over all. Our verse here says that by him all things consists.

I like the ESV's translation here. Hopefully some of you are still reading it this year. But listen to this.

*Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Everything on this earth the things seen and unseen. Everything in the heaven's seen and unseen are being held together by his omniscient, omnipotent hand.

When you are going through this world and it feels like you are hardly holding it together. Your life's a mess. You got no job. You got no car. Your wife left you. Your kids hate you. You're at the bottom and your ready to crumble. Yep even then when you can't hold it together Christ is still holding you in his hand.

And by the way folks that's lost or saved. Jesus is in control. In him all things hold together. You can fight him all you want him. You can say you don't believe in him. Doesn't change the fact he is still over all. Listen folks not even Satan can have his way with mankind unless a preeminent, sovereign, omnipotent Christ allows it.

Now to the saved that is a comfort. To the lost that is a terror because you know that God knows more than you know about yourself. He knows the darkness of your heart. There is nothing he doesn't know about you and your life and death is in his hands.

So often in life we all begin to think that we are the master of our own destinies. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are the master of *nothing* except what he allows because he is the one holding it all together for his divine purpose and plan.

Let's read on. You all are going to like this verse.

*Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: ho is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

This is a good verse isn't it. As much as Christ is preeminent over the things in this world and outside of this world, he is should also preeminent in the church. Paul really brings it close to home here. Christ should be preeminent in the church.

You know the sad fact is that isn't always the case. Sometimes the preeminence of Christ gets placed secondary to cold doctrine. Sometimes he gets replaced with tradition. Sometimes he becomes second to the person preaching the message.

Let us never forget the Ephesian church and how they lost their first love. That is Christ became second place to everything else.

Christ is to have preeminence in the church. He is the head of the church. That was a question posed to Joe yesterday and he answered well.

I am not the head of this church. No man or woman is the head of this church. No governing

board is head of this church. No pope is the head of this church.

We have one head and that is Jesus. Every local body of baptized believers has Jesus Christ as their head. No one else.

A church without him as a head will not be a church for long. He will remove the candlestick. Christ must be preeminent in the church. He must always be our first love.

Now look here. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Now that might not make sense right away to those perhaps newer in the faith. But what this verse is saying is that he is the first of the resurrection.

When Jesus died on the cross his work was still being completed for three days later he arose victorious over death, hell, and the grave. He was the first fruit of the resurrection.

Someday there will be another resurrection. Some day again as Brother Joe said yesterday...

*the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

*1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

And scripture here tells that in all things he might have the preeminence.

He is preeminent over all of creation in heaven and earth. Preeminent over all nations and powers. Preeminent because he is holding all things together. Preeminent because he is the head of the church and he is Preeminent because he was victorious over death and is risen from the grave. And because he is preeminent as the firstborn from the dead, he too will be preeminent in the resurrection.

Let's read on,

*Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

What does it mean for the fullness of God to dwell in the person of Christ? It means the fullness of who God is dwells in him. In chapter 2 and verse 9 Paul there says that he is the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Jesus Christ is the complete image of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we see Jesus through the word with our spiritual eyes, we see more than just the Father. We see the fullness of God in Christ.

Sometimes people accuse us of being too Christ centered. Just seem to forget the Father and Spirit. Listen the Spirit bears witness to the Son. The Father draws us to the Son. Heaven declares the Son as worthy to open the scrolls as heaven bows to him.

It's not that we forget the Father and forget the Spirit. We are doing what we are commanded to do- give him preeminence and listen whenever you praise him you are praising the Father. Whenever you praise Jesus your are praising the Spirit. In Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. You can't separate them. That's the beautiful mysterious truth of the Trinity.

Let's read our last verse for the day..

*Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

You know when we were born into this world we were not at peace with God. The curse of sin was already upon us. In time we came to know sin and love sin and we were even more at enmity with God.

God's wrath was upon us and we could not so much as raise the white flag of surrender

ourselves and bring peace. No it took Christ to bring peace through his shed blood on that hill called Golgotha.

Scripture here speaks of him reconciling all things to Himself. Reconcile speaks of an exchange. There on the cross through his blood my sins were exchanged for his righteousness.

You say it sounds like he got the raw end of the deal. Yeah it does. He took our sin- we got his righteousness. He died- we got life.

On the surface yeah it looks like a raw deal, but that was God's will for his elect and his will never fails or falters. And it is through this action that God the Son Jesus Christ reconciles us to himself.

As we have come to the end of our reading today, we must in the reflection of scripture as ourselves what does this passage mean for us today.

Let's consider first the church. Let's humbly reflect the question is Christ first in all things. Do our services reflect his preeminence or have other things crept in to take the eyes off of Christ?

Does he have preeminence in the songs we sing? The prayers we pray? The lessons we teach? The messages we preach? Is Christ exalted every time we meet? Is he first place? I hope and pray that is our goal.

I've heard people say when things change in a church that they don't necessarily like because they have grown used to a certain way of doing things and they will say- it's just not my church anymore.

Let me tell you something we need to all realize. It was never your church. It is not my church. It is his church and as long as he is made manifest above all things it shouldn't matter about what

we like and what we don't like. All that matters is if it pleases him.

How about in our personal lives? Is Christ preeminent? Oh man how we fail this so much. We get up and run to the shower, run to work, run home, do our evening routine and go bed just to do it again.

How often do we open our eyes in the morning or the middle of the night when we can't sleep before our feet hit the floor open our eyes and say thank you Jesus. Thank you for another night of safety and rest. Help me to praise you today.

How often do we go down the road to work and meditate upon him instead of the things of this world?

How often do we magnify him at work to others through our deeds and actions and word?

You see what I'm saying? How often do we keep Christ first?

As often as we should? I dare say not at all and that starts right here with this preacher.

God help us though to see these words today and seek to do better and give him first place in our lives.