

# EXPOSITORY TEACHING ON THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

## MESSAGE FIVE: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST – PART ONE

### SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:15-18

- ❖ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

### INTRODUCTION:

After expressing thanksgiving and prayers, Paul began to speak about the supremacy of Christ Jesus.

- The false teachers, probably the Gnostics, believed in Jesus, but it was a different Jesus.
- They had a faulty understanding of Christ.
- They did not deny Christ, but dethroned His supremacy or preeminence.
  - Today, New Age philosophers, cults (JW's, Mormons), other religions (Hinduism, Islam)

## 1. CHRIST JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

**Scripture:** “He is the image of the invisible God.” (Col. 1:15)

**Image:** Visible Representation and Manifestation

**Gnostics:** Christ is one of the emanations/manifestations of God. He is not the only one. But Paul refutes them saying “Christ is *the* image of the invisible God.”

### i. God is invisible.

- ❖ **Colossians 1:15**, “He is the image of the *invisible* God.” The God who cannot be seen.
- ❖ **1 Timothy 1:17**, “To the King of the ages, immortal, *invisible*, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”
- ❖ **1 Timothy 6:15-16**, “He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, *whom no one has ever seen or can see*. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”

### ii. Christ Jesus is the image of God.

- ❖ **Colossians 1:15**, “He is *the* image of the invisible God.”
- ❖ **John 1:18**, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, *he has made him*

known.”

- ❖ **John 14:8-9**, Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.* How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”
- ❖ **Hebrews 1:3**, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and *the exact imprint* (image or representation) of his nature (essence)....”
  - Someone said, “In Him the invisible God becomes visible.”

### iii. Difference between man being created in God’s image and Christ being the image of God.

- ❖ **Genesis 1:27**, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
- ❖ **Colossians 1:15**, “He is *the image* of the invisible God.”
- i. Man generally/partially represents the image of God (emotions, intellect, will to decide, morality—communicable attributes). But Jesus is the exact likeness and perfect manifestation of God (fullness of God’s character and nature—communicable and incommunicable attributes).
  - ❖ **Colossians 1:19**, “For in him *all the fullness of God* was pleased to dwell.”
  - ❖ **Colossians 2:9**, “For in him *the whole fullness of deity* dwells bodily.”
    - The complete divinity of God takes permanent residence in Christ Jesus.
- ii. Man was created in the image of God. Jesus exists (not created) as God’s image.

**Application:** Christ Jesus is the image of God, God Himself, the second person in Trinity.

## 2. CHRIST JESUS IS SUPREME OVER ALL CREATION

**Scripture:** “He is the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn of all creation.*” (**Col. 1:15**)

**Gnostics:** Jesus is important, but He is not the supreme one.

**Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslims:** Falsely claim that Jesus is the first creation of God.

### Three Observations:

- i. Firstborn does not necessarily mean birth order. It also speaks about being supreme in position. The following Scriptures are the evidence.
  - ❖ **Exodus 4:22-23**, Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, *Israel is my firstborn son* (*figurative*), and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son (*literal*).
  - ❖ **Jeremiah 31:9**, “I am a father to Israel, and *Ephraim is my firstborn.*” Actually, Manasseh was the

firstborn son of Joseph and Ephraim was the youngest.

- ❖ **Psalm 89:27**, “And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” Actually, Eliab was the firstborn son of Jesse and David was the youngest.
- ❖ **Romans 8:29**, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that *he might be the firstborn* among many brothers.” In this verse, it is non-sense to think “firstborn” as “first created being”. It could only mean “preeminence”.
- Lightfoot mentions the ancient Rabbis called Yahweh Himself “Firstborn of the World.”

ii. The context too suggests (He is the Creator and Sustainer – v. 16-17) that this speaks about Christ being the supreme over all creation, not that He is the first created being. Observe the word “For” in verse 16, which gives the reason for Christ being the firstborn.

iii. Paul used “*prototokos*”, not “*protoktistos*”.

- In the New Testament, the Greek word for “*Prototokos*” essentially means “high in rank.” Only once it is used in reference to being a firstborn son in the family.
- Even if “*prototokos*” means birth order, it does not mean first-created one. The Greek word “*protoktistos*” means “first-created” and this word was not used at all.

**Note:** The term “Firstborn” is also used in verse 18, “He is.....the firstborn from the dead.”

- **Kent Hughes:** “The reason for Christ's exalted position in the Church is that “he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead” (v. 18). We saw this word “firstborn” in verse 15, where it meant first in rank, and here it means the same thing. Paul was not saying that Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead, for he was not. *However, he was the most important of all who have been raised from the dead, because without his resurrection there could be no resurrection for others (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20ff.).*”

**Application:** The Lord Jesus Christ is supreme over all creation.

### 3. CHRIST JESUS IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

**Scripture:** “For *by him* all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” (**Col. 1:16**)

**Gnostics:** They believed soul is good, but matter (material) is evil. Since the world is matter, they consider world as evil. So, they believed God did not create the world. Some inferior power made a mistake of creating the world. Moreover, since body is evil, they even died Jesus had come in flesh.

**By Him:** In Greek, it is contrast emphasis, meaning, “By Him and no other.”

*In heaven and on earth* – the whole universe

- **Sun—**

- One million Earths could fit inside the sun.
- The temperature inside the sun can reach 15 million degrees Celsius.
- With a mean average distance of 150 million kilometers from Earth, light from the Sun takes eight minutes to reach Earth.
- Moon
- **Stars**—If somebody could count three stars per second, after 100 years he would have counted less than five percent of this number.
- Animals on the ground
- Insects in and on the ground.
- Birds in the air
- Creatures in the sea
- Trees
- Mountains
- Waters
- Above all, the magnificent human beings.

*Visible and invisible*—whatever things in heaven and on earth, the things that can be seen (earth) and the things unseen (heaven).

*Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*—which are references to the invisible world of angels.

- **Col. 2:18** reveals the false teachers were teaching worship of angels. Jesus is their creator and worthy of worship.
- Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus was created and is an archangel. But the Scripture claims He is the Creator of all angels.
- **Hebrews 1:6**, And again, when he (Father) brings the firstborn (Son) into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

**Point:** Therefore, all the above things (things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities) were created by Christ Jesus.

**C. H. Spurgeon** - Note how Paul harps upon that one string, "He." See how much he dwells upon the divine person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He will never have done praising him, he keeps on heaping up epithets to magnify that blessed name; and he truly was in the Spirit of God when he did this, for it is the work of the Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. He makes him great in our hearts, and then we try to make him great by our words and by our acts....How can anyone ever read this passage, and yet say that Christ Jesus is only a man? By what twisting of words on such language as this be applied to the most eminent prophet or apostle who ever lived? Surely he must be God by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist.

- ❖ **John 1:3**, "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

- ❖ Father saying to the Son in **Hebrews 1:10**, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.”

#### 4. CHRIST JESUS IS THE PURPOSE/GOAL OF ALL THINGS

**Scripture:** “All things were created through him and for him.” (**Col. 1:16b**)

**Atheists:** Cannot answer, “Why are we existing?” An atheist said, “No inherent moral or ethical laws exist, nor are there absolute guiding principles for human society. The universe cares nothing for us and we have no ultimate meaning in life.”

**Purpose of existence of all things:** All things were created for Christ Jesus, for the glory of Christ, for Christ Himself.

**Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper:** When Jesus looks at his universe from his exalted throne at the right hand of the Father, and he sees the great galaxies whirling in space, the planets and the people upon this planet, and all the minute details of life here including the details of our individual lives, there is nothing that he sees anywhere of which he cannot say, “Mine!”

- **Cause/Creator:** Christ Jesus—“For *by* him all things were created” (**Col. 1:16a**).
- **Means/Agent:** Christ Jesus—“all things were created *through* him” (**Col. 1:16b**).
- **Purpose/Goal:** Christ Jesus—“all things were created *for* him” (**Col. 1:16b**).

#### ❖ **Doxology in Romans 11:33-36,**

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For *from him* and *through him* and *to him* are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**John Piper:** All that came into being exists for Christ—that is, it exists to display the greatness of Christ. Nothing—nothing!—in the universe exists for its own sake. Everything from the bottom of the oceans to the top of the mountains, from smallest particle to the biggest star, from the most boring school subject to the most fascinating science, from the ugliest cockroach to the most beautiful human, from the greatest saint to the most wicked genocidal dictator—everything that exists, exists to make the greatness of Christ more fully known—including you, and the person you have the hardest time liking.

#### **Application:**

- Your *passion* must be according to the *purpose* of your life.
- Your *decisions* must be driven by the *purpose* of your life.
- Your *goal* must be according to the *purpose* of your life.
- In short, your *entire life* must be lived for the *purpose* of your life.

