

Colossians: Jesus is First | Week 9

COLOSSIANS 1:18b

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** 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. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** 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. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Introduction

>> **Begin by reading 1:15-20**

When we first got into this section of the text, I talked about the fact that this section of Colossians represents a hymn of the early church. More than likely Paul is quoting or paraphrasing or even tweaking a hymn that they would have readily known in Colossae. One, quite possibly, that Paul himself wrote.

Here's how that hymn can be broken down lyrically:

FIRST STANZA: Christ, God, and Creation (1:15-16)

1:15 – Christ, the Image of God

1:16 – Christ, the Creative Agent, Goal of All

TRANSCRIPT FROM JAMES MACDONALD, “THE SURPASSING SUPREMACY OF JESUS CHRIST”:

Back in the 1970s, a guy named Lee Chesnut wrote a book called, “The Atom Speaks”. You know, the atom, that little tiny particle from which all things are made... He writes this...

“Consider the dilemma of the nuclear physicist when he looks in utter amazement at the pattern he has drawn of the oxygen nucleus. (just the nucleus of oxygen) For here are 8 positively charged protons closely associated together within the confines of this tiny nucleus. With them, are 8 neutrons. A total of 16 particles, 8 positively charged, and 8 with no charge. (now if you're not scientific you think that's not a big deal, but hang on...) Earlier, physicists had discovered that like charges of electricity and like magnetic poles repel each other. And the entire history of the electrical phenomenon was built upon these principles, it's known as Coulomb's Law of Electrostatic Force. The fact that when there are like particles together they repel each other. (And so scientists begin to wonder, what is wrong? What holds the nucleus together? Why doesn't it fly apart? And therefore why do not all atoms fly apart?)”

*Chesnut goes on to describe the experiments of the 1920s and 30s, where powerful atom smashers were used to fire protons into the nuclei of atoms. Those experiments also gave scientists and understanding of the incredibly powerful force that holds protons together with the nucleus. Scientists have dubbed that force the **strong nuclear force** but have no explanation for why it exists. [NUCLEAR GLUE]*

Preaching Notes – Colossians 1:18b

Colossians: Jesus is First | Week 9 – Sunday, March 6, 2011 | Page 1
Josh Weiland | Wawasee Community Bible Church

In fact, one of the physicists who developed the big bang theory of the universe wrote this:

“The fact that we live in a world in which practically every object is a potential nuclear explosion without being blown to bits...” and he had no explanation for it.

Carl Darrell a physicist at the Bell Laboratories wrote this:

(And I summarize...) “Do you grasp what this implies? It implies that all the massive nuclei have no right to be alive at all. Indeed they never should have been created. And if created they should have blown up instantly, yet here they all are, some inflexible inhibition is holding them relentlessly together.” Every single atom in our universe, there’s no reason for it... except this... The bible teaches that Jesus upholds all things... In him all things consist... In him all things hold together

Now here me, Peter teaches in his letters he teaches that someday, the bible says the earth is going to melt with fervent heat. What’s gonna happen is that Jesus Christ, under God’s direction, and at the time of the Father’s judgment is going to withdraw his sustaining influence in this universe, and there is going to be a nuclear blowout such as people have never imagined or known before.

How thankful are you that Christ upholds all things by the power of his word? That in him all things hold together?

He is the force in the universe that unbelieving men and women turn away from. We’re here this morning because we worship him. And he is the central figure in human history, he is supreme. He is eternal. He is the sustainer.

Small wonder then that in verse 18 he is called the head of the church. Who else would be the head?

Last week we talked extensively, then, on what the local church should be and what it ought to look like.

BRIDGE: Christ, the Central Figure (1:17-18a)

1:17a – Christ the One Before All

1:17b – Christ, the Sustainer of All

1:18a – Christ, the Head of the Church

SECOND STANZA: Christ, God, and the New Creation (1:18b-20)

1:18b – Christ, the founder of the Church

1:19 – Christ, the Fullness of God

1:20 – Christ, the Means of Reconciling All

This morning we enter into the second stanza, how Jesus is first not only over all creation, but is first over all of the *new creation*.

1. Jesus is the beginning = FIRST

Jesus is eternal, back back back back back... Before all things... In the beginning, Jesus. At the start: JESUS

Just as Jesus is lord of creation, he is lord of new creation

Beginning:

ἀρχή *archē*; from 756; (properly abstract) a commencement, or (concretely) chief (in various applications of order, time, place, or rank): — beginning, corner, (at the, the) first (estate), magistrate, power, principality, principle, rule.

In saying Jesus is the “beginning”, Paul could be referring to one of three different things:

1. Supremacy in Rank
2. Precedence in Time
3. Creative Initiative

The big idea here is that Jesus is the beginning, he’s the start, he’s the founder... before everything: JESUS

This specifically is true when it comes to the re-creating of those who give their lives to Jesus and trust him for salvation.

– Hebrews 2:10 – Jesus is the “founder of salvation”

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is a *new creation*. Brand new. Re-created. Reset the clock. The old has gone, the new has come. Later this spring when we get into chapter 3 of Colossians we’ll see this same theme laid out by Paul.

Jesus is First.

We live in a culture of *firsts*. And it’s been that way in your life since you were a kid...

- On the playground – a race to be *first* in line to go down the slide
- At lunch –
- Business
- Athletics
- Etc.

2. Jesus is the firstborn of the dead = FIRST

He wasn’t the first to rise from the dead, but he is the founder of all resurrection, new creation. He is the victor over death.

Jesus is the beginning... and here Paul goes on to give a little more detail of what that means...

He is the victor over death... first in priority... unequalled...

He wasn't the first ever to rise from the dead, Jesus raised people from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit during his earthly ministry.

Firstborn from the dead means that over death, Jesus is first in priority, unequalled, the one who got victory over sin and death.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:54-56

You will never die!

That's what it means that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. That all who place their trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, will NEVER die!

Jesus is not the first to ever rise from the dead — he raised people from the dead in his earthly ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. —> Jesus is the first to rise from the dead in *true resurrection life*.

I think one way you might think of this phrase and make sense of it is like this... he's first born of the dead... Revelation 1 says "firstborn of the dead"...

Who are the "dead"?

READ & WORK THROUGH EPHESIANS 2:1-10 — *Dead = all mankind*

We all begin life as children of wrath, objects of God's wrath. — By objects of wrath, it means we take the blow, we take the punishment, God's anger over sin is directed at me, at you...

God's wrath and punishment is the penalty for our sin...

Romans 3:23 – *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Romans 6:23 – *The wages of sin—what I earn for my sin—is death! God's wrath!*

God is unbelievably angry about our sin. FURIOUS!!! In my sin...

- ***Sin of Commission – doing things that are wrong... the lust of my heart... lying to cover my own reputation... words that come out of my mouth that are slanderous or hurtful of others... — In my sin I am a child of wrath, and object of God's wrath and he is FURIOUS with me in my sin.***

"But wait... I thought God was love... I thought Jesus was compassionate and tender and merciful..." — He is. But he is also perfectly just and cannot tolerate our sin. He absolutely hates it.

In the bible, why do people cower in fear when God reveals his glory? Because they are suddenly aware of their sin and how unbelievably vile it is in God's sight. It not only puts us at odds with his holiness... it is so absolutely opposite of him that sin makes us GOD'S ENEMY.

Look at Revelation 1???? – John falling down as if dead...

- ***Sin of Omission – NOT doing what I ought to... Not spending time in prayer... Not obeying and submitting to authorities God has put in my life... not repenting of my sin and turning to Jesus...***

So who are the dead? – *EVERYONE. ALL HAVE SINNED.*

BUT, Jesus is **firstborn of the dead**. — *he is the first to conquer death and rise again to everlasting life, never to die again.*

A penalty has to be paid for sin. We're all dead in our sin... *DEAD MAN WALKING*... and the furious anger and wrath of God is directed right at me and right at you in our sin...

BUT!!!! – JESUS STEPS IN AND TAKES THE BLOW FOR US!

God made him to be sin on the cross who knew no sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
So that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus is first over all creation (v. 15) and he is first to walk in new creation... firstborn from the dead. He is the beginning, the founder of new life, resurrection life!

Jesus' death on the cross satisfied God's wrath. And his resurrection from death proves it. Death could not hold him down, he is risen! The angel says at the empty tomb.

If you would give him your life, give him your sin, turn to him and repent, he would take it, and in turn give you his life... *new life. New creation. Renewed. Re-created.*

Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection give him supreme spiritual authority over the universe. He is the beginning... the founder, the creator, the *firstborn* of the dead!

And because Jesus Christ is spiritually supreme over the universe, Paul says that he ought to be preeminent or FIRST in EVERYTHING! It's a no brainer.

To quote the great contemporary philosopher, Charlie Sheen – "DUH!!!!" Look what he did, look what we do... He's perfect... we're sinful... Jesus, "WINNING!!!"

3. In everything, Jesus is preeminent = FIRST

πρωτεύω *prōteuō*; from 4413; to be first (in rank or influence): — have the preeminence.

Let me ask you this... **how many things can be in first place?** How many? — ONE.

- in a race? – 1
- in line? – 1
- only Jesus can be in first place

When anything else is in first place, anything other than Jesus, it becomes an idol. – **idolatry**
In our sin we are idol making machines. We put all kinds of other things in first place over Jesus.

Anything can become an idol in your life... anything... And idols always over promise and under-deliver. They always fail you. Always.

For example, your kids... they can be an idol.

- Do they rule the roost in your home? Do they dictate your calendar? Do they dictate your schedule? Do they run around your house like little dictators making everyone subservient to their rule?

Preaching Notes – Colossians 1:18b

Colossians: Jesus is First | Week 9 – Sunday, March 6, 2011 | Page 5
Josh Weiland | Wawasee Community Bible Church

- *I'm not talking about providing for your children. I'm not talking about parenting and loving them and honoring them... I'm talking about putting them in FIRST place, where they rule as God. I'm talking about when they throw a fit, I give them everything they want. I'm talking about when they want to participate on a travel team, we reorient every single area of our waking day to accommodate them...*
- The sad thing is, not only is it sin to put your children in the place of idol, in the place of God, in the place of preeminence in your life.... Not only does it ultimately hurt you... it ultimately destroys them.
- Because idols always disappoint. — **they overpromise and underdeliver**
- When you put your kids in the place that only Jesus deserves—FIRST PLACE—you're setting out expectations for them that they will never ever be able to fulfill. They will always fail.
- It's hard to live up to being God in your parents' life, and while I could tell you stories of kids who are messed up because of neglect in the broken, drug-destroyed, sexually abused homes they come from... I could give you some equally devastating examples of kids who might look pretty great on the outside, but who are ROYALLY broken and destined for heartache because their parents have put them in the place of God in their homes.
- Don't make your kids into idols. Love them. LOVE THEM LIKE CRAZY!!!! But not more than you love Jesus. Don't worship them.
- Don't let anything take the thrown of your heart... give it to Jesus that he might be first in EVERYTHING!!!!

Until Jesus is first in every area of my life, I will never experience the joy I was created to know. Never.

First in my thoughts
 First in my speech
 First in my home
 First in my sexuality
 First in my finances
 The first thought in my text messages
 First in my family
 First in my friendships
 First in my character
 First in my media choices
 First in my diet and what I eat
 The first place in my relationships
 First in my health
 First in my actions
 First when I'm on the internet
 The first thought when I go to the movies
 First in my marriage
 First in my singleness
 First in my time
 First in my job
 The first place I turn after I sin
 The first one I call on in need
 The first one I thank in blessing
 The first thought when I'm sinned against
 First when I'm driving my car
 First in what I look at
 The first thought when I'm forgiven

Preaching Notes – Colossians 1:18b

First when I'm alone
First when I'm with others
First when I lose
First when I win
First in the church
First in my 1:10 Group
First in the youth group
First at school
First at play
First in my giving
First on my calendar
First in my worship
First in my planning for the future
First on the golf course when I miss the gimme
First when I speak of other people
First when I pay my taxes
First when I pray
First when I look in the mirror
First when I choose what to wear
The first thought when I see my own sin
The first thing I'm thankful for
The first thought when I consider my mortality
First in my sickness
First in my suffering
First on my Facebook profile
First when I don't understand
First in what I listen to
First in my pain
First in what I believe about myself
First in how I raise my children
First in my joy
The first one I submit to
My first thought in the morning
The first one I turn to in repentance
First in my motivation
First in glory
First when I'm confused
First in my studies
The first thought when I consider others
First in my business dealings

FIRST IN EVERYTHING

>> PLAY S.M. Lockridge "My King"

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

(Taken from the end of MacDonald's sermon... "The Surpassing Supremacy of Jesus Christ" quoted above.)

- What burden are you carrying that he couldn't carry better?
- What problem are you facing that you can afford to face without complete continuous dependence upon him?
- What sin have you been struggling with that you wouldn't renounce for his glory?

Preaching Notes – Colossians 1:18b

Colossians: Jesus is First | Week 9 – Sunday, March 6, 2011 | Page 7
Josh Weiland | Wawasee Community Bible Church

- What area of defeat have you been circling in that you wouldn't choose in this moment to move afresh to his all sufficiency in all things...
- Over and over in the passage... all things, all things, all things...
- That he might have first place in all things...

Until Jesus is first in every area of my life, I will never experience the joy I was created to know. Never.

>> SING "THE FIRST PLACE"