

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 2

Jesus Is the Center of Everything! Colossians 1:15–23

Christology is the study of the life, work, and person of Jesus. The life of Jesus consists of much of what He did in the Gospels. The work of Jesus includes doctrines like the atonement and resurrection of Jesus, focusing on what He accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection. The person of Jesus is the study of his character and nature.

What does it mean that Jesus is fully God and fully man? Further, why is this important? As we read the Bible, over and over again it is abundantly clear that God's people could not save themselves. Only God possesses the power and ability to save them. This gives reason for Christ's divinity. At the same time, there must be a perfectly obedient man who would suffer in the place of humanity, to serve as a true substitute. This gives reason for Christ's humanity. Therefore, salvation only comes through Jesus.

Many scholars believe that among the Colossians there were false teachings about Jesus that were popping up, and Colossians 1:15–23 is Paul's loving and truthful correction to them. Paul understood that if you get Jesus wrong, then you get the Gospel wrong. This passage gives us proof that every Christian needs good Christology.

What Does It Mean That Jesus Is the Center of Everything?

Jesus Is THE PERFECT IMAGE OF GOD

Colossians 1:15a, *The Son is the image of the invisible God...*

There are six major Christological statements in the next few verses that build to a dramatic conclusion. The first of these is the truth that Jesus is the mirrored representation of the invisible God. As humans, we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), meaning that we were made to have a connection with God and called to reflect God. But since the day sin entered the world, the image we bear has been twisted.

Paul is using this reality to highlight the significance of Jesus: that Jesus is the perfect Image of God means that Jesus is the one who is going to bring about the new creation of those image bearers (see also: John 1:1–18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:3). To put it the way Paul does in Romans 5:12–21, Jesus is the second-Adam. This means that as Jesus is the perfect image of

God, when He saves us we are made new and transformed into Jesus' likeness. When we are saved, we don't go back to being like Adam, but we are conformed into the image of the second-Adam. This truth reminds us that Jesus restores us back into who we were created to be!

Jesus Is SUPREME OVER ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:15b, ... *the firstborn over all creation.*

This second truth has led some to believe that Jesus was created. But it's important to see that "firstborn" is not a reference to Jesus being created but to his position over creation. The key word is "over," that he is "firstborn over all creation" means that he is supreme over all things. Jesus outranks all things. In fact, the point of this phrase is to distinguish him from creation, not tie him to creation. Combined with the context of the following verse, we see that Jesus was before all things and is King over all things. Even though Jesus humbled himself and took on flesh, He is still the God who is worthy of all praise, adoration, and glory (Philippians 2:5–11).

Jesus Is THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:16, *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

Jesus is the creator of all things. The fact that all things were created "in him... through him and for him" means that every aspect of creation was His idea. All things find their origin and purpose in Jesus Christ for He has created them for His purposes and His glory. Jesus is the center of everything because there is nothing that has been created that can flourish apart from Him and everything is destined for destruction unless it is redeemed by Him.

Discussion Question:

- Which one of these first three attributes of Jesus stands out to you most and why?

Jesus Is THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:17, *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

As Jesus created all things intentionally, he also holds all things purposefully. The picture of God as one who is detached from the in-workings and out-

workings of the world is false. This verse explains that Jesus didn't just create and walk away, but that He created and is currently sustaining His creation. In the face of brokenness, sometimes we may feel like Jesus is far away from our world. But this verse assures us that nothing is happening apart from His sustaining. Therefore, even when the darkness seems to prevail, we can stand firm knowing that God is working for His glory and our good (Romans 8:28). Every breath that we take is testimony of the sustaining power of Jesus in our lives and the presence of His constant grace.

Jesus Is THE RULER OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:18, *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

First, Jesus is the head and ruler of the church. As such, the church exists to make much of Jesus. We are the many ligaments and members that make up the body (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1–16; Romans 12:3–8). Each of us should join together as the Lord has equipped us to submit to Him and serve Him.

Jesus is also the ruler over all the dead, the only one who can give them new life. In Jesus death and resurrection, he defeated death. This should be a great comfort to us for death is no longer the final word. This should also be a great challenge for us as we believe that those who remain apart from Him will not have life.

To put these ideas together then, as we join the body of Christ: Jesus is the head and the source of life. Those who have not joined his body remain headless and dead in their sin.

Jesus Is THE RESCUER OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:19–20, *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

The Word became flesh and dwelled among us, and as a result, God saved us (John 1:1). Jesus had to be God, for only God can save. Jesus had to be man, for we needed a perfectly obedient substitute. And therefore, we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one can come to the Father unless it's through Him (John 14:6). Rather than remain headless and spiritually dead, Jesus restores things as they should be.

Why can't God just forgive everyone? Why go through this elaborate plan of salvation? In order for God to maintain his perfect holiness, every aspect of the life, work, and person of Jesus was necessary to bring us salvation. Jesus had to be all of this to forgive us of our sins. If Jesus is anything less, then we could not be saved.

Discussion Questions:

- Which one of these last three attributes of Jesus stands out to you most and why?
- What do we learn about God by studying the person and work of Jesus?

Therefore, Jesus Is WORTHY OF ALL DEVOTION, SERVICE AND WORSHIP!

Colossians 1:21–23, Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

It is true that we can live our lives however we want to live, but if Jesus is all of the truths we just unpacked: Then we will be miserable unless we live a life devoted to him. Failing to surrender our lives to Jesus means that we will continue to live in a broken image of God, continue to rule our lives and search for purpose, and continue to remain dead in our sin. But these verses proclaim that because this is who Jesus is, and as a result he was able to bring us the good news of salvation, we therefore can live our lives in steadfast worship to Him alone.

Discussion Questions:

- How can this group encourage one another to stand firm?
- What does it look like in your life to give Jesus your full devotion, service and worship?