

# Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

## WEEK 3 THE GREAT SUSTAINER



***All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*** Colossians 1:16-17

Sometimes it seems the Christian life is simply an ongoing discovery of the sufficiency of Christ. We come to faith by the work of the Holy Spirit and believe that Jesus alone can save us, thereby receiving eternal salvation (John 3:1–15), and yet we need to be reminded again and again that Jesus alone is also the key to life after conversion. If we are honest with ourselves, all of us have at least acted otherwise, though many of us have believed otherwise as well.

Maybe, for a time, we lived like the Galatians, who thought that God would really love them only if they dotted every “i” and crossed every “t” of the Mosaic law. If so, we forgot that God loves us on account of the perfection of Jesus, our Substitute (Gal. 2:15-21; 3:10-14). Perhaps we once followed in the footsteps of Simon Magus, not in trying to purchase the Spirit but in focusing so much on the power of the Holy Spirit that we forgot the One who with His Father pours out the Spirit upon all believers (Acts 8:18-24; see John 14:15-31).

It could even be that we acted like the false teachers in Colossae, turning to diets, superstitions, and other things for spiritual help, not because we denied verbally Jesus’ sufficiency but to make sure all our religious bases were covered (Col. 2:16-19).

### COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

#### CORAM DEO

*C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity, “Let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His [Jesus] being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” The foolishness of humanity and false religion is seen in the willingness to accept Jesus as a good teacher, but nothing more. He is either the Lord, Creator, and Sustainer of all, or He is worthy of no more regard than we would give any other talented teacher.*

Paul’s answer to all these errors is this — Christ alone is sufficient, and believers mature as we take hold of this truth in our beliefs and actions (1:24–29). The apostle’s revelation about our Savior’s identity in Colossians 1:16–17 reveals clearly the sufficiency of Christ. Jesus, we read, is the self-existent, eternal agent of God’s creative acts described in Genesis 1-2. Or, as John 1:1-18 puts it, Jesus is the Word — the Logos who is God and is with God.

In Him all things were made, including the lesser principalities and powers whom the Colossian false teachers trusted (Col. 1:16; 2:18). Their hope in angels for spiritual advancement was misplaced because it meant turning from the Creator to creatures. Moreover, if Jesus’ identity with the Creator is not enough to convince readers of Christ’s sufficiency, the apostle also explains that the Son of God is the great Sustainer. “In him all things hold together” (1:17): Christ, no other being or impersonal force, keeps the universe in order. Without Him, the cosmos would be chaos, and if He has the power to hold everything together, how could anyone believe that He needs to turn anywhere else to find completion?<sup>1</sup>

## OPEN IT



Describe a time when you encountered something in creation that was awe-inspiring. What did this scene teach you about our Creator God?

Though we live in a country without a monarchy, many Americans are still enamored with the events surrounding the royal family of Great Britain. Why do so many people have such an interest in the idea of royalty?

What does this interest tell us about ourselves?

## READ IT | Colossians 1:15-23

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<sup>1</sup> From Ligonier Ministries, the teaching fellowship of R.C. Sproul. All rights reserved. [www.ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org)

## EXPLORE IT



1. According to our text what things has Jesus created?
2. What role does Jesus have when it comes to the church?
3. According to verses 19-20, what things have been reconciled by Christ?
4. What were we reconciled from according to verse 21?
5. How did he reconcile these things?

## GET IT

*The Christ-hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 is a powerful statement about the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ's supremacy is seen at every turn. The first portion focuses on His preeminent role in creation, while the second emphasizes His work as Redeemer. To any Christian, in Colossae then or elsewhere today, who may have been or is confused about Christ's role in the world, these six verses testify to Christ's absolute authority, which is not to be shared with any person, angel, or demon.<sup>2</sup>*

6. How would you describe Jesus to someone who has never heard of Him before? Why would you use those words to describe Him?

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<sup>2</sup> *The Doctrine of Christ in Colossians* by H. Wayne House. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (April 1992) 180-92. © 1992 by Dallas Theological Seminary.

7. Why is it imperative that we have a proper and robust understanding of who Jesus is? What can happen when we allow our view of Him to be only surface level?

### **HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD**

*The concept of "image" involves three things: likeness (Christ is the exact likeness of God, a mirror image [cf. Heb. 1:3]), representation (Christ represents God to us), and manifestation (Christ makes God known to us [cf. John 1:18]). While God made man in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), Christ is the image of God.<sup>3</sup>*

8. William Barclay says that without Christ we can't get beyond the shadows of God. By looking at Jesus as "the image of God" what can we learn about the Father?

*By using this word of Jesus, Paul in effect says, "Look at this Jesus. He shows you not only what God is; he also shows you what man was meant to be. Here is manhood as God designed it."*

9. What does Jesus teach us about how God has created and designed humanity to live?

### **FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION**

*Jesus is not only God; He is the "firstborn over all creation." Jehovah's Witnesses believe that this verse teaches that Jesus was a created being and therefore not God. Actually, the phrase "firstborn" is most frequently translated as "heir or owner." In ancient time it meant the "ranking one, or supreme one." Jacob was not born first but he was the heir. This is strongly supported in Psalm 89:27 where we read that God appointed King David as his "firstborn," even though he was the youngest of eight brothers. This verse concludes by saying that David will be the "most exalted of the kings of the earth." "Firstborn" therefore is a title of honor or position, not chronological order.<sup>4</sup>*

10. How is Jesus the "firstborn" over every part of creation?

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<sup>3</sup> William Barclay *The Daily Study Bible Colossians*

<sup>4</sup> Brian Bill Sermon *The Supreme Question of Life*



11. How does the fact that Jesus reigns over all of creation give you confidence as you encounter the world?

12. What doctrinal implications come as a result of declaring that Jesus is a created being as the cults erroneously claim?

13. How would you defend the fact that Jesus was not created? What scriptures would you use to defend this position?

*At the early church council at Nicea in 324 AD, the issue of Christ was debated and defined in this way: I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father; through him all things were made.*

14. How does the creed reinforce the idea that Jesus is not a created being?

15. Paul tells us in verse 17 that "In Christ all things hold together." What does this truth do for you as you observe the events of the cosmos as well as engage in the minute details of everyday life?

16. As Paul continues his theme of Christ's preeminence over all things he reminds us that Jesus is also the head of the church. In light of this headship, in what ways must a church submit to Christ's leadership in all of its ministries and activities?

17. In what ways does the fullness of God dwell in the God-Man, Jesus Christ?

What about Jesus and His life pleases the Father? (See Matthew 3:17)

18. How does Paul's writing on the supremacy of Christ strengthen your faith and give you hope that you have been reconciled no matter the sins that you have committed?

How does the truth of verse 22 spur you on to continue in the faith?

19. In verse 23 what things hinder our confidence that we are called to have in the Gospel? What truths about Jesus from this passage strengthen our hope in the Gospel and its power to change lives?

20. Knowing these facts about Christ, what difference should it make in our lives?