
Colossians 1:15-18, *Jesus Christ is Supreme!*

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: Jesus Christ is the visible representation of the invisible Most Holy God eternal. Jesus is eternal too. He has always existed; with no beginning or end, He is Supreme! God created the entire universe—all matter, substance, and form, all time, thought, and essence, all by and through Christ. Christ is supreme. He is the absolute highest and most precious transcendent Being through it all, and through us too. Consider that Christ made all things and enables us to trust and have faith in Him. He made literally everything in and within the universe, beyond dimensions and time—including what we see and do not see. What we think is not important as well as what we think is. Such as, thinking angels and principalities as well as heads of states, movers and shakers are important, when in the grand scheme of things, not so much. Those who hold the power as in kings and kingdoms rulers and authority are not the significant factors of life and living and eternity, as Christ is The Ultimate King and Authority is above it all! Everything has been created by Him and for Him; Jesus Christ has always existed and holds all things together—every particle of matter—our soul and being. Christ is the head of all things, including the Church. The Church is His body; therefore He must be placed first and foremost in all church dealings, plans, and preparations. He is to be worshiped and He is the primary purpose for anything upon which a church is to focus and do!

Contexts and Background:

Paul is using philosophical language of the “logos” (eternal reason), where the Greeks believed that the god Zeus held the universe together and Atlas held it up. The wording Paul uses means divine reason that transcends the universe and makes the point that Jesus Christ is not only fully Divine, He is The One Creator, Lord, and God. He is the archetypal image of God and goodness. The Colossians did not understand who Christ was or have an adequate view of His Lordship. Some considered Christ not fully divine. This passage could have been an early Christian hymn that Paul quoted or perhaps even wrote. It points to the grandeur and glory of our Lord and that He is all-powerful and supreme above all things! The Church is strong when it is in Christ and He is placed first; He is primary.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Image of the invisible God.* This is the argument that Christ is fully God and Lord; His deity is assured. We are not able to see God since He transcends space and time. However, Christ being fully God gives us a tangible look into an intangible God. Thus, our view and concept of God rests on who Jesus is and has done. This also means we are not to look to anything but Christ for Who and What God is. No theological construct can be formed of God without Christ, as in no philosophical theory, because it will be false and mislead others (John 1:1-18; 8:58; 10:30-33; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; 6:16; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8).
- *Invisible.* This refers to the “non-corporeal” beings such as Angels whom we cannot normally see with our eyes without some supernatural unveiling. God cannot be seen, but Christ was, and thus God was seen then; now, we commune in God (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:19-23; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16).
- *Firstborn of all/over all creation.* Means the chief and boss or one who is preeminent, and in context, Christ the Creator and Redeemer is in charge. This does not mean that Christ was created or was the first creation; rather, it is a Jewish term meaning the highest honor, first in rank and authority and importance. This refers to Christ’s preeminence, His position of authority. For the Jew, the first-born son was the “chief.” He had the authority of the family and received all or most of the inheritance. As to a nation, this applied to Israel. As to a Christian, it now also applies to us, our inheritance in Him by His authority to create and redeem. In Hellenistic culture referring to deities, *first* also meant superior (Gen. 49:3-4; Ex. 4:22; Deut. 21:17; 1 Chron. 5:12; Psalm 89:27; Jer. 31:9; John 1:1-3, 14-18; 3:16-18; Col. 1:14; 1 John 4:9; Rev. 1:5).

- *For by him.* The goal of creation is to glorify Christ, who is both the agent of the formation of the universe and the creation of humanity, and its main goal is to know and make known Christ (Gen. 1).
- *All things.* In context, this is an expression of love—the love of God the Father expressed to God the Son.
- *Were created.* Meaning the creator cannot be created; only an eternal God can manipulate matter in such a way that substance can come from nothing. This is a clear presentation that Jesus Christ is not just a god but The One True God, whose preeminence predates time and history because He is the agent of creation. There is only One God: Jesus Christ is God. Other passages testify to the Trinitarian nature of God as in One God and three personalities, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Rev. 5:1-7, 13).
- *Thrones or powers/dominions/principalities.* Refers to created beings that are different from humans such as angels, demons, and others we do not know about. Even though these seem ominous, they are created and are under the authority of Christ. The people in this early church thought that Jesus was just one of these or some hybrid like Heracles who was half god and half man. Jesus is fully God and fully Man (Rom. 2:15; Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; 1 Pet. 3:22; Jude 6).
- *Rulers or authorities.* May refer to human might, and/or powerful, political figures and people of wealth and power. Even though we may admire, envy, or fear them, they too are mere people, and Jesus is Lord and thus Superior!
- *Before all things.* This is a Greek philosophical term meaning “logos,” or the divine reason of the invisible substance that holds the universe together. This is further expounded by John (John 1:1-14). Christ was not created or evolved; rather, He is eternal, having always existed with no beginning and no end. He is the daily and eternal sustainer of the universe. An early heresy of the Church was the belief that Jesus was a created being, a misunderstanding of the words “son” and “firstborn,” taught by Arius 250-336 AD and many cult groups today, like the Jehovah Witnesses (Mic. 5:2; John 1:1-14; 8:58; John 1:1; Rev. 22:13).
- *All things hold together/consist.* Christ is the One for whom we exist and have meaning; He also gives us substance and community. The case of the significance and superiority of Christ continues. He not only made the universe, He sustains it by holding it all together. He is also displayed throughout the universe (Psalm. 2:7; 33:6; 102: 25-27; Prov. 8:30; John 1:3; Rom. 1:18-20; 11:33-36; Heb. 1:1-4; 11:3; 12:26-28; 2 Pet. 3:4-7).
- *Head.* Meaning in physiology the head is in charge of and controls the body. Thus, Jesus is the One who births, gives life, directs, and gives information and direction to the universe and to the Church too. Thus, we must adhere to Him in this. This is Paul’s point for this passage. Christ is the Head of the universe, and for all of humanity and the Church (Rom. 12:3-5; Col. 2:19).
- *Of the Church/body.* In context, this means that all things originate from God, and are sustained and controlled by Him, as He is in His Church. It is not about what we think it is or should be; it is what it is. He is Head over “our” church, not the pastors or leaders or trends or ideas, whether they are good or bad. We are tools and means; He is the Means and Reason. When this gets lost or forgotten, He is pushed aside and false teachings and misrepresenting of God continues. The Colossians thought they had to placate and solve riddles from angels to receive the clue to the next step of spiritual enlightenment; here, it is explained: Christ is all in all (1 Cor. 12:4-27; Eph. 1:4, 21-23; 4:15; 5:23)!
- *The beginning.* This refers to the authority, “the source” of it all. Here, Jesus is the “agent” and the “goal” of God, and He is the most respected authority in both the universe and in the Church. This means that from God, all things originate and are sustained and He has full rights to all things. This, in

Judaism, was a name for God, that He is the Creator Almighty who has wisdom beyond man's wisdom. Here, it is referring to Jesus as God and His role in the resurrection, which initiates the Kingdom of God and His new creation. He is first in creation and first to rise from the dead in this new life that He gives us (John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:10)

- *Firstborn from the dead.* Meaning Christ is Sovereign, the highest in all creation, and the greatest of all who are raised from the dead. Referring that Jesus gives us life and blood and then a new life in Him that we can enjoy now and for eternity. This also continues the key word, *beginning*; it may also mean the end of the age of Law and the beginning of the age of grace. It can also mean the inaugurating of a future event such as the "second coming." More likely, this means that Christ's resurrection marked the inauguration of the covenant of grace (Acts 2:29-36; 13:32-35; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Cor. 5:17 Col. 3:10; Phil. 2:8-11; Heb. 1:6; 12:23; Rev. 1:17-18). This also shows that the greatest miracle. People who were raised from the dead (2 Kings 4:35; Luke 7:15; John 11:44; Acts 9:36-41; 20:7-11) would one day just die again.
- *Preeminence/Supremacy.* Jesus Christ is LORD! This is the theme verse of the Book of Colossians. Here, Christ has the highest standing as Creator, Sustainer, and Head. He reconciles us, gives us our hope, is the Source of all we are and have, and He is our wisdom, our redemption, our empowerment, and our life. His glory radiates throughout the universe and must also radiate in and through us too, personally and collectively as a Church pointing to Him (Acts 13:33-34; Rom. 1:4; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:1-11; Heb. 1:4-5)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

The chief characteristic of who we are in Christ is the fact that He is the living, Supreme God who has existed for all time, who transcends space, time, and thought, who intimately knows us and loves us. Christ is Lord; Christ is Supreme! Christ is the tangible aspect of God who is beyond sight and comprehension. Consider that He is the God who created the universe, who made all things, who has this impacted you? He made all that we see, and all that we do not see, how has this come with you to the daily grind of your life? He is God who created the molecules of substance that formed the ground on which we stand and the wood upon which He was crucified. In all of life, all of what we will face and know, He has gone before us, and He still goes with us. This world was created by Christ and for Christ; He is indeed supreme. Thus, we need to learn how to live our lives in Him for His glory. Life is not about our ideas or expectations; it is about Him as LORD! When we gain this mindset, we begin our journey of growing in faith, maturity, character, and being more content in life and of better use to Christ and others around us. This is realized when we see the Hope we have in Him; when we allow that hope to be a foundation, He will carry us through all things!

The point of this passage is that Jesus is Lord, Almighty God. This is fact and nothing we can think or do can change that. Thus, if Christ is the Head of the universe, is He Head over you? Since Jesus Christ is the Creator and foundation of all things, since He is the purpose and reason of the Universe, since He is the highest and most respected authority—is He so in your church? He is! But is He revered, respected, worshiped, and honored as such? Is the purpose of your personal agenda in your church dealings and management to seek to know and glorify Christ? Or, is the purpose of your church to placate personalities, the rulers, movers and shakers, the political agendas and trends? He is the Head; so do you know, teach, and worship Him in this way and lead and manage your personal lives and church this way? If not, you are leaving Christ outside the church door!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?

5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Who holds the power (as in authority) in your town or state? Why is this important? Should such people be honored? If so, how is Christ revered then?
2. Why do many people fuss and envy over heads of states? What about the movers and shakers in your church?
3. Why is it important that we know that Jesus Christ has always existed? How is Christ displayed as the head of your church?
4. Why is it important that we realize that Christ is supreme, sufficient, and enough? How can this information stimulate your faith, help you put Christ first, and move you on to spiritual maturity?
5. What does it mean to you that you have a Savior in whom you can have faith and trust? What does this passage tell you about our Lord?
6. How is the Church strong when it is in Christ? Why is it then that so many leaders forget or on purpose do not place Him first? How have you seen this happen? What are the main thinking and trends in your church, and how do they line up to the fact that Christ must be primary? How can they be improved or reformed?
7. How do you feel that Christ the Creator and Redeemer is in charge of you and your church? What does this mean to you?
8. How and why have there been misunderstandings of the words “son” and “firstborn?” Why would people want to argue that Christ is not fully God?
9. Why is our local church not about what we think it is or should be? Why would some church leaders behave and think that their church is theirs and that they can and should do as they please? How does this hurt our Lord?
10. How do you display Christ in your personal life? In your church? How should you? What are you going to do about it?
11. Reflect on that Christ made all things. What does this do for your trust and faith in Him? What about how you lead and manage your church? Is He the head there? How so? In what area is He kept on the outside? What are you going to do about it?
12. What can you do to better focus on Christ? How will this help you know Him better? How would this then help you in all the other things and stuff in life?