

Quarter One: Uniting Heaven & Earth: Christ in Philippians & Colossians

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Lesson 8—The Preeminence of Christ

Monday: Firstborn Over All Creation

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- **Last Week:** “A Heavenly Citizenship”
 - Phil 3:17 – 4:23
 - Conclusion to book of Philippians: secrets to a joyful Christian life
- **This Week:** “The Preeminence of Christ”
 - Col 1:15 – 20 (next week finishes Col 1)
 - Jesus is our Redemption, and He rescues us from darkness / Satan and brings us to Himself (Light)
 - Study this week of Christ: image of the invisible God / firstborn over all creation

Memory Text: “He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Col 1:15 – 17, NKJV).

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Image of the Invisible God (SQ)
 - Col 1:15 – Biblical examples of an image; Jesus as God Himself & the exact image of God; God’s thought made audible & His character made visible
- 2. **Monday:** Firstborn Over All Creation (Jill)
 - Col 1:15 - 17 – firstborn not necessarily chronological, but in preeminence; He is Creator & Sustainer / Redeemer; He is preexistent
- 3. **Tuesday:** Head of the Body (the Church) (John L)
 - Col 2:10; 1 Cor 12:12 – 27 – Christ as the head of the church, providing leadership, guidance, nourishment, unity & growth
- 4. **Wednesday:** The “Beginning” (and Initiator) (James)
 - Col 1:18 – Christ as the head & also as the beginning (Creator); Christ as the preeminent resurrection, preeminent Head of humanity & Head of the church
- 5. **Thursday:** To Reconcile All Things (John D)
 - Col 1:19, 20 – Christ as the One who reconciles us back to God: His death on the cross

Monday: Firstborn Over All Creation

Col 1:15 – 17; Luke 2:7; Rom 8:29; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:5; 1 Sam 16:10 – 13; Ps 89:27; Ex 4:22; Eph 3:9, 10; John 1:1 – 3; Rev 4:11; Eph 6:12; 1 Cor 2:7, Gal 1:17, Eph 1:4

- **Meaning of the term, “Firstborn”**

- Does firstborn mean oldest in chronological age?
 - In life it often does
- In Scripture, firstborn = special relationship a son has with his father, regardless of birth order
 - Isaac was more prominent than Ishmael
 - Jacob was more prominent than Esau
 - Joseph was more prominent than older brothers
- In Scripture, firstborn means “first in terms of preeminence”

- **Biblical examples:**

- David – youngest of 8 sons – anointed king (1 Sam 16:10 – 13)
 - Ps 89:27 – “I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”
 - David was called the firstborn because of his exalted position, privileges & responsibility as king
- God to Moses – Ex 4:22 - “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.”’”
 - Israel = God’s chosen people
- Almost every other Scriptural reference is about Christ, the Firstborn
 - Creator, Redeemer, the preexistent, preeminent One

- **Christ as central**

- Col 1:13 – 23 = theological heart of this epistle
- Vs 15 – 20 = high point of Paul’s teachings about Christ
 - The heresy at Colossae tended to accent the importance of other powers and, apparently, diminish the importance of Christ
 - Colossian believers were surrounded by the practices & influences of heathenism, as well as false teachers, & “were in danger of being drawn away from the simplicity of the gospel, and Paul, in warning them against this, pointed them to Christ as the only safe guide.” (AA, p. 473)
 - Paul’s hymn celebrates the centrality, importance & preeminence of Christ
 - One of the most inspiring statements about Jesus, the beloved Son of God, & how the cosmic scope of His work of redemption impacted the believers in Colossae
 - 2 stanzas to the hymn:
 - 1st = celebrates Christ’s work as Creator of all things
 - Christ = Creator
 - 2nd = celebrates Christ’s work in reconciling all things through His blood on the cross
 - Christ = Redeemer
 - 1st half of Colossians – “in Christ” or “in Him” featured prominently
 - Our identity is **in Christ**

- Col 1:15 – 17 – “He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn over all creation**. (16) For **by Him** all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created **through Him** and **for Him**. (17) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”
 - Firstborn over all creation = doesn’t mean He was the first created
 - He IS the Creator
 - By Him all things were created
 - All things were created through Him & for Him
 - Eph 3:9 – “...which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.”
 - God carried out process of creation through Jesus
 - John 1:3 – “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”
 - **Takeaway #1:** Christ is not the created; He is the Creator
 - He is preeminent because He made humanity & the entire world
 - Christ’s creative power encompasses “**all things**”:
 - All = *pas* = each and every one
 - Cosmic geography (“in heaven & on earth”)
 - Fundamental reality (“visible & invisible”)
 - All beings – human beings or angelic beings – owe their existence to Jesus (whether seen or unseen)
 - **Takeaway #2:** Christ is not just the Origin of all; He is their Destiny, as well
 - He is preeminent, because He’s not just the Agent; He is the Goal of creation
 - Cosmogony (how the world begin) is joined with
 - Eschatology (how the world will end)
 - All things were created **through Him** and **for Him**
 - He is the beginning & the end
- Col 1:20 – “and by Him (Christ) to reconcile all things to Himself by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”
 - **Takeaway #3:** Christ is not the redeemed; He is the Redeemer
 - He is preeminent because He redeemed humanity by His substitutionary atonement on the cross
- Col 1:17 – “And He is **before all things**, and in Him all things consist.”
 - Before all things = Gk, can mean “precedence in rank, as well as time” – but in every other instance in Paul’s writings, it refers to time
 - NLT: “He existed before anything else, and He holds all creation **together**.”
 - **Takeaway #4:** Christ did not have a beginning; He is preexistent
 - He is preeminent because He is divine and He existed from eternity
 - John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”
 - Margin of Bible: “Before there was a beginning, the Word had been”

- Col 1:17 – “And He is before all things, and in Him all things **consist**.”
 - Consist = Gk, “bring together” “to unite”
 - **Takeaway #5:** Christ did not just create, He is the Sustainer & Unifier of that creation
 - He is preeminent because He sustains the cosmos and brought all together in One
 - AA, p. 471, Paul declared that “the hand that sustains the worlds in space, and holds in their orderly arrangements and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for them.”

5 Takeaways of who Christ is, from Colossians 1

- #1: Christ is not the created; He is the Creator
 - He is preeminent because He made humanity & the entire world
- #2: Christ is not just the Origin of all; He is their Destiny, as well
 - He is preeminent, because He’s not just the Agent; He is the Goal of creation
- #3: Christ is not the redeemed; He is the Redeemer
 - He is preeminent because He redeemed humanity by His substitutionary atonement on the cross
- #4: Christ did not have a beginning; He is preexistent
 - He is preeminent because He is divine and He existed from eternity
- #5: Christ did not just create, He is the Sustainer & Unifier of that creation
 - He is preeminent because He sustains the cosmos and brought all together in One