

The Supremacy of Christ

Text: Colossians 1:13-23

Main idea: Christ is supreme over everything because of his relationship to God, to creation, and to his people.

- I. Christ is supreme because of his relationship to God: He bears God's image in a way that no other being does.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

- a. This idea is echoed in other parts of the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- b. You might remember from Genesis that in the beginning, God originally created man "in his own image".

Gen 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

- i. Many understood the image of God as meaning that man "is a moral being, equipped with a mind, a heart and a will" (R.C. Sproul, Essential Truths of the Christian Faith).
- ii. However, at the Fall (Gen 3), the image of God in mankind was marred (not destroyed) so that we do not mirror God's likeness as closely as we once did.

- c. The fact that Christ is “the image of the invisible God” means that in Christ the nature and being of God are truly revealed in a unique way.

1. No one has ever seen God.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

2. However, when we see Christ, we see God the Father through him.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and *yet* you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

- a. We see the Father in the attributes of Jesus: Jesus possesses attributes that resemble those of the Father.

Colossians 1:19 For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.

- i. Jesus is eternal

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

- ii. Jesus is sinless

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.

- iii. Jesus is omniscient

1. He can see into the hearts of men and women.

John 4:17-18 The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now

have is not your husband; this you have said truly.”

2. He knows future events

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Mark 13:6-8 ⁶“Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many.” ⁷“When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.” ⁸“For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

iv. Jesus is powerful and authoritative.

1. He could heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, raise the dead, cast out demons, calm the storm, walk on water, cause a fig tree to wither, and much more!

2. He has the power to forgive sins.

Mark 2:5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

3. The Father has given all authority in heaven and on earth to Jesus.

Mt 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth...”

b. We see the Father in the actions and teaching of Jesus: Jesus communicates the will of God.

- i. Jesus reveals the will of God in his actions.

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."

- ii. Jesus reveals the will of God in his teaching.

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 7:16-17 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."¹⁷ "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself."

- iii. The "will of God" which was communicated in the teachings of Jesus, was echoed in men like Paul.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

- d. Because Christ is image of God, this means he is the preeminate being over all creation.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

- i. "Firstborn of all creation" means that Jesus is superior to all (by virtue of his deity).
 1. In Old Testament times, the firstborn son was given a double portion of the inheritance from his father (Deut 21:15-17) and was given a place of honor higher than his brothers.
 2. So Christ is called the firstborn because he occupies a place of honor that higher than any other created thing.
- ii. Being the "firstborn of all creation" does not mean that Jesus was a created being and that he was created being before all other beings.

1. For even other passages of Scripture do not always use the term “firstborn” as literally meaning “born first”.

Ps 87:27 “I will make him (David) the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”

2. Scripture also teaches that Jesus was eternally existent with the Father.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

- iii. However, because Christ existed prior to creation, this does give him reason to be praised.

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

1. Though he was not the first created being, you could say that he was first in time before the creation, since he existed before it.
2. This verse fits in nicely with the idea of Christ being the “firstborn of creation” in that he is before all things from a temporal standpoint and also in honor.

- II. Christ is supreme because of his relationship to creation: he is sole agent through whom everything was made, he holds all things together and he gives purpose to creation.

- a. The world was made through Christ.

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things have been created through Him and for Him.

- i. On the surface it would appear that this text teaches that Christ was the creator of the world.
 1. Colossians 1:16a in the NIV & NASB both read “for by him all things were created”.
 2. Colossians 1:16b in the NIV read, “all things have been created by him and for him.”
- ii. But closer examination reveals that Jesus is the agent of creator, not the creator himself (the Father)

1. These verses really mean “in” and “through” and not by.
 - a. The word behind Col 1:16a really is “in”. (so, “for *in* Him all things were created”)
 - i. The ordinary Greek word for ‘by’ is not used here.
 - ii. Instead, the word here (‘in’) might be intended to point to a personal agent.
 - iii. Thus, the idea is not that everything was created by Christ, but rather, in Christ all things were created- through his agency.
 - b. The NASB is more correct in translating Col 1:16b as ‘through’ (so, “all things have been created *through* him and for him”)
 - i. This word most commonly is translated as ‘through’ but not ‘by’.
 - ii. Thus, the idea is that things in heaven on earth were not directly created by Christ, but through him and his power.

2. We can see this same idea of *agency* in the example of Matt 9:34

Matthew 9:34 But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

3. God the Father made the world

- a. Acts 4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.
- b. (And many other passages that speak of ‘God’ being the creator of the world.)

- iii. This idea of Christ being the agent in creation is found elsewhere in Scripture

1. John 1:1-3 ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through

Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

2. Hebrews 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
- iv. Christ's agency in creation was absolutely necessary in making all things.
1. Just because Christ was not the Creator (that is, the Father, if we had to 'split hairs'), does not mean his role was unimportant.
 2. On the contrary, he was involved in the creation of everything in this world.

John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things have been created through Him and for Him.

- a. Not only were humans and everything on the earth created through Christ, but also the heavens, angels and all other beings.
- b. "Thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities" probably refers to powers in the spiritual realm.

- i. This is the case in Eph 6 (The Armor of God)

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- ii. In Colossians, Paul was writing against certain false teachings that had crept up in the church.
 1. Some commentators speculate that one of these teachings was that there are many levels of spirit beings who act as intermediaries between God and man, that some Colossians were worshiping

them, and that Christ was merely one of these beings.

Colossians 2:18a Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels...

2. If this was being taught, then Paul might be saying here that Christ is superior to such beings – yes, he even was the force that *created* them all.

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things have been created through Him and for Him.

- b. Christ holds all things together.

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

- i. Jesus Christ is the sustainer of the universe.

Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

- ii. Jesus is also the unifying principle of all life.

Col 1:16b all things have been created through him and for him.

- III. Christ is supreme because of his relationship to us: he is the head of the body, he is the firstborn from the dead, he reconciled us to God, and he brought forgiveness for our sins.

- a. Jesus is the head of the church.

Colossians 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

- i. Jesus is the source of the church's life.

- ii. Jesus is the church's lord/authority.

1 Cor 11:3 the head of every man is Christ, woman's head is man, and Christ's head is God.

- b. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

Colossians 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

- i. What Jesus was to the universe (firstborn over all creation), he is to the church (firstborn from the dead).

- ii. This means several things.

1. That Jesus was the first in time to be raised from the dead.
2. He is the most significant figure to be raised from the dead.
3. He is the guarantee for all of his people that they too will be raised from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

- c. Jesus brought reconciliation between God the Father and us.

Colossians 1:20-22 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself (the Father), having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, / say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach

- i. The term 'reconciliation' implies that we were enemies with God prior to knowing Christ.

1. Before we were forgiven, we weren't just on neutral terms with God; we were his *enemies*.

Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2. Because we were rebellious and hostile towards God, we were destined for judgment and wrath.

Ephesians 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

ii. But through faith in Christ, he has reconciled (restored in relationship) us to God.

1. This reconciliation could only have been brought about through the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross.

Colossians 1:22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach

2. This is because without the shedding of blood, our forgiveness would have not been possible.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the Law, *one may* almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

3. The purpose of Christ's reconciling work was so that we could be blameless.

a. In Christ's work of reconciliation, our sins have been forgiven.

Colossians 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

b. Now that our sins are wiped away, we are now free to be conformed more and more into the likeness of Christ- holy and blameless.

Colossians 1:22 -yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

iii. But Christ didn't die just to reconcile us individually, but to reconcile the entire world.

Colossians 1:20-22 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself (the Father), having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

1. This does not mean that everyone will be saved.

2. However, it does mean that Christ's work of reconciliation is meant to benefit more than us (individually).
 - a. We tend to think of our salvation in an individualistic way ("Christ died for *me*", etc.)
 - b. But Scripture says that all of creation is awaiting liberation from this world of sin.

Romans 8:19-22 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

- c. So Christ has come to remove the curse from the whole earth entirely, and to bring about a restoration of all creation. This will find its ultimate fulfillment in:
 - i. The destruction of this old earth, and...
 - ii. The creation of a new heavens and new earth.

Conclusion/Application: