

# Colossians 1:17-20 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

[Colossians Overview](#) - Click Chart on right side

<b>Christ</b> <b>Preeminent in All Things</b> <b>Supreme Lord - Sufficient Savior</b>			
Colossians 1	Colossians 2	Colossians 3	Colossians 4
<b>Supremacy of Christ</b>		<b>Submission to Christ</b>	
Doctrinal and Corrective		Practical and Reassuring	
What Christ Did For Us		What Christ Does Through Us	
Christ Our Lord		Christ Our Life	Christ our Love

Christ the Head of the Body	Christ the Lord of the Universe	Christ the Head of the Home	
Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
Reconciliation	Creation	Submission	Conversation
His Person and Word		His Peace and Presence	

**Colossians 1:17** He **is before all things** and in Him **all things hold together**. (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [kai autos estin \(3SPAI\) pro panton kai ta panta en auto sunesteken. \(3SRAI\)](#)

**Amplified:** And He Himself existed before all things, and in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together) ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

**MLB** (Berkley): and He is Himself before all, and in Him all things hold together.

**Phillips:** He is both the first principle and the upholding principle of the whole scheme of creation. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** And He himself antedates all things, and all things in Him cohere.

**Young's Literal:** and himself is before all, and the all things in him have consisted.

**AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS: kai autos estin (3SPAI) pro panton:**

- Isa 43:11, 12, 13, 44:6 Mic 5:2 John 1:1, 2, 3, 8:58, 17:5
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

"And He Himself existed before all things" (Amp),

Literally "He is continually ("is" = present tense) before all things" emphasizing His absolute existence.

"Christ existed before anything else existed", "...before anything was created."

## CHRIST'S PREEXISTENCE THE GREAT "I AM"

**He** - Emphatic in the Greek sentence. The personal pronoun **He** (autos) is used for emphasis ("He Himself" or '**He and no other**' is the idea). As **Moule** says "HE and no other who could even seem to rival or obscure His sublime eminence." ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**Spurgeon** - Note how Paul harps upon that one string, "**He**." See how much he dwells upon the divine person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He will never have done praising him, he keeps on heaping up epithets to magnify that blessed name; and he truly was in the Spirit of God when he did this, for it is the work of the Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. He makes him great in our hearts, and then we try to make him great by our words and by our acts....How can anyone ever read this passage, and yet say that Christ Jesus is only a man? By what twisting of words on such language as this be applied to the most eminent prophet or apostle who ever lived? Surely he must be God by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist.

**J I Packer's** illustration of Spirit's role to glorify Jesus - The Holy Spirit's distinctive role is to fulfill what we may call a floodlight ministry in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as this role was concerned, the Spirit "was not yet" (John 7:29, literal Greek) while Jesus was on earth; only when the Father had glorified him (John 17:1, 5) could the Spirit's work of making men aware of Jesus' glory begin. I remember walking to church one winter evening to preach on the words, "He will glorify me" (John 16:14), seeing the building floodlit as I turned

a corner, and realizing that this was exactly the illustration my message needed. When floodlighting is well done, the floodlights are placed so that you do not see them; in fact, you are not supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make it visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its details into relief so that you can see it properly. This perfectly illustrated the Spirit's new covenant role. He is, so to speak, the hidden flood light shining on the Savior. Or think of it this way. It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder on to Jesus who stands facing us. The Spirit's message to us is never, "Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me", but always, "Look at him, and see his glory; listen to him and hear his word; go to him and have life; get to know him and taste his gift of joy and peace." **The Spirit, we might say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together.** (James Packer, BORROW [Your Father Loves You - Daily Insights for Knowing God](#))

**Lightfoot** - The emphatic use (of "he") therefore means **"He himself, He and no other"** so that among supernatural rulers Jesus has no rival for the lordship of the universe or of the church (next verse).

**He is before all things** - This speaks of Christ's preexistence (see below for discussion of Jesus' description as "I am")

**He is (present tense** = continually = timeless present) and thus the existence of the Son is apart from all time; i.e., it expresses immutability of existence and describes Christ's absolute existence as the eternal **"I Am"** (ego eimi - see Exodus 3:14-note for same phrase in Greek translation of Hebrew, cf Jn 8:58+). Thus Paul does **not** say that Jesus "came to be before all things," but that "He is continually before all things" which gives the sense of **"I exist, I am"**.

**Vine** adds that Paul makes a clear "declaration of His eternal preexistence as the Son; for the whole passage is a presentation of His Deity, His relationship, His creative and sustaining power as "the Son of His [the Father's] love" (Col 1:13). The teaching that His Sonship had a beginning at His birth or at any other time is utterly erroneous, and derogatory to His glory. The apostle does not say "He was before all things," but "He is." Therefore his preexistence is absolute existence. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**Wayne House** - This reference to His preexistence relates naturally to the previous reference to Christ as the **Firstborn of all creation**. Christ Himself spoke of His preexistence in connection with His claims of deity, as in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I AM." And, as He prayed in His high priestly prayer, He was with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5) ([The Doctrine of Christ in Colossians](#))

**Jesus** claimed His **eternal existence** before the Jews when they asked Him "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" to which Jesus replied "Truly, truly (Amen, Amen), I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I Am** (ego eimi). Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple." (Jn 8:57-59, cp Ex 3:14) **Why did they seek to stone Him in Jn 8:59?** Stoning was the normal punishment for blasphemy in the Old Testament. This attempt to stone Christ shows they believed He was committing blasphemy claiming to be God. Jesus Christ is not some lesser created being who created the universe at some later time, but He is the eternal God who existed as the great **I Am** before anything was created. As an aside, you need to file these verses away in your mind so that you will be able to give a reply to the skeptic who says Jesus never claimed to be God. That is clearly a misconception (or vain hope and/or delusion) of many skeptics/agnostics.

**Hemphill** commenting on **I Am** notes that "Various scholars have suggested different translations of the name of God used in this passage. The name is from the imperfect stem of the Hebrew verb "to be." The imperfect tense denotes an action that started in the past, continues in the present, but is not yet complete. Many Bible scholars follow the simple translation that we have in our text, "**I am who I am.**" One of our Old Testament scholars at Southwestern translates it this way: **I AM who I have always been.**" I like this translation because it affirms that the God who spoke from the burning bush is the same God who worked through the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It also implies His ability and desire to work through Moses in the present and the future. However we translate this name, we can be assured that it affirms God's self-existence and His eternity (Hemphill, K. Names of God)

**Keil and Delitzsch** suggest that "The repetition of the same word [**I am**] suggests the idea of uninterrupted continuance and boundless duration."

**Thomas Constable** quotes several sources writing that "'To the Hebrew 'to be' does not just mean to exist as all other beings and things do as well—but to be active, to express oneself in active being, 'The God Who acts.' 'I am what in creative activity and everywhere I turn out to be,' or 'I am (the God) that really acts.' (Sigmund Mowinckel, "The Name of the God of Moses,") "I am that I am" means "God will reveal Himself in His actions" through history." (See [Davis, John J. "The Patriarchs' Knowledge of Jehovah." Grace Theological J 1963 - discussion specifically of Exodus 6:3](#)) Another writer paraphrased God's answer, "It is I Who am with you." In other words, the One Who had promised to be with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent Moses to them. "The answer Moses receives is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a name. It is an assertion of authority, a confession of an

essential reality, and thus an entirely appropriate response to the question Moses poses. (Durham) ([Expository Notes](#))

**Swanson** writes that "**I AM WHO I AM**, i.e., a title of God with a focus on **presence, care, concern, and relationship** (Swanson, J. Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew. Old Testament)

Is God-?' 'Does God-?'  
Man's 'Why?' and 'How?'  
In ceaseless iteration storm the sky.

**'I am'**; I will'; 'I do'—sure Word of God,  
Yea and Amen, Christ answers each cry;  
To all our anguished questionings and doubts  
Eternal affirmation and reply.

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed "now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee**before** the world was. (cp Jn 17:24, 1:18, 3:13, 10:30, 14:9, 1Jn 1:2)

In **John's** first epistle he notes Jesus' eternity "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the **eternal life**, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1Jn 1:1, 2, 3)

In Rev 22:13 ([note](#)) He said "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning (arche) and the end. (cp Re 1:8-[note](#), Re 21:6-[note](#))

Paul writes that Jesus "existed in the form of God (yet) did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped" (Php 2:6)[note](#))

**Before** ([4253](#)) is the Greek preposition "**pro**" which can be translated in front of, prior to, before and can refer to both of place and time. Figuratively **pro** speaks of precedence, preference, dignity.**Pro** thus states the precedence of Christ **in time** and **in place** (rank) for He always existed before creation and thus has the preeminence as Creator.

**John** has a similar thought (speaking primarily to His precedence in terms of time) in the preface to his gospel " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." (John 1:1-3)

**Moule** says Christ is **before** "in respect of priority of existence; the priority of eternity."

[Ray Stedman](#) points out that what Paul is saying is that Christ "is outside His own creation; He was there first (which) describes His eternity as the Son of God. As **C. S. Lewis** has pointed out, He is over creation as a King and a Sovereign, not subject to it or part of it, but intimately related to it."

Dutch theologian, **Abraham Kuyper** adds that "When Jesus looks at his universe from his exalted throne at the right hand of the Father, and he sees the great galaxies whirling in space, the planets and the people upon this planet, and all the minute details of life here including the details of our individual lives, there is nothing that he sees anywhere of which he cannot say, "Mine!"

In a verse that surely refers to Christ, **Solomon** records Him saying that "The LORD possessed me **at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.**" (Pr 8:22)

**Isaiah** records ""I, even I, am the LORD; and there is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, and there was no strange god among you; so you are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And I am God. "**Even from eternity I am** (ego eimi) **He** and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?" (Isa 43:11, 12, 13) "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: **'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.**" (Isa 44:6)

In the prophet **Micah** we read "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. **His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.**" (Mic 5:2)

**John** writes that "In the beginning **was** (imperfect tense = conveys idea of no origin for the Logos, simply continuous existence) the Word, and the Word **was** (imperfect tense) with God, and the Word **was** (imperfect tense) God. He **was** (imperfect tense) in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." (Jn 1:1-3)

The writer of **Hebrews** speaks to the eternity of the Son explaining that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever." (Heb 13:8-note)

The ancient heretic **Arius**, who denied that Jesus was truly God, said there was a time when Jesus didn't exist. Paul's words here do not allow for such a false teaching to be true, either in the days of Arius or our own day.

#### Related Resources:

- [What is Arianism?](#)
- [Arianism in CARM](#)
- [Arianism in Wikipedia](#)

#### AND IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER: kai ta panta en auto sunesteken (3SRAI):

- 1Sa 2:8; Ps 75:3
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

"and in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together)" (Amp)

"in union with Him all things have their proper place" (GNB)

"He holds all creation together" (NLT)

"through Him the universe is a harmonious whole" (Weymouth)

"in union with Him all things have their proper place" (UBS)

"through Him everything has stability" (German Common Language)

"He holds all things in unity" (NJB)

### JESUS CHRIST CREATOR AND SUSTAINER

**And in Him all things hold together** - Note again the repetition of "**all things**" (literally "the all") emphasizing His total sovereignty and complete control over all creation. Jesus created it and now He sustains it. To **sustain** means to give support, to uphold, to keep from falling.

**THOUGHT** - I would add He keeps it from "falling apart!" -- If He can do that with the Creation, how much more can He keep our lives from falling apart if we surrender to His sovereign rule over our lives! D DeHaan adds that "When your world seems to be falling apart, look to Jesus Who holds everything together."

**John MacArthur** adds "How encouraging to know that the eternal God who sustains the entire universe is also watching over you. No detail of your life is too small for His concern; no circumstance is too big for His sovereign control." (BORROW [Strength for today](#))

**Hold together** as discussed more below is in the **perfect tense**, which describes the permanence of His holding hand! This reminds us of the famous traditional American spiritual song "[He's Got The Whole World In His Hands](#)."

**Paul Apple** illustrates how critical is the truth that **Jesus Christ has the whole world in His hands**- "Consider what would happen if things changed. The sun has a surface temperature of twelve thousand degrees Fahrenheit. If it were any closer to earth, we'd burn; and if it were any further, we'd freeze. Our globe is tilted on an exact angle of 23 degrees, which enables us to have four seasons. If it weren't tilted, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, eventually piling up monstrous continents of ice. If the moon did not remain a specific distance from the earth, the ocean tide would completely inundate the land twice a day. If the ocean floor merely slipped a few feet deeper, the carbon dioxide and oxygen balance in the earth's atmosphere would be completely upset, and no vegetable or animal life could exist on earth. If our atmosphere suddenly thinned out, many of the meteors that now harmlessly burn up when they hit our atmosphere would constantly bombard us. Things don't happen in our universe by accident.

Jesus Christ sustains the universe. He is the principle of cohesion. He is not the deist's ([Deism](#)) Watchmaker Creator who made the world, set it in motion, and hasn't bothered with it since ([Watchmaker analogy](#)). The reason the universe is a **cosmos** ([See word study of kosmos](#)) and not **chaos**--an ordered and reliable system instead of an erratic and unpredictable muddle--is the upholding power of Jesus Christ (Heb 1:3-note). Scientists who think they are discovering great truths are doing nothing more than discovering **the sustaining laws that Christ uses to control the world** No scientist--no mathematician, astronomer, or nuclear physicist--could do anything without the upholding power of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ monitors and sustains the movements and developments of the universe, for the entire universe hangs on the arm of Jesus. His unsearchable wisdom and boundless power are manifested in the governing of the universe (Ro 11:33-note). And **He upholds it all by the word of His power.** ([Colossians Outline](#))

**Wayne House** - He is the cause of creation, and He also is the bond that holds it together. ([The Doctrine of Christ in Colossians](#))

**Moule** writes that should be an encouragement to believers since "He is not their Cause only, in an initial sense He is for ever their Bond, their Order, their Law, the ultimate secret which makes the whole universe, seen and unseen, a cosmos, not a chaos."

The writer of Hebrews makes a similar statement declaring that Jesus **'upholds all things by the word of His power.'** (Hebrews 1:3+).

My times are in His hand,  
A hand so safe and strong,  
A hand which holds the sea  
And guides the stars along.  
—Anon.

**Henry Morris** comments on Hebrews 1:3 "The eternal Son not only created all things by His omnipotent Word (Ps 33:6; Heb 11:3) but is now **"upholding all things by the Word of His power"** Note the remarkable relationship here between "things" and "power," or in modern scientific jargon, between mass and energy. The atomic structure of our very bodies is being held together (or "sustained"—see Morris' note on Colossians 1:17 below) by mysterious nuclear forces or binding energies that keep the atoms from disintegrating into chaos. Scientists do not yet understand such energies or their origin—they merely name them! **The fact is that we (and all things) are being upheld by the out-radiating energy of the Son of God**, so that He is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27), whether we believe in Him or not. "Where the word of a King is, there is power: and who may say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Ecclesiastes 8:4). This passage in Hebrews 1:2-3—like Colossians 1:14-20 and Romans 11:36—beautifully summarizes the past, present and future work of Christ in relation to the whole universe. ([Defender's Study Bible Note on Hebrews 1:3](#)) ([See Dr Morris' related article on "The Light of the World"](#)) Morris goes on to write "The atoms of our bodies are sustained by Him, (Colossians 1:17), yet multitudes ignore Him, ridicule Him, and take His name in vain. What presumption! What foolishness!" ([The Unknown Creator](#))

**Back to Genesis** (Newsletter) - "No wonder the apostle Paul could tell even the skeptical evolutionary Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in first-century Greece that the God who created the world was "not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27–28). How foolish and wicked it is, therefore, to continue living on the stale and bitter bread of worldly deceit and sinfulness when one could be thriving on the Bread of Heaven!" ([The Staff of Life](#))

**John MacArthur** - He maintains the delicate balance necessary to life's existence. He quite literally holds all things together. He is the power behind every consistency in the universe. He is gravity and centrifugal and centripetal force. He is the One who keeps all the entities in space in their motion. He is the energy of the universe. In his book [The Atom Speaks](#), **D. Lee Chesnut** describes the puzzle of why the nucleus of the atom holds together: "*Consider the dilemma of the nuclear physicist when he finally looks in utter amazement at the pattern he had now drawn of the oxygen nucleus... For here are eight positively charged protons closely associated together within the confines of this tiny nucleus. With them are eight neutrons—a total of sixteen particles—eight positively charged, eight with no charge. Earlier physicists had discovered that like charges of electricity and like magnetic poles repel each other, and unlike charges or magnetic poles attract each other. And the entire history of electrical phenomena and electrical equipment had been built up on these principles known as Coulomb's Law of electrostatic force and the law of magnetism. **What was wrong? What holds the nucleus together? Why doesn't it fly apart? And therefore, why do not all atoms fly apart?*** ([San Diego: Creation Science Research Center, 1973], pp. 31–33) Chesnut goes on to describe the experiments performed in the 1920s and 1930s that proved Coulomb's law applied to atomic nuclei. Powerful "atom smashers" were used to fire protons into the nuclei of atoms. Those experiments also gave scientists an understanding of the incredibly powerful force that held protons together within the nucleus. Scientists have dubbed that force the "strong nuclear force," but have no explanation for why it exists. The physicist George Gamow, one of the founders of the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe, wrote, "The fact that we live in a world in which practically every object is a potential nuclear explosive, without being blown to bits, is due to the extreme difficulties that attend the starting of a nuclear reaction." (Cited in Chesnut, *The Atom Speaks*, p. 38) Karl K. Darrow, a physicist at

the Bell (AT & T) Laboratories, agrees:

*You grasp what this implies. It implies that all the massive nuclei have no right to be alive at all. Indeed, they should never have been created, and, if created, they should have blown up instantly. Yet here they all are.... Some inflexible inhibition is holding them relentlessly together. The nature of the inhibition is also a secret... one thus far reserved by Nature for herself.* (Cited in Chesnut, *The Atom Speaks*, p.38) One day in the future God will dissolve the strong nuclear force. Peter describes that day as the one when "the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). With the strong nuclear force no longer operative, Coulomb's law will take effect, and the nuclei of atoms will fly apart. The universe will literally explode. Until that time, we can be thankful that Christ "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3). Jesus Christ must be God. He made the universe, existed outside and before it, and preserves it. (SEE [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) - scroll up and down for more text) ([See original quote](#))

**Donald B DeYoung** has an interesting article on "**Gravity**" in which he writes "Two Bible verses especially help us understand the nature of gravity. First, Colossians 1:17 explains that Christ is before all things, and by Him all things consist. The Greek verb for "consist" (sunistano) means to cohere, preserve, or hold together. Extra-biblical Greek use of this word pictures a vessel holding water within itself. The word is used in Colossians in the perfect tense, which describes a present continuing state arising from past action. This perfect tense also implies permanence of the act of holding the universe together. One mechanism used is obviously gravity, established by the Creator and still maintained without flaw today. Consider the alternative: If the Lord turned His back on the universe for one moment, instant chaos would result. Without gravity, the earth, moon, and stars would immediately disintegrate. A second reference, Hebrews 1:3, declares that Christ upholds all things by the word of His power. Uphold (Greek, fero) again describes the sustaining or maintaining of all things, including gravity. The word uphold means much more than simply supporting a weight. It includes control of all the ongoing motions and changes within the universe.[5] This infinite task is managed by Christ's almighty Word, whereby the universe itself was first called into being (Hebrews 11:3)." ([Gravity](#))

**Vine** adds that "**in** (**en**) "here is instrumental, and has not the same significance as at the beginning of Col 1:16. He is not only the center of divine counsels, He is the acting agent in upholding the universe." ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

See **Thomas Guthrie's** article related to "**In Him all things hold together**" - [Colossians 1:17 Christ in Providence](#)

**Hold together** ([4921](#)) (**sunistemi/sunistao** from **sun** = together with + **hístemi** = set, place, stand) means literally to set or stand together. To place or hold set together. "Extra-biblical Greek use of this word pictures a vessel holding water within itself." **Sunistao** is used in Colossians in the sense of **cohere** or **hold together firmly** so that the parts form a united mass.

**Sunistao** conveys the idea of consistence, harmony, congruence. It represents the unifying power, the integrating principle. Every atom in the universe holds together because it is in Christ. There is order and harmony in all creation. It is a universe, not a chaos, and Christ is the unifying force. Do you feel like your life is in chaos, falling apart? Christ has the power to "hold your life together". Will you trust Him to do so? The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus "upholds all things by the word of His power" or as the Amplified version says - Jesus is "upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power"! (He 1:3-note) He alone is able!

**Sunistao** - 16x in NT - Lk. 9:32; Rom. 3:5; 5:8; 16:1; 2 Co. 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 7:11; 10:12, 18; 12:11; Gal. 2:18; Col. 1:17; 2 Pet. 3:5

The **perfect tense** of the verb "**hold together**" emphasizes the permanence of the cohesion in Christ. He created all things at a point in time, making them cohere and this cohesion continues to the present or as the Message says He "holds it all together right up to this moment."

**Athanasius of Alexandria** (circa AD 360) wrote "Christ, the All-powerful, All-holy Word of the Father, spreads His power over all things everywhere, enlightening things seen and unseen, **holding and binding all together (sunistao) in Himself**. Nothing is left empty of His presence, but to all things and through all, severally and collectively, He is the Giver and Sustainer of life....He, the Wisdom of God, holds the universe in tune together. He it is Who, binding all with each, and ordering all things by His will and pleasure, produces the perfect unity of nature and the harmonious reign of law. While He abides unmoved forever with the Father, He yet moves all things by His own appointment according to the Father's will." (**Amen!**)

Creationist **Henry Morris** on **hold together (consist** in KJV) - The Greek word translated "consist" (hold together) is sunistano, from which we get "sustain." The things created by Christ are now being sustained, or conserved, or held together, by Him. He is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The most basic of all scientific principles is implied in these two verses (Colossians 1:16-17), that is, the principle of conservation of mass/energy, or "all things." According to this principle, nothing is now being either created or annihilated—only conserved, as far as quantity is concerned. One state of matter can be changed to another (e.g., liquid to solid); one type of energy can be converted to another (e.g., electrical energy to light energy); and under some conditions, matter and energy can be interchanged (e.g., nuclear

fission); but the total quantity of mass/energy is always conserved. This law—also called the First Law of Thermodynamics—is the best-proved law of science, but science cannot tell us why it is true. The reason nothing is now being created is because Christ created all things in the past. The reason why nothing is now being annihilated is because all things are now being sustained by Him. If it were not so, the “binding energy” of the atom, which holds its structure together, would collapse, and the whole universe would disintegrate into chaos. ([Defender's Study Bible Note on Colossians 1:17](#))

**Lightfoot** writes that Christ "is the principle of cohesion in the Universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos.

**Vine** adds that "Christ is the personal means by which all the parts of the universe are maintained in cohesion. This solidarity and coherence are not due merely to natural forces and principles: everything depends upon His continuous sustaining power. Even the force of gravitation, which regulates the condition of things, is not only due to His creative act, but is the effect of His upholding power. When the present universe is dissolved (2Pe 3:10-note), it will be His act." ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**Ellicott** - Christ was the conditional element of their creation, the causal element of their persistence...The declaration...is in fact tantamount to "in Him they live and more and have their being".

**Bible Knowledge Commentary** - "Christ is not only the One through whom all things came to be, but also the One by whom they continue to exist." ([Reference](#)).

The **UBS Handbook** adds that "one may say “everything fits together because of Christ” or “Christ is the one who causes everything to fit together.” In some languages, the concept of “fitting together” is related to the construction of furniture, so that a phrase such as “everything remains in its place” may be appropriate or “everything is dovetailed together,” in which the strongest and most effective joint in carpentry is identified by “dovetailing.” ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series](#))

**Wiersbe** tells the story about the a guide who "took a group of people through an atomic laboratory and explained how all matter was composed of rapidly moving electric particles. The tourists studied models of molecules and were amazed to learn that matter is made up primarily of space. During the question period, one visitor asked, “If this is the way matter works, what holds it all together?” For that, the guide had no answer. But the Christian has an answer: Jesus Christ! Because “He is before all things,” He can hold all things together. Again, this is another affirmation that Jesus Christ is God. Only God exists before all of Creation, and only God can make Creation cohere. To make Jesus Christ less than God is to dethrone Him." (Borrow [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

In Christ all things are set or placed together, caused to stand together, cohere and to hold together. By Him all things were **created** in the past, by Him all things **consist** in the present. By Him all things are to be **reconciled** in the future. Therefore, in Christ all fullness dwells. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things"

Paul wrote to the Romans (Ro 11:36-note). He is the Alpha and the Omega (Re 22:13-note), the all and in all. Christ is the controlling and unifying Force in all of nature. The Gnostic philosophy that matter is evil and was created by a remote aeon is swept away by these truths about Christ. The Son of God's love is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe.

**Barclay** sums it up "**In him all things hold together**" this way - "This means that not only is the Son the agent of creation in the beginning, and the goal of creation in the end, but between the beginning and the end, during time as we know it, it is he who holds the world together. That is to say, all the laws by which this world is order and not chaos are an expression of the mind of the Son. The law of gravity and the rest, the laws by which the universe hangs together, are not only scientific laws but also divine." So, then, the Son is the beginning of creation, and the end of creation, and the power who holds creation together, the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Final Goal of the world. ([Colossians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Maclaren** - He is the element in which takes place and by which is caused that continued creation which is the preservation of the universe, as He is the element in which the original creative act took place of old. All things came into being and form an ordered unity in Him. He links all creatures and forces into a cooperant whole, reconciling their antagonisms, drawing all their currents into one great tidal wave, melting all their notes into music which God can hear, however discordant it may sometimes sound to us. He is "the bond of perfectness," the keystone of the arch, the centre of the wheel. (Colossians 1 - The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Ray Stedman** commenting on this verse adds that one of "The most astonishing phenomenon today is to see men who work with this physical universe, who intimately observe the beauty, order, and power inherent in the natural world as well as in the world of humanity, yet who fail to see the Power behind it all; the ordered Intelligence that possesses and originates all these things. I do not understand how a man like Carl Sagan can work in the field of astronomy, knowing of the great secrets that are now coming to light in the universe, and yet go on breathing air which God has supplied, eating the food with which God has stocked this earth, and relying moment by moment on a heartbeat whose continuation rests in the will of Someone other than himself, yet can busy himself telling us that only man matters! It is a phenomenon beyond my understanding." Stedman in conclusion adds that "as I think of the

world in which we live today surely this is the reason for the terrible sense of lostness among people. We are a generation adrift. We have thrown out all the absolutes, and found ourselves adrift on the tossing ocean of life. No one has an anchor any more. What men desperately need is a King, a God, an Authority, an Anchor to cling to. I am convinced we will never solve the terrible drug traffic until we teach people that there is an answer to the hunger and anguish of their empty lives. We cannot stop the drug traffic by simply confiscating all the drugs that come into this country. Drugs are merely a symptom of the terrible anguish of people; of their empty lives, their lack of a sense of worth. They have no King to worship, no authority to serve, no cause greater than themselves. Thus the central truth of our faith, and one that makes for strength in the Christian life, is this truth. In Jesus is found the center of life. "He is the image of the invisible God...the Creator of all things, who is before all things and holds all things in his hand and power." Is he your Lord?" ([Master of the Universe - Colossians 1:15-17](#))

Jesus, wondrous Savior! Christ, of kings the King!  
Angels fall before Thee, prostrate worshipping;  
Fairest they confess Thee in the heav'n above.  
We would sing Thee Fairest here in hymns of love  
-- Daniel MacGregor

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**Robert Hawker - By Him all things consist.** Hence their consisting is in him; they are living in him, feeding on him, made righteous in his righteousness, and hereafter will be glorified in his glory. My soul! think what a world of mysteries thou art in! think what an unspeakable life is a life of grace here! think what a world of glory in Jesus hereafter! Now see if thou canst better enter into an apprehension of those divine words of Jesus, Because I live, ye shall live also. And again, At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (The Poor Man's Morning Portion)

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**Leonardo DaVinci** - In Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting of The Last Supper, our Lord's hands are empty. And therein lies an inspiring story.

Da Vinci dedicated three years to this painting, determined that it would be his crowning work. Before the unveiling, he decided to show it to a friend for whose opinion he had the utmost respect.

The friend's praise was unbounded. "The cup in Jesus' hand," he said, "is especially beautiful." Disappointed at once Da Vinci began to paint out the cup. Astonished, the distinguished friend asked for an explanation. "Nothing," Da Vinci explained, "must distract from the figure of Christ."

Da Vinci focused attention solely on Christ by removing the distraction of the cup. Having removed the cup, he had to do something with the hand. The left hand was already outstretched just above the table, lifting, as if to bless and command. Now the right hand, also empty, was also outstretched invitingly.

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**Jon Courson** - There's an interesting law of science called Coulomb's Law of Electricity which very simply says **like charges repel**. If you have a magnet in your right hand and a magnet in your left hand, and you push the positive ends towards each other, they push away. Opposite charges attract; like charges repel. But here's a great mystery: in the nucleus of the atom, protons are packed together which are all positive-charged particles. What keeps these positive-charged protons from repelling like the magnets? What holds them together? Science doesn't know. You can study quantum physics and learn lots of hypotheses and theories, yet to this day, it's a mystery to scientists—but not to believers, for Scripture tells us the real answer. It is Jesus Christ who holds all things together. And the day is coming when, suddenly, He will let go... "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2Peter 3:10-**note**) (A Day's Journey: 365 Daily Meditations from the Word)

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**Found: The Missing Piece** - The caption in *USA Today* read, "Physicists find the missing piece in a universal puzzle." The "tau neutrino," an incredibly tiny particle, was the last-theorized member of the family of particles that make up the universe. It has now been proven to exist. Phillip Schewe of the American Institute of Physics said, "It's like finding the Z in the alphabet of fundamental particles . . . [This study] doesn't save lives or fill stomachs, but it does investigate the most fundamental structures . . . out of which everything, including ourselves, is made." Imagine finding the smallest known piece of the universe! It's even more amazing to know the Designer of the universe—the Creator of those tiny bits of matter—and the reason they hold together. In Colossians 1:17 we read that Jesus "is before all things, and in Him all things consist." One Bible scholar defines the word consist as the "principle of cohesion," adding that Jesus makes the universe "*a cosmos instead of a chaos*." Jesus Christ is more vital to our existence than the "tau neutrino." He feeds us spiritually, as well as physically. He saves us from our sins, as well as protects us from evil. He brings order to our inner chaos. May we ever worship the One who holds everything together. —D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

My times are in His hand,  
A hand so safe and strong,  
A hand which holds the sea  
And guides the stars along.

—Anon.

**When your world seems to be falling apart,  
look to Jesus who holds everything together.**

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**Octavius Winslow Devotional - AUGUST 19.** = "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Colossians 1:17, 18

In this striking and beautiful passage, Jesus is declared to be before all created things; could this be true, if He Himself were a created being? Christ is either created, or He is uncreated. He is a creature, or the Creator. If a mere creature, then it were absurdity to suppose Him creating all things; for He must have been created before He could create: then He could not have been before all created things. If, too, He were a mere creature, how could He uphold all things? for He would need an upholding power for Himself. No mere creature ever has, or ever can, sustain itself. The angels could not, for they fell. Adam could not, for he fell. And Christ could not have sustained Himself in the solemn hour of atonement, when standing beneath the mighty load of His people's sins, had He not been more than creature—the uncreated Jehovah. His humanity did indeed tremble, and shudder, and shrink back; but, upborne by His Godhead, secretly, invisibly, yet effectually sustained by His Deity, He achieved a complete triumph, made an end of sin, and brought in a new and everlasting righteousness. If, too, He were a creature only, how could He give spiritual life to the dead, and how could He sustain that life when given? All spiritual life is from Christ, and all spiritual life is sustained by Christ—"Christ who is our life"—the life of the soul, the life of pardon, the life of justification; the life of sanctification, the life of all the Christian graces—the life of all that now is, and the life of all that is to come. Glorious truth this, to the saint of God!

Turn to our blessed Lord's conference with the Jews, in which He asserts His eternal existence: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." What a consoling view do we derive of Christ, from this revealed attribute of His nature! Is He eternal?—then His love to His people is eternal; His love to them being coeval with His very being. It is not the love of yesterday or of to-day—it is the love of eternity: its spring-head is His own eternal existence. Is He eternal?—then must He be unchangeable too: His precious love, set upon them from all eternity, can never be removed: having given them Himself, Himself He will never take away. Blessed thought! He may blight earthly hopes, He may break up earthly cisterns, He may wither earthly gourds; He may send billow upon billow, breach upon breach, but never, never will He take Himself from the people of His love. Dear reader, you may be conscious of many and great departures; this single view of your Father's unchangeableness may recall to your recollection backslidings many and aggravated; forgetfulness, ingratitude, unkindnesses without number; murmurings, rebellion, and unbelief. Still does God, your God, say to you, "Though you have dealt so with me, though you have forgotten me, though your name is rebellious, yet do I love you still. Return unto me, and I will return unto you." What a soul-humbling, heart-melting thought is this! Does your Father love your sins? No! Does He look complacently on your wanderings? No! He hates your sins, and He will follow your wanderings with His chastising rod; but He loves your person, beholding you in the Beloved, fully and freely accepted in the glorious righteousness of Jesus, who is the same "yesterday, today, and forever." If this truth, dear reader, be broken up to your soul by the blessed and eternal Spirit, the effect will be most holy and abasing. The legitimate tendency of all spiritual truth is sanctifying. Hence our blessed Lord prayed that the truth might be the medium through which His people should be sanctified. "Sanctify them through your truth." And hence the apostle reasons, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it. That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word." That God's truth has been and is abused by wicked and ungodly men, is no argument against the truth. They abuse it to their own condemnation; they turn it from its right and legitimate use to their own loss. Still the truth stands firm in its peerless dignity and holy tendency, and when unfolded to the understanding, and laid upon the heart by the Holy Spirit, Christ's prayer is answered in the progressive sanctification of the soul.

**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](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [kai autos estin](#) (3SPA1) [h kephale tou somatos. tes ekklesias: os estin](#) (3SPA1) [arche. prototokos ek ton nekron. hina genetai](#) (3SAMI) [en pasin autos proteuon.](#) (PAPMSN)

**Amplified:** He also is the Head of [His] body, the church; seeing He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, so that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**MLB** (Berkley): He also is the Head of the body, the church; He is its beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that in every respect He might have first place.

**Phillips:** And now he is the head of the body which is composed of all Christian people. Life from nothing began through him, and life from the dead began through him, and he is, therefore, justly called the Lord of all. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** And He himself is the Head of His Body, the Church. He is the originator [i.e., the creator], the firstborn out from among the dead, in order that He might become in all things himself the One who is pre-eminent

**Young's Literal:** And himself is the head of the body--the assembly--who is a beginning, a first-born out of the dead, that he might become in all things --himself--first,

## HE IS ALSO HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH: kai autos estin (3SPA1) he kephale tês ekkliêsias:

- Col 2:10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 1Co 11:3; Eph 1:10;22 ,23, 4:15,16; 5:23
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

## CHRIST THE HEAD CHURCH THE BODY

**Moule** - Thus far the Apostle has unfolded the glory of Christ as the Cause and Bond of all being in the sphere of "Nature," material and otherwise. Now he turns to the sphere of Grace. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**He is also** (kai autos estin - literally "and he is") - **He** is first for emphasis of the idea "He and no other!" Not angels, nor any other created being. The verb (**is**) is **present tense** indicating that He is continually Head. "**He**, the same Person, **is** also, necessarily, all that is now to be stated. The Head of Nature is the Head of Grace; the Person one, the operations analogous though differing." (Moule)

**Vine** adds that "as in Col 1:17, the subject **He** is made especially emphatic by the presence of the pronoun **autos**, which serves to stress the identity of the Person concerning Whom the preceding statements have been made. That is to say, He who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is likewise the **Head** of the **church**. As in physical nature the head is seat of the controlling, directing power of the body, guiding, inspiring and sustaining its life and activities, so in the spiritual relationship between Christ and the church. In its complete state it will be "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." He will forever fill all things in all the members, all their activities being under His authority and direction. They will be His fullness, manifesting His glory, and glorifying Him in a perfect unity of life and action. This complete development is defined as "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Collected Writings)

**The head of the body the church** - Christ is the **head** which guides, directs and controls the actions of the **body**, which is to represent Him and present His presence to the world. "Just as a human body is a vehicle by which the person expresses himself, so the Body of Christ is that vehicle which He has on earth by which He chooses to express Himself to the world." (MacDonald)

**Wiersbe** observes that Paul "switches focus from the old natural creation to His new spiritual creation." (Borrow [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Head** (2776) ([kephale](#)) can mean **source** or **origin** (as well as head or ruler) even as we refer to the head of a river.

**Apple** - To understand the church and how it should function, think about your own body and how it functions. ([Colossians](#))

**Lightfoot** - Christ controls every part of His body the church and is its inspiring, ruling, guiding, combining, sustaining power, the mainspring of its activity, the center of its unity, and the seat of its life. ([Colossians 1 Commentary](#))

Jesus is the Source of and the Leader of His body, the Church. The metaphor "**head of the body**" represents the supremacy of Christ and the unity of all Christians as a living organism which belongs to Christ. Christ controls every part of His body the church

and is its "inspiring, ruling, guiding, combining, sustaining power, the mainspring of its activity, the center of its unity, and the seat of its life."

Writing in a parallel passage to the saints at Ephesus Paul reminds them that God "put all things in subjection under His (Jesus') feet, and gave Him as **Head** over all things to the **church**, which is His **body**, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. (Eph 1:22-23-note)

In Chapter 2 Paul emphasizes that Christ "is the **Head** over all rule and authority" (Col 2:10-note) referring to the spirit world. Jesus Christ is the Creator and Ruler of the universe and all its spiritual beings (Col 1:16), not a lesser being emanating from God.

**John Eadie** - The previous verses show His qualification for such a headship,-His possession of a Divine nature-His supremacy over the universe, and His creation and support of all things. Any creature would be deified were he so highly exalted; for he would, from his position, become the god of the Christian people, as their blessing, protector, and object of worship. But the church and the universe are under one administration, that of Him who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." The king of the universe is able to be Head of the church, and He has won the Headship in His blood. It is no eminence to which he is not entitled, no function which he cannot worthily discharge. For the apostle subjoins the following statement as proof. (Colossians 1 - Eadie's Commentary Colossians)

**THOUGHT** Is He the Head of your local church body? Remember that as a human body is powerless without its head, so too the church (even one with pews and coffers overflowing) is powerless without its Living Head, Christ Jesus. Do you see His power in your local body? What is happening in your church that can only be explained as something that Christ is doing? How many of the programs and ministries of your church would continue if the Holy Spirit were removed (to paraphrase A W Tozer)?

**William Barclay** - He is the **head** of the body, that is, of the **Church**. The Church is the body of Christ, that is, the organism through which He acts and which shares all His experiences. But, humanly speaking, the body is the servant of the Head and is powerless without it. So Jesus Christ is the guiding spirit of the Church; it is at His bidding that the Church must live and move. Without Him the Church cannot think the truth, cannot act correctly, cannot decide its direction. There are two things combined here. There is the idea of privilege. It is the privilege of the Church to be the instrument through which Christ works. There is the idea of warning. If a man neglects or abuses his body, he can make it unfit to be the servant of the great purposes of his mind; so by indisciplined and careless living the Church can unfit herself to be the instrument of Christ, who is her head. (Barclay's Daily Study Bible)

**Hughes** on Christ's **headship** - Christ is sovereign over the Church, just as he is sovereign over creation. When we became believers, we became part of Christ's Body through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). "[S]o in Christ we who are many form one body" (Romans 12:5). As members of his Body we are totally dependent upon the Head, Christ, for direction. He is to control us. (Colossians and Philemon: the supremacy of Christ)

**MacArthur** - There are many metaphors used in Scripture to describe the church. It is called a **family**, a **kingdom**, a **vineyard**, a **flock**, a **building**, and a **bride**. But the most profound metaphor, one having no Old Testament equivalent, is that of a **Body**. The church is a **Body**, and Christ is the **head** of the Body. This concept is not used in the sense of the head of a company, but rather looks at the church as a living organism, inseparably tied together by the living Christ. He controls every part of it and gives it life and direction. His life lived out through all the members provides the unity of the Body (cf. 1Cor 12:12-20). He energizes and coordinates the diversity within the Body, a diversity of spiritual gifts and ministries (1Cor 12:4-13). He also directs the Body's mutuality, as the individual members serve and support each other (1Cor 12:15-27). Christ is not an angel who serves the church (He 1:14-note). He is the head of His church." ([MacArthur, J. Colossians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Moule** - (**Head** combines) the thought of supremacy with that of the origination and conveyance of life and energy. The Son of God presides over His Church, but more—He is to it the constant Cause and mighty Source of spiritual vitality. "Because He lives, it lives also." Its organization is rooted in Him, grows from Him, and refers to Him. Cp. 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 5:23; and below, Colossians 2:10; Colossians 2:19. The idea, it will be seen, appears in this precise form (the Headship of the Body) only in Eph. and Col.; but cp. Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:21. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges - note this commentary is distinct from his other Colossians commentary below](#))

**H C G Moule** ([Colossian and Philemon Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness](#)) has a practical comment on **head** - In that word **Head** much lies involved. It betokens of course primacy of authority; the right of supreme direction. Over "His Body" the Son of God, Incarnate, Sacrificed, Glorified, absolutely presides; and so over every limb of His body; and so over my reader, and over me. In everything, at every moment, I am under my Head, Christ (1Cor. 11:3). He is my Sovereign, and I His vassal, His bondservant, His implement, to the uttermost. The more entirely I recognize this, and the more I love it, the greater the freedom and the less the friction of my life. But along with all this, the word "Head" tells me that He is my life as well as my law; my secret of energy, my power to do His will. He lives in me; He carries out His glorious life, in true measure, through me. And in that fact there lies an inexhaustible

secret of rest and strength for the “limb” as it yields itself to the orders of its Head. And as for the limb, so for the whole organism:

To know, to do the Head's commands.  
For this the Body lives and grows;  
All speed of feet, all skill of hands,  
Is for Him spent and from Him flows.

**Body** (4983)(**soma**) can refer to the physical body, but here of course it is used figuratively to describe the mystical Body of Christ, the **Church**. The church is not an **organization** but is an **organism** that is **organized!** The problem with most churches is that they try to organize a thing and then try to make it work. The proper order is to first center fix your eyes on Jesus, the **Head**, and once centered on Him, He via His Spirit works in and through the body. What He does is always organized, but not for the sake of the organization.

**Moule on the body** - This side of the imagery is strictly correlative to that of “the Head.” It presents the believing Company as an Organism subject to the Lord, dependent vitally on Him for its being, cohesion, and energy, and forming an animated vehicle for the accomplishment of His will. And it indicates of course the mutual relations of “the members” (see on this esp. 1 Corinthians 12) in their widely differing functions of life and service. (Cp. Ro 12:5; 1Corinthians 10:17; 1Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 4:4; Ephesians 4:12; Ephesians 4:16; Ephesians 5:23; Ephesians 5:30; below, Colossians 1:24, Colossians 2:19, Colossians 3:15) ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**Wiersbe** - No denomination or local assembly can claim to be “**the body of Christ,**” for that body is composed of all true believers. When a person trusts Christ, he is immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into this body (1Cor 12:12, 13). The baptism of the Spirit is not a post conversion experience—for it occurs the instant a person believes in Jesus Christ.” (Borrow [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Related messages by Dr Wayne Barber on the [7 Pillars of the NT Church](#)

- Pillar 1: God's Pattern for Ministry - 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
- Pillar 2: God's Power in Ministry - Isaiah 6
- Pillar 3: God's Platform in Ministry - John 11
- Pillar 4: God's Priorities of Ministry - Romans 15:17-18; Jeremiah 9:23-24
- Pillar 5: God's Purpose for Ministry - Ro 11:33-36
- Pillar 6: God's Picture of Ministry - Ro 12
- Pillar 7: God's Preparation for Ministry - Eph 4:11-13

**Church** (1577) (**ekklesia** from **ek** = out + **kaleo** = call) is literally the “called out ones”. Greeks used **ekklesia** to describe the assembly of citizens “called out” to transact city business. The **church** as alluded to is a supernatural, living organism, composed of living members joined together under the headship of Christ and through which He works and carries out His purposes for the glory of the Father.

Paul gives an excellent description of the church in Romans 12:4-5 writing that “just as we have many members in **one body** and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are **one body** in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (see also 1Cor 12:12-27)

**Moule** - The word “**Church**” here appears in its highest reference, denoting the society of human beings “called out” (as the word **ekklesia** implies) from the fallen world into vital union with the glorified Christ as **Head**. It occurs again Colossians 1:24, and nine times in Ephesians (Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32), always with the same reference. (See also Hebrews 12:23; and cp. Acts 20:28; 1Corinthians 15:9.) As presented here, the idea rises above the level of “visibility;” it transcends human registration and external organization, and has to do supremely with direct spiritual relations between the Lord and the believing Company. It is in fact “**the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife,**” of Revelation 21, only not yet manifested in bridal splendor. It is the “called, justified, and glorified” of Romans 8; “the Church of the firstborn” of Hebrews 12; “the royal priesthood, the people of possession,” of 1 Peter 2:9. All other Christian meanings of the word **Church** are derived and modified from this, but this must not be modified by them. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**Vine** in an excellent note clarifying the meaning of the **church** writes that “The word “**church,**” as used in this and similar passages, contemplates the entire company as it will be seen when the Lord comes to receive it to Himself. It is nowhere in Scripture viewed as an earthly organization established in the world, it is heavenly in its design, establishment and destiny. Its individual members are incorporated into it as each one is born of God through faith in Christ. At no period can all the believers living in the world have constituted the **church**. They could not at that particular time be spoken of as the body of Christ. Most of the **church** had not come into existence in the early part of the present era. At the present time most of those who form part of it are in Heaven (they have not

ceased to be members because they are there). By some the term “**the church**” is applied to all the believers living in the world at any time, but such a view is not borne out by the teaching of the New Testament. Believers are formed into local churches, each of which is called a “**body**” (1Cor 12:27). But nowhere are the churches in any district or country or in the world organized into an entity or **body**. Local churches, Scripturally formed, are visible communities, professing the same faith, governed by the same Lord, but this has never afforded any ground for their external amalgamation or for their being considered as a church. There is no such phrase in Scripture as “The Church on earth,” nor is the whole number of believers on earth viewed as, or spoken of, as the church of God. The idea is a pure inference and conveys a false impression, being a contravention of the teaching of Christ and the apostles.” ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

### **I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES**

Samuel Medley

[Click to play](#)

I know that my Redeemer lives;  
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
He lives, He lives, Who once was dead;  
He lives, my ever living **Head**.

He lives to bless me with His love,  
He lives to plead for me above.  
He lives my hungry soul to feed,  
He lives to help in time of need.

He lives to grant me rich supply,  
He lives to guide me with His eye,  
He lives to comfort me when faint,  
He lives to hear my soul's complaint

He lives to silence all my fears,  
He lives to wipe away my tears  
He lives to calm my troubled heart,  
He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives and grants me daily breath;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death:  
He lives my mansion to prepare;  
He lives to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to His Name!  
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives!

**Spurgeon** - Christ is joined by an indissoluble union to his people, and is the **head** of their glory, their wisdom, and their strength. O beloved! as the sun is to be seen mirrored, not only in the face of the great deep, but in every little drop of dew that hangs upon each blade of grass, so is the glory of Christ to be seen, not only in his universal Church, but in every separate individual in whom his Spirit has wrought holiness. **Are we giving Him the pre-eminence in all things?** That theology must be false which puts Jesus in the second place, or even lower than that, and that experience is a wrong one which does not put Christ always in the front. **He must in all things always stand first.**

### **AND HE IS THE BEGINNING: hos estin (3SPA) arche:**

- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

**He is** (present tense = continually) **the beginning** - "the starting point of all things" (BBE)

**Eadie** says here **beginning** is "much the same as in the phrase, Rev 3:14-the cause or source of the creation of God."

**MacDonald** - We understand this to mean the **beginning** of the new creation (see Rev 3:14), the source of spiritual life. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Beginning** (746)(**arche**) means beginning in a temporal sense. The initial starting point. Figuratively, the idea is first and therefore chief or foremost, having priority because it is ahead of the rest (preeminent). **Arche** refers to the commencement of something as an action, process, or state of being.

**Barclay** writes **arche** in the present context "means **beginning** in a double sense. It means not only first in the sense of time, as, for instance, **A** is the beginning of the alphabet and **1** is the beginning of the series of numbers. It means first in the sense of the **source** from which something came, the **moving power** which set something in operation. We will see more clearly what Paul is getting at, if we remember what he has just said. The **world** is the **creation** of Christ; and the **Church** is the **new creation** of Christ." Christ is the, source of the Church's life and being and the director of her continued activity. (Colossians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible)

**John MacArthur** - Christ is the Source of the Church - **Arche (beginning)** is used here in the twofold sense of source and primacy. The church has its origins in Jesus. God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). It is He Who gives life to His church. His sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf provided our new life. As Head of the Body, Jesus holds the chief position, or highest rank in the church. As the **beginning**, He is its originator. (See [Colossians Commentary](#))

**Moule on the beginning** - The Origin, the Principle and Secret, of the life of the living Body. Cp. Revelation 3:14 [note](#), where the probable reference is not (as here) to the spiritual creation specially but to created existence generally. Perhaps also (as Wordsworth suggests) the word (**arche**) points also to the Son's governing primacy, supreme above all possible angelic "Governments." But this would be a secondary reference. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

### The Church's one foundation

The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word.  
From heaven He came and sought her  
To be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her  
And for her life He died  
--Samuel Stone

### THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD: prototokos ek ton nekron:

- Ps 89:27 Acts 26:23 1Co 15:20-23 Rev 1:5,18
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

### Related Passages:

Psalm 89:27 "I also shall make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.

**Comment** - This verse speaks first about King David (but prophetically of the Messiah), who was the youngest, or last-born son of Jesse—as far away as he could be from being literally first-born.

**Henry Morris** - As God's "firstborn," He is the heir of God's created world (Psalm 2:8). All the kings of the earth are stewards not owners.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23+ But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

## THE PREEMINENT RESURRECTION

**The first-born from the dead** - The preeminent resurrection. The resurrection of the One on which all other resurrections from the dead are founded. The parallel thought is Christ is "the first fruits of those who are asleep." (1Cor 15:20+) Had He not been resurrected, there would be no other resurrections of believers. He was not the first to be resurrected but surely even those that preceded (like Lazarus) had as their basis His supreme resurrection. And He was the first to rise from the dead, never to die again! He was the first to rise with a glorified body! He rose from the dead as Head of a new creation.

The resurrection of Jesus is "The cardinal point of the apostle's (and our) faith."

In explaining to the believers the future resurrection of their bodies, he explains "But each in his own order: Christ the **first fruits** (aparche), after that those who are Christ's at His coming." (1Cor 15:23)

**Firstborn** (4416) (**protokos** from **protos** = first, foremost, in place order or time; rank dignity + **titko** = beget, to bear, bring forth) can mean **first-born chronologically** (Lk 2:7), but refers primarily to position, rank, priority of position and emphasizes quality or kind, not time with the idea of "preeminence". We have previously discussed the importance of this noun and how the cults twist the meaning, so you may want to review that discussion (**Click note**).

John uses **protokos** with a similar meaning writing that "Jesus Christ (is) the faithful witness, **the first-born of the dead**, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loves us, and released (Amplified =has once [for all] loosed and freed) us from our sins by His blood (Rev 1:5-[note](#))

**Protokos** - 8x in the NT - Lk. 2:7; Ro. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6; 11:28; 12:23; Rev. 1:5

**From** or out of **the dead** is a clear reference to the Resurrection (see Ray Stedman's comment below). Paul did not say that Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead, for He was not. But He is **the most important** of all who have been raised from the dead (of all who have ever been raised or ever will be raised, Christ has first rank!) for without His resurrection, there could be no resurrection for others (1Cor 15:20-24ff). Christ is not merely someone Who lived and died and of Whom we read and learn. He is someone Who, because of His Resurrection, is alive for evermore and Whom we meet and experience, not a dead hero nor a past founder, but a Living Person. Even before He was crucified He spoke of the resurrection in the present tense, declaring that **"I am** (ego eimi = present tense = continually) the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn 11:25)

In His Revelation (revealing), Jesus declared "(I am) the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev 1:18-[note](#))

**Barnes** - At the head of those who rise from their graves. This does not mean literally that he was the first who rose from the dead, for he himself raised up Lazarus and others, and the bodies of saints arose at his crucifixion; but it means that he had the pre-eminence among them all; he was the most illustrious of those who will be raised from the dead, and is the head over them all. Especially, he had this pre-eminence in the resurrection in this respect, that he was the first who rose from death to immortality. Others who were raised undoubtedly died again. Christ rose to die no more; see Notes on 1 Cor. 15:20. (Colossians 1 - Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible)

**Wiersbe** comments that "It seems odd that Paul used the word **born** in connection with **death**, for the two concepts seem opposed to each other. But the **tomb** was a **womb** from which Christ came forth in victory, for death could not hold Him (Acts 2:24)." (Borrow [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

The result of all this is that He has the supremacy in all things. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is his title to supreme lordship. By his Resurrection he has shown that he has conquered every opposing power and that there is nothing in life or in death which can bind him.

**J Vernon McGee** on the phrase **firstborn from the dead**. - Did you know that there is only one Man who has been raised in a glorified body today? He is the firstfruits of them that sleep. When a loved one who is in Christ dies and you put that body into the grave, you are just putting it into a motel. It is like putting it into a hotel for a few days, because there is a bright morning coming. The body is put to sleep, but the individual has gone to be with the Lord. When Christ comes to take His church out of this world, then that body is going to be raised on the basis of His resurrection. It is sown in corruption, but it will be raised in incorruption (see 1Cor 15:42). We shall be just as He is. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2-**note**). (Thru the Bible commentary)

The respected expositor **Ray Stedman** interprets **firstborn from the dead** somewhat differently - Many take that to mean he is the first one ever to be resurrected. That is certainly true. The resurrection of Jesus is the only **resurrection** that has ever occurred on this earth. Lazarus, and all the others who came back from the dead, were simply **resuscitated**: they came back to the same life they had left. We may even feel a bit sorry for them because they had to come back to take it up again. But Jesus was truly **resurrected**. He was given a glorified life: He came from the grave at a far higher level than He went in. He returned in a glorified body, subject to different laws and governed by different principles. But that is not what is meant here. That is what Paul calls "**the first-fruits (aparche) of them that slept**." (1Cor 15:23) But here "**firstborn**" means what it does in Col 1:15. We have already seen that it means the owner, the possessor, of the old creation. Here then it means the owner, possessor, of the new creation. He is the One who alone possesses the resurrection life that he gives to each of us. That is what John is saying in his first letter, 1Jn 5:11: "This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life [deathless life, resurrection life], and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." He may be moral, he may be a nice person, but he does not yet possess the life of eternity, the resurrection life of Jesus, because that life comes from Jesus alone. Now it is a clear biblical fact that Christians who have received Christ and been born into the new creation have this life. That is the reason they can no longer excuse themselves for wrong behavior by saying, "Well, after all, I'm only human." It is true you are human yet in the body, in the flesh, and that is why you are tempted, but because you also have a new life it means you do not need to yield to that temptation; there is now a new power within. I feel constrained to get this across to people. When you become a Christian you have a new source of power which the world knows nothing about. Therefore, you are expected to live at a different, higher level. And you can. You cannot excuse yourself by saying, "I'm only human." True, that is why temptations come, but God has given us an ability to say *no* to these and to say *yes* to the power of Christ (**Ed: The best way to say "no," is to start each morning by saying "yes" to Christ**, cp Ro 12:1-2). We will not *feel* powerful--we are never expected to--but we have the power to say *no*; that is what the new creation is all about (**Ed: cp Ro 8:13, Col 3:5 which follows immediately after Col 3:1 and Col 3:2 ~ the latter are like "saying yes" to Jesus**). Thus, because our Lord is Master of the old creation (the old, material universe all around us)---and also master of a whole new humanity that is now coming into being, Paul goes on to say that he is both **firstborn** of the old and **firstborn** of the new "in order that he might have the supremacy." There is nothing left out of his control. ([The Reason for the Season](#))

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**Norman Geisler** - COLOSSIANS 1:18—If Christ is only the firstborn in creation, then how can He be God?

**PROBLEM:** John declared Christ to be eternal and equal with God (John 1:1; 8:58; 20:28). But here Paul seems to say that Christ was only a creature, the first one born (created) in the universe.

**SOLUTION:** Paul clearly declares Christ to be God in this very letter by saying He "created all things" (Col 1:16) and has "the fullness of the Godhead" (Col 2:9). The reference to "firstborn" does not mean He is the firstborn in creation, but the firstborn over creation (Col 1:15), since "He is before all things" (Col 1:17). "Firstborn" in this context does not mean the first one to be born, but the heir of all, the Creator and owner of all things. As Creator of "all things," He could not have been a created thing. ([Is there a Bible contradiction in Colossians 1:18?](#))

(See [youtube video on "for" as a term of explanation](#) where this single conjunction refutes the claim of the Jehovah's Witnesses)

**SO THAT HE HIMSELF MIGHT COME TO HAVE FIRST PLACE IN EVERYTHING: hina genetai (3SAMS) en pasin autos proteuon (PAPMSN):**

"so that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent]" (Amp)

that in all things he might have the preeminence (ASV)

so that in all things he might have the chief place (BBE)

that in all things he may hold the primacy (DRB)

so that in everything he might have the supremacy (NIV)

in order that He Himself may in all things occupy the foremost place" (Weymouth)

- Php 2:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- Song 5:10 Isa 52:13 Mt 28:18 John 3:29-31, 34, 35 Ro 8:29 1Co 15:25 Php 2:6, 7, 8, 9, 10 11 Heb 1:5,6 Rev 5:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 11:15
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

## CHRIST IS SUPREME! ABOVE ALL!

**So that** ([2443](#)) (*hina*) is a purpose clause and thus Paul brings us to the "theme" of this entire preceding section -- Christ is preeminent in everything (Greek = **pas** = all things without exception). He is supreme over the visible world, the invisible world and the church. He ranks first. He is not simply another emanation (emanate means to come out from a source -- Jesus is not an emanation - He is the Source!). Does He have first place in my life? In everything? Christ is first with Paul in time and in rank.

**EXCURSUS:** The importance of pausing to ponder the phrase **SO THAT** (see [terms of purpose or result](#)) - "So that" is used as a subordinate clause which is used in Scripture to **show purpose** or **reason** or to **give an explanation** (This begs several questions the engaged reader should ask, prayerfully trusting their Teacher, the Spirit, to answer [1Cor 2:10-13] = "What is the author explaining?" For example: In Mt 6:2 "Why are men honored by men?"). **So that** is used to show an **action** (Mt 6:2 giving in sight of others) producing an intended **result** (Mt 6:2 - that we might be honored by men) or a **cause** producing an **effect** (Beloved, if you are a bit "slow" like me, you may need to read that sentence again!). As you read the Bible and spot "**so that**," pause and ponder and practice asking as many relevant questions as you can, and over time, intelligent (Spirit directed and controlled) interrogation will become your "default mode" as you read the Scriptures. You will be pleasantly surprised at how much better is your Biblical **observation** and **Interpretation!** Don't become frustrated. Please persevere! Some passages are more difficult to interrogate than others (especially those by Paul). I can assure you that with practice you will become proficient! Here is a simple illustration - "He must die **SO THAT** others might live." You could ask = "**Who** must die?" and that would force you to examine the context. **Why** must he die? **What** is the result of his death?, etc. As an aside, you should encounter ample opportunities to practice your interrogation, as there are 992 occurrences (in 979 verses) of the phrase "**so that**" in the NAS (1995 Version). If you are using the ESV, note that there are only 622 occurrences (in 612 verses) of **so that** (Be alert for ESV substitutes of words like "**so**" or "**that**" at the beginning of a sentence or clause.)

**Might come to have first place** ([proteuo](#)) in everything - This verb [proteuo](#) is used only in Col 1:18 in the New Testament and in the **present tense** indicates that Christ might **continually** have first place! Christ's resurrection from the dead warrants that He should receive pre-eminence over all time and all creation. Practically His preeminence entitles Him to receipt of obedience from everything. We do not see that now, but one day will (Php 2:9-11).

**THOUGHT** - What area of your Christian life are you struggling to obey Christ? Most of us have some spiritual Achilles' heel. What's yours? Mediate on the truth about Christ in Colossians 1:15-18, asking His Spirit to increase your understanding of and love for Him and His preeminence, that you might experience the "expulsive power of a new affection" to overwhelm your spiritual Achilles' heel. Read Ray Pritchard's short note on The Expulsive Power of a New Affection - Thomas Chalmer's famous sermon)

**Michaelis** - The clause sums up, intensifies and rounds off what was said in Col 1:15 (TDNTA)

**Might have first place** ([4409](#)) (*prōteuō* from **protos** = first) means to be first, to hold the first place, to be preeminent, to have preeminence, to be first in rank or influence, to hold the chief place, to have the highest dignity. **Proteuo** means preeminent in the sense of holding the primary place of power and status. "To hold the highest rank in a group = to be first, have first place." (BDAG) "To be in the first position, with the implication of high rank and prominence." (Louw-Nida)

**Preeminent, Preeminence** (Dictionary Definitions) - Having paramount rank, dignity, or importance : outstanding (standing out, marked by eminence and distinction). Excellence. Greatness. Superiority, especially in noble or excellent qualities. A position of supremacy or distinction above other persons, objects, or so-called gods. Synonyms = supreme, incomparable, surpassing, towering, transcendent, ultimate, unequalable, unmatched, unsurpassable. Renown. Distinction.

**Moulton and Milligan** have an interesting quote from secular Greek - "never does a house fail to come to grief, where woman takes the lead (*proteuo*) in everything."

**Erickson** - Place of supreme standing. Unlike the Gnostics, who exalted angels, Paul emphasized the preeminence of Christ (Col. 1:15–20). (The concise dictionary of Christian theology)

A derivative (cognate = related) verb is **philoprōteuō**, combining **philos** (“love”) and **prōtos** (“first”) thus describing a person (in context Diotrephes 3Jn 1:9) who loves to be first and thus is selfish, self-centered, and self-seeking. The present tense in 3Jn 1:9 indicates that this was the constant pattern of Diotrephes’ life. Woe! Let’s face it, we all have some a bit of this “Diotrephes’ desire” in us, don’t we? We constantly struggle with the desire to be first in anything and everything, a battle that will rage until we see Jesus face to face. In the meantime, a good “antidote” is to ponder the truth that there is really one One Who deserves the title of “FIRST,” and His Name is Jesus (cp Heb 12:2-note). The more we contemplate that eternal truth, the less we will focus on self. That’s the pattern in Gal 5:16 (note), where walking filled with and empowered by the Spirit effectively defeats takes the place of the desires of the flesh.

**Proteuo** - Once in NT, twice in Apocrypha, once in Lxx

NAB Esther 5:11 He recounted the greatness of his riches, the large number of his sons, and just how the king had promoted him and **placed** him **above** (caused him to take precedence) the officials and royal servants.

NAB 2 Maccabees 6:18 Eleazar, one of the **foremost** scribes, a man of advanced age and noble appearance, was being forced to open his mouth to eat pork.

NAB 2 Maccabees 13:15 Giving his men the battle cry “God’s Victory,” he made a night attack on the king’s pavilion with a picked force of the bravest young men and killed about two thousand in the camp. They also slew the **lead** elephant and its rider.

NAB Colossians 1:18 He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be **preeminent**.

**Jamieson** on **first place in everything** - One holding the first place,” or, “take the precedency.” Both ideas are included, priority in time and priority in dignity: now in the regenerated world, as before in the world of creation (Col 1:15). “Begotten before every creature, or “first-born of every creature” (Ps 89:27; Jn 3:13).

**In everything** - Vine says the idea is He is preeminent “both in the universe and in the church (the word “**all**” (everything) is to be regarded grammatically in the original as neuter, indicating the most comprehensive inclusion)....That Christ should eternally occupy this highest position was a purpose consistent with His inherent supremacy, indicated in the word, “the beginning,” and His priority in resurrection (“the Firstborn from the dead”).”

Christ’s **resurrection** signifies His triumph over death (He 2:14-note; 1Jn 3:8) since, unlike others, He rose never to die again. Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power by the **resurrection** from the dead” (Ro 1:4-note). So He continues to live by “the power of an **indestructible life**.” (Heb 7:16-note).

After His resurrection, He declared to His disciples - “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Mt 28:18)

Paul added that “He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.” (1Cor 15:25)

The writer of Hebrews speaking of Jesus’ supremacy over the angels adds “to which of the angels did He ever say, “THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE”? And again, “I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”? And when He again brings the **first-born** into the world, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.” (Heb 1:5-note; Heb 1:6-note)

**MacDonald** - (Christ’s) resurrection is unique, and is the pledge that all who trust in Him will also rise. It proclaims Him as supreme in the spiritual creation. **Alfred Mace** put it well: “Christ cannot be second anywhere. He is “**firstborn** of every creature,” because He has created everything (Col. 1:15, 16). He is also **firstborn** from the dead in connection with a redeemed and heavenly family. Thus creation and redemption hand the honors of supremacy to Him because of Who He is and of what He has done; “that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” He is first everywhere.” The Lord Jesus has thus a double pre-eminence—first in creation, and then in the church. God has decreed that in all things HE may have the preeminence. What an answer this is to those who, in Paul’s day (and our own), would seek to rob Christ of His deity, and to make of Him only a created being, however exalted! (Ibid)

**Moule** on **Might have first place** - “That in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” “And He must have it; and He will have it; and He shall have it!” The words were uttered by the Rev. C. Simeon, in his pulpit at Cambridge, in his old age, about the year 1835 (Ed: See Piper’s summary entitled “[Brothers, We Must Not Mind a Little Suffering](#)”). The scene was reported to me from memory in 1868 by the late Dean Howson, of Chester; he was in the church, and heard the impassioned words, and saw the form of the aged preacher actually rise in height as the soul erected the body to bear witness to the Redeemer’s glory. The effect was strong and thrilling. But the words and action were after all only the just utterance of a faithful servant consenting from his heart to the fact of his Lord’s glory, and of his Father’s purpose for the Son of His love. So let our hearts take them up to-day. For the Universe, for

the Church, Christ is and must be "pre-eminently" the First, the Head. And therefore this He must be, He will be, He shall be, not only to the world and the Church but to me the creature of His will, the believer in His promise. ([Colossians 1:15-20 The Pre-Eminence of the Son of God](#))

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**In light of the truth that Christ is first in everything, sing this song to Him..**

[Above All — \(Michael W Smith\)](#)

Above all powers  
Above all kings  
Above all nature  
And all created things  
Above all wisdom  
And all the ways of man  
You were here  
Before the world began

Above all kingdoms  
Above all thrones  
Above all wonders  
The world has ever known  
Above all wealth  
And treasures of the earth  
There's no way to measure  
What You're worth

**Refrain:**

Crucified  
Laid behind a stone  
You lived to die  
Rejected and alone  
Like a rose  
Trampled on the ground  
You took the fall  
And thought of me  
Above all

Like the rose  
Trampled on the ground  
You took the fall  
And thought of me  
Above all

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**J C Philpot** - August 24 - "And he is the head of the body, the church." Colossians 1:18 -

That the Lord Jesus Christ should have a people, in whom he should be eternally glorified, was the original promise made by the Father to the Son. "Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession" (Psalm 2:8). This was "the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame." This was "the purchased possession," "the travail of his soul," and the reward of his humiliation and sufferings (Phil. 2:9, 10). This people form the members of his mystical body, all of which were written in his book, the book of life, when as yet, as regards their actual existence, there was none of them (Psalm 139:16). All these were given to him in eternity, when he was constituted their covenant Head in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. They thus became, in prospect of his incarnation, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

How touchingly did the blessed Redeemer remind his Father of those covenant transactions, when he said in his memorable prayer, "I pray for them--I pray not for the world, but for those who you have given me; for they are yours. And all mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I am glorified in them." Being thus given to Christ, and constituted members of his mystical body, they can no more perish than Christ himself. He is their Head; and as he is possessed of all power, full of all love, filled with all wisdom, and replete

with all mercy, grace, and truth, how can he, how will he, allow any of his members to fall out of his body, and be lost to him as well as to themselves? Will any man willingly allow his eye, or his hand, or his foot, or even the tip of his little finger, to be taken out or cut off? If any member of our body perish, if we lose an arm or a leg, it is because we have not power to prevent it. But all power belongs to Christ, in heaven and in earth; and therefore no one member of his mystical body can perish for lack of power in him to save it.

But however truly blessed this doctrine is, it is only when we are quickened and made alive unto God by a spiritual birth that we savingly and experimentally know and realize it; and we are, for the most part, led into it thus. We are first made to feel our need of Christ as a Savior from the wrath to come, from the fear of death, the curse of the law, and the accusations of a guilty conscience.

When enabled, by the blessed Spirit's operations, to receive him into our heart, by faith, as the Christ of God, and to realize in some measure a saving interest in him, we are then taught to feel our need of continual supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness. For we have to learn something of the depths of the fall, of the evils of our heart, of the temptations of Satan, of the strength of sin, of our own weakness and worthlessness; and as every fresh discovery of our helplessness and wretchedness makes a way for looking to and hanging upon him, we become more and more dependent on him as of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

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**THE LAMB SLAIN IN TIME IS THE LAMB ADORED IN ETERNITY** - John sums up the reaction every saint should when they come to a proper understanding of the **preeminence** of the Lord Jesus Christ, writing that those in heaven "sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou (Christ) to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" and then John heard "the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, " To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." (Rev 5:9-13+)

**John** later records "the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." (Rev 11:15+) As someone has said "If Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, He cannot be Lord at all."

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**Wiersbe** relates the story of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition which was held in Chicago writing that "more than 21 million people visited the exhibits. Among the features was a "World Parliament of Religions," with representatives of the world's religions, meeting to share their "best points" and perhaps come up with a new religion for the world. Evangelist D. L. Moody saw this as a great opportunity for evangelism. He used churches, rented theaters, and even rented a circus tent (when the show was not on) to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His friends wanted Moody to attack the "Parliament of Religions," but he refused. "I am going to make Jesus Christ so attractive," he said, "that men will turn to Him." Moody knew that Jesus Christ was the preeminent Savior, not just one of many "religious leaders" of history. The "Chicago Campaign" of 1893 was probably the greatest evangelistic endeavor in D. L. Moody's life, and thousands came to Christ." (Borrow [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

### **THE CHURCH OF GOD IS ONE**

Daniel Whittle

The Church of God is one:  
As brethren here we meet;  
For us salvation's work is done,  
In Christ we stand complete.

The church of God is one:  
One blessed hope have we;  
Our dear Redeemer's sure return  
His saints to glorify

Refrain:

The church of God is one,  
Is one in faith and love,  
Is one in the death by Jesus borne,  
One in His life above.

---

**An illustration of Giving Jesus the Preeminence He Alone deserves:** In Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting of The Last Supper, our Lord's hands are empty. And therein lies an inspiring story. Da Vinci dedicated three years to this painting, determined that it would be his crowning work. Before the unveiling, he decided to show it to a friend for whose opinion he had the utmost respect. The friend's praise was unbounded. "The cup in Jesus' hand," he said, "is especially beautiful." Disappointed at once Da Vinci began to paint out the cup. Astonished, the distinguished friend asked for an explanation. "Nothing," Da Vinci explained, "must distract from the figure of Christ." Da Vinci focused attention solely on Christ by removing the distraction of the cup. Having removed the cup, he had to do something with the hand. The left hand was already outstretched just above the table, lifting, as if to bless and command. Now the right hand, also empty, was also outstretched invitingly.

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**SINGLE FOCUS** - He is the head of the body, the church, . . . that in all things He may have the preeminence. --Colossians 1:18

Pam Sneddon was taking a class in photography. For one assignment, she chose her 6-year-old daughter as her subject and asked her to sit on a serene hillside. Close by was an apple tree in full bloom. Pam just couldn't resist. She gave the tree a prominent place in the picture.

Pam was surprised when her instructor pointed out a problem with the photo. The apple tree distracted from her primary focus, the little girl.

"See how it catches the eye," the instructor said. "It competes with your subject. You need to choose one subject and leave the other out."

This observation applies to more than good photography skills. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must center our attention only on Him. Like amateur photographers, we are often attracted to the "apple trees in full bloom." We pay more attention to our hobbies, friends, family, or work.

Christ commands our attention because He is "the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality" (1 Tim. 6:15-16). That may mean relegating something we deem to be important to the background--or cropping it out of the picture altogether.

Whatever distracts us from Jesus has to go. As the preeminent One, He must be the single focus of our lives. --DCE

In Christ alone the earth shall find its answer,  
A refuge from its doubts, its fears, its strife;  
This God-revealed-in-flesh, this precious Savior,  
Forever is the Way, the Truth, the Life! --Calenberg

If Christ is the center of your life, you'll always be focused on Him.

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We can never exaggerate the greatness of Christ. Paul said that **'He is the image of the invisible God'** (Col. 1:15), that **"by Him all things were created"** (Col 1:16), and that **'He is before all things'** (Col 1:17). As the preeminent person in human history, Christ is worthy of our love and our praise.

In his classic book *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer paid tribute to Frederick Faber, the Englishman who wrote the song "Faith of Our Fathers."

Tozer said,

"His love for the person of Christ was so intense that it threatened to consume him; it burned within him as a sweet and holy madness and flowed from his lips like molten gold. In one of his sermons he said, 'Wherever we turn in the church of God, there is Jesus. He is the beginning, middle, and end of everything to us... There is nothing good, nothing holy, nothing beautiful, nothing joyous which He is not to His servants...No one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts. We can exaggerate about many things, but we can never exaggerate our obligation to Jesus, or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. All our lives long we might talk of Jesus, and yet we should never come to an end of the sweet things that might be said of Him.

Christ deserves our loving adoration. He is truly the preeminent One. —R. W. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**When we submit to Jesus' lordship, we'll give Him our worship.**

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**Eyes On The King** -John Henry Jowett, the great English preacher, liked to tell about the time he attended the coronation of Edward VII. Westminster Abbey was filled with royalty. Jowett said, "Much bowing and respect was shown as nobility of high rank entered the cathedral." When the king arrived, however, a hush came over the audience. Every eye was on him, and no longer did the dignitaries of lower status receive the gaze and interest of the people. All the subjects fixed their attention on their royal leader. This is the way it should be in the life of a Christian. Jesus is the King of kings, and He deserves the place of highest prominence. Naturally we love and respect our families, friends, associates, and those who serve the Lord. But the Lord Jesus must have the preeminence! Our devotion is always to be centered on Him. With all the activities that compete for our time-even the work and program of the church-it's so easy to take our eyes off the Savior. May we never lose sight of King Jesus who deserves our praise and worship. Let us join the heavenly voices and say, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor" (Rev 4:11-[note](#)). Yes, Christ is the preeminent One! -R W De Haan ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Then let us adore and give Him His right-  
All glory and power and wisdom and might,  
All honor and blessing with angels above,  
And thanks never ceasing, and infinite love.  
-Wesley

### **Focusing on Christ puts everything else in perspective**

**Colossians 1:19** **For** it was the [*Father's*] **good pleasure** for **all** the **fullness** to  **dwell in Him** (**NASB: Lockman**)

- **Greek:** [hoti en auto eudokesen \(3SAAI\)](#) [pan to pleroma katoikesai \(AAN\)](#)
- **Amplified:** For it has pleased [the Father] that all the divine fullness (the sum total of the divine perfection, powers, and attributes) should dwell in Him permanently. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))
- **MLB** (Berkley): For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him,
- **Phillips:** It was in him that the full nature of God chose to live [Phillips: Touchstone](#)
- **Wuest:** because in Him [God] was well pleased that all the fullness be permanently at home.
- **Young's Literal:** because in him it did please all the fulness to tabernacle,

**FOR IT WAS THE FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE: Hoti en auto eudokesen (3SAAI):**

- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

See end of this comment section for a technical note on the 3 grammatical possibilities in translation

**For** ([3754](#)) (**hoti**) introduces the reason why the Son is supreme in the new creation. His supremacy is by virtue of His work of reconciliation. Be sure not to skip over "**for**" when it is used as a **term of explanation**. **For** is usually important for understanding the author's argument or train of thought. So take the opportunity (under the tutelage of the Spirit), to pause and ponder this strategic term, asking at least "What is the writer explaining?"

**Lightfoot** - The eternal indwelling of the Godhead explains the headship of the Church

**Peake** explains the **for** this way - This verse with Colossians 1:20 shows how the Son was able to hold the position assigned to Him in Colossians 1:18. Further, this verse leads up to Colossians 1:20. The thought is then: All the fulness dwelt in the Son, therefore reconciliation could be accomplished through the blood of His cross, and so He became the Head of the body. (Colossians 1 - The Expositor's Greek Testament)

**Constable** - The reason for His preeminence in the new creation is the Son's work of reconciliation (Col 1:20). Col 1:19–23 give the reason Paul could say what he just did about Christ's supremacy. (Colossians 1 - Expository Notes)

**Good pleasure** ([2106](#)) (**eudokeo** from **eú** = well, good + **dokéo** = think, seem) literally means what seems good (pleasingly)

acceptable). To think well of. To approve of. To take pleasure or delight in. The idea is to find satisfaction in someone and view with approval. The Father clearly took personal pleasure in His Son as His Source of great pleasure, keen enjoyment, and great gratification. God said "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am **well-pleased** (eudokeo)" (Mt 3:17)

Note that there is no word in the Greek for "**the Father**," though the verb calls for either "**God**" (some prefer) or "**Father**" to be the subject (as determined from the context).

#### FOR ALL THE FULNESS TO DWELL IN HIM: en auto...pan to pleroma katoikesai (AAN):

- Col 2:9, Jn 1:16 Eph 1:23
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

See Technical note at the end of this comment section.

The **KJV** reads "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" -**MacDonald** comments that "Darby translates Col 1:19 as follows: "For in Him all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell." The King James tradition could make it sound as if at some point in time the Father (notice italics for words not in the Greek) was pleased to make all fullness dwell in the Son. The real meaning is that the fullness of the Godhead always dwelt in Christ. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**All the fulness** - All means without exception, without deficiency or lack.

**Spurgeon** - It tells us that Christ is substance and not shadow, fulness and not foretaste. This is good news for us, for nothing but realities will meet our case. What joy these words give to us when we remember that our vast necessities demand a fulness—"all fulness"—before they can be supplied!

**Fulness** (4138) (**pleroma** from **pleroo** = make full, fill, fill up) means fullness, full measure, abundance, completion or what fills. **Pleroma** describes a full measure or abundance with emphasis upon completeness without any gap or deficit. The idea of pleroma is sum total or totality of something. This word was used for example of a ship inasmuch as it is filled (i.e. manned) with sailors, rowers, soldiers. After the miracle of feeding 4000, Jesus asked "And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets **full** (pleroma) of broken pieces did you pick up?" (Mt 8:20) In reference to time, Paul records that "when the **fulness** (pleroma) of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law." (Gal 4:4)

Paul presumably choose **pleroma**, because (as Lightfoot points out) it was "A recognized technical term in theology, denoting the totality of the Divine powers and attributes." And so in this context **pleroma** is used **figuratively** to speak of the completeness or totality of the divine nature in Christ! "The whole total of the Godhead" was pleased to dwell in Christ. Christ has ALL the divine attributes in Himself.

Gnosticism used **pleroma** for the entire host of intermediary beings between God and man. The Gnostics taught Christ was kind of "halfway house" to God, a link in the chain with other better links on ahead. Paul countered with the clear and indisputable truth that in Christ "all the fullness (pleroma) of Deity dwells (present tense = continually) in bodily form." (Col 2:9-note) Paul says "no", the **complete** embodiment of God dwells permanently in Christ. Christ is not some inferior emanation (coming out of the Godhead through intermediate stages or matter). In short, as mysterious and incomprehensible to our finite minds as this truth is, Jesus was **fully God** and **fully Man** and the great news is that we as believers are "been made complete" in Him (Col 2:10). Every believer possesses all of Jesus today that they will possess of Him for all eternity. The goal now of course is for Jesus to possess "all of our heart" today, which is the essence of the Spirit's work of daily, progressive sanctification (setting us apart from the world and unto God) in believers (cp Php 1:6).

**MacArthur** - **Plērōma** (fulness) was a term used by the later Gnostics to refer to the divine powers and attributes, which they believed were divided among the various emanations. That is likely the sense in which the Colossian errorists used the term. Paul counters that false teaching by stating that all the fulness of deity is not spread out in small doses to a group of spirits, but fully dwell-s in Christ alone (cf. Col 2:9).

**MacDonald** - Gnostic heretics taught that Christ was a kind of "halfway house" to God, a necessary link in the chain. But there were other, better links on ahead. "Go on from Him," they urged, "and you will reach the fullness." "No," Paul answers, "Christ is Himself the complete fullness!" (Ibid)

**Lightfoot** - On the one hand, in relation to Deity, He is the visible image of the invisible God. He is not only the chief manifestation of the Divine nature: He exhausts the godhead manifested. In Him resides the totality of the Divine powers and attributes. For this totality Gnostic teachers had a technical term, the *pleroma* or plenitude.... In contrast to their doctrine, [Paul] asserts and repeats the assertion, that the *pleroma* abides absolutely and wholly in Christ as the Word of God. The entire light is concentrated in Him. ([Colossians 1 Commentary](#))

**Vincent on *pleroma***- "The word must be taken in its passive sense—that with which a thing is filled, not that which fills. The fulness denotes the sum-total of the divine powers and attributes. In Christ dwelt all the fulness of God as deity."

**William Barclay - *Pleroma***...is the word which is needed to complete the picture. Jesus is not simply a sketch of God or a summary and more than a lifeless portrait of Him. In Him there is nothing left out; He is the full revelation of God, and nothing more is necessary." (Colossians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible)

**Constable** - Here Paul used this word (***pleroma***) of the totality of Christ's saving grace and power (cf. Acts 5:31, 17:31). His point was that all divine power resides in Christ as a result of His resurrection (Col 1:18) and there are no other mediating agents (cf. 2:9; Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:13; 1Tim. 2:5). ([ibid](#))

**Homer Kent:** "'Fullness' (***pleroma***) was a term used in Gnostic literature to denote the totality of the divine powers and attributes. These were considered to be distributed among various aeons or emanations (i.e., actual beings who mediated between God and men). The entire series of aeons was known as the *pleroma*. In Paul's day (a century before full-flowered Gnosticism), the term apparently referred to the totality of the divine attributes, as indicated by Paul's clarifying phrase in Col 2:9, 'all the fulness of Deity' (NASB). Hence, in contrast to the heretical teaching which would share divine honors with angelic beings (Col 2:18), Paul affirms that all the divine powers reside in Christ. There are no other mediating agents. Furthermore, this fullness which Christ possesses is a permanent possession (***katoikeo***).'" ([Treasures of Wisdom- Studies in Colossians & Philemon](#))

#### Other Lexicons-

- [Vine's discussion of \*pleroma\*](#)
- [Thayer's discussion of \*pleroma\*](#)

**Dwell** ([2730](#)) (***katoikeo*** from ***kata*** = intensifying preposition and this prefix shows permanence + ***oikeo*** = occupy a house, live at home) means literally to settle down (be at home, dwell) in a place so to take up permanent abode or residence and so to abide. The idea is to take up permanent residence as one's personal residence. Contrast the related verb Paul did not use = ***paroikeo*** = transient sojourning.

**Wuest** - (***katoikeo*** means) all the divine fulness is **at home permanently** in the Lord Jesus, at home in the sense that this divine fulness was not something added to His Being that was not natural to Him, but that it was part of His essential Being as part of His very constitution, and that permanently.

**Constable** on ***katoikeo*** signifying permanence - "This contradicts the idea that Christ possessed divine power only temporarily, which Christian Science teaches." ([ibid](#))

**Barth** writes that ***katoikeo*** denotes permanent habitation as opposed to sojourning or an occasional visit. And thus ***katoikeo*** means to dwell in a more permanent sense than ***paroikeo*** which means to dwell in a temporary sense (synonymous with sojourn = to stay as a temporary resident - used of strangers who have no rights of citizenship and no settled home - e.g., Abraham by faith "*lived* {*paroikeo*} *as an alien in the land of promise as in a foreign land, dwelling*{*katoikeo*} *in tents*" Heb 11:9-note).

**Docetism** (from Greek "***dokeo***"= to seem) describes the false doctrine that Christ did not actually become flesh. They taught that Christ's physical body was not real but only appeared to be. In other words, Jesus only appeared to be a man. This false teaching states that Jesus became Deity only at His baptism but that His Deity left Him on the cross. Thus **Docetism** affirms the deity (only in part) of Christ and denies His humanity. This heresy originated directly from the Gnostic heresies. Paul directly confronts this genre of error with the term "**the fulness**" of Deity (Col 1:19-note, Col 2:9-note). You can stake your life on it - the very essence of God dwells in Christ.

Some people believe you can separate the Trinity, but when you get the Lord Jesus in your life, you have the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (See related study on Our Body, His Temple)

**In Him** - This pronoun is at beginning of the Greek sentence for **emphasis**. Literally the Greek reads "because in Him it did please all the fulness to tabernacle (dwell)."

**In Him** gathers all the previous truths into a grand climax — image of God, firstborn of all creation, Creator, eternally preexistent,

Head of the Church, Victor over death, first in all things. On this summit we should pause, looking, like John, from Christ in His fulness of deity to the exhibition of that divine fulness in redemption consummated in heaven where John saw "between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain." (Rev 5:6+)

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#### QUESTION - [What is Docetism?](#)

**ANSWER** - Docetism was an early Christian heresy that promoted a false view of Jesus' humanity. The word *Docetism* comes from the Greek *dokein*, which meant "to seem"; according to Docetism, Jesus Christ only *seemed* to have a human body like ours.

Docetism allowed that Jesus may have been in some way divine, but it denied His full humanity. Hardcore Docetists taught that Jesus was only a phantasm or an illusion, appearing to be human but having no body at all. Other forms of Docetism taught that Jesus had a "heavenly" body of some type but not a real, natural body of flesh. Docetism was closely related to [Gnosticism](#), which viewed physical matter as inherently evil and spiritual substance as inherently good.

The problem with Docetism is that it denies the core truths of the [gospel](#), namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. If Jesus did not have a real body, then He did not really die (Docetism teaches that His suffering on the cross was mere illusion). And, if Jesus had no physical body, He could not have risen bodily from the dead. Without the actual death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have no salvation, we are still in our sins, and our faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:17). Docetism also denies the ascension of Christ (since He had no real body to make the ascent).

On the matter of Jesus' humanity, the Bible could not be clearer. Jesus went out of His way to prove His [bodily resurrection](#) to the disciples who thought at first they were seeing a ghost: "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:39).

The apostle John warned the early church against the false doctrine of Gnosticism, which embraced Docetism's error: "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist" (1 John 4:1-2). Note the apostle's emphasis on Jesus being "in the flesh." Denial of Jesus' humanity was heresy. John repeats the warning in another epistle: "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming **in the flesh**, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 1:7, emphasis added).

Early church fathers fought valiantly against Docetism, especially [Ignatius of Antioch](#) (c. AD 35-107). Ignatius rightly taught that, if Jesus had not actually shed His blood on the cross, then His death was meaningless. Ignatius saw that there was no possible way to align the deception of Docetism with the truth of Christianity.

Docetism must be rejected because it is not a biblical view of Jesus' nature. In fact, Docetism stands in flat denial of biblical truth. Jesus Christ did not simply *appear* human; He was [truly human](#), as well as truly God. He came from heaven and took on human flesh and bone, and He lived the life of a normal man in this world—a Spirit-filled man, to be sure, and a man who always obeyed the Father, but a man nonetheless. His suffering on the cross was real, and His death was an actual death. He shed real blood to pay the real price for our real sin in order to grant us real forgiveness. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [Docetism - A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography](#)
- [Docetism](#)
- [Docetism - Heresies of the Church Thru the Ages](#)
- [Wikipedia article on Docetism](#)
- [What are Docetism, Apollinarianism, Ebionism, and Eutychianism](#)

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**Octavius Winslow. Daily Walking with God** - (Col 1:19) All wisdom to guide, all power to uphold, all love to soothe, all grace to support, all tenderness to sympathize, dwells in Christ. Let us, then, gird ourselves to a fresh taking hold of Christ. We must walk through this year not by sight, but by faith- and that faith must deal simply and directly, with Jesus. "Without me you can do nothing." But with His strength made perfect in our weakness, we can do all things. Oh, be this our course and our posture- "coming up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved." Living in a world of imperfection and change, we must expect nothing perfect, nothing stable, in what we are, in what we do, or in what we enjoy. But amid the dissolving views of the world that "passes away," let us take firm hold of the unchangeableness of God. The wheels may revolve, but the axle on which they turn is immovable. Such is our covenant God. Events may vary- providences may change- friends may die- feelings may fluctuate- but God in Christ will know "no variableness, neither the shadow of a turning." "Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

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**TECHNICAL NOTE H C G Moule** - Grammatically, the Greek admits three possible explanations: (a) "For in Him all the Plenitude was pleased to take up Its abode;" (b) "For He (the Son) was pleased that all the Plenitude should take up Its abode in Him;" (c) "For He (God, the Father) was pleased that all the Plenitude should take up Its abode in Him (the Son)." What decision does the context, or other side-evidence, indicate? The explanation (b) is discredited as assigning to the Son a determining choice which the whole context leads us to assign to the Father. The explanation (a), adopted and ably defended by Ellicott, is that of the Old Latin Version. It is grammatically simple, and it is capable of doctrinal defence; "the Plenitude" of the Divine Nature being taken to include the actings of the Divine Will as the expression of the Nature, and so to signify the Divine Personality (here, of course, that of the Father). But it is in itself a surprising and extremely anomalous expression; and it becomes still more so when we read on, and see what are the actions attributed to the same Subject, and that the Subject appears in the masculine gender in the word rendered "having made peace" (see note below), while the word Plerôma (Plenitude) is neuter. On the whole we believe (c) to be the true explanation, with Alford, and Lightfoot, who compares James 1:12; James 4:6 (the better supported reading in each case); "the crown which He (unnamed) promised;" "the Spirit which He (unnamed) caused to dwell in us." He points out also that the noun (eudokia) kindred to the verb here is often, and almost as a habit, used of God's "good pleasure" where God is not named. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**Wayne House** - Paul wrote, "For in Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell" (RSV). One view on the meaning of this verse is that it affirms the deity of Christ, with the understanding that **all the fulness** refers to Christ as the One who represents all that God is. A second view is that **pleroma** speaks of intermediary beings between God and man. The second-century school of Valentinius used the word **pleroma** to describe such divine entities or emanations. In this view Christ encompasses and/or replaces all these emanations. Though Gnosticism had not yet become part of the Colossian heresy, this idea of emanations could have germinated in Colosse before Gnosticism took root as a full-orbed system. A third view is that **pleroma** refers not to essence but to redemptive power. Following verse 18, which affirms Christ's victory over death, verse 19 may suggest that salvific power is what dwells in Christ. This seems most plausible, because it inherently includes the idea of the deity of Christ, and yet, flowing from the thought in verse 18, it points to Christ as Redeemer. God the Father was pleased to have all redemptive power dwelling in Christ. ([Ref](#))

**Colossians 1:20** and [through Him](#) to [reconcile all things](#) to [Himself](#), having [made peace through](#) the [blood](#) of His [cross](#); [through Him](#), I say, [whether](#) things on [earth](#) or things in [heaven](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [kai di autou](#) apokatallaxai ([AAN](#)) [ta panta eis auton, eirenopoiasas](#) ([AAPMSN](#)) [dia tou haimatos tou staurou autou, \[di' autou\] eite ta epi tes ges eite ta en tois ouranois.](#)

**Amplified:** And God purposed that through (by the service, the intervention of) Him [the Son] all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, as through Him, [the Father] made peace by means of the blood of His cross. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**MLB** (Berkley): and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, those on earth as well as those in heaven, as through Him God made peace by means of the blood of His cross.

**Phillips:** and through him God planned to reconcile in his own person, as it were, everything on earth and everything in Heaven by virtue of the sacrifice of the cross. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** And [God was well pleased] through His agency to reconcile all things to himself, having concluded peace through the blood of His Cross, through Him, whether the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens.

**Young's Literal:** and through him to reconcile the all things to himself--having made peace through the blood of his cross--through him, whether the things upon the earth, whether the things in the heavens.

**AND THROUGH HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF:** [kai di' autou apokatallaxai](#) ([AAN](#)) [ta panta eis auton:](#)

- Col 1:22, Lev 16:20 2Cor 5:18 Ro 5:10 Eph 2:16 Heb 2:17 1Jn 2:2
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

## RECONCILIATION: THROUGH CHRIST

**Wuest** associates this passage with the previous one writing - The **fulness** of the Godhead that resides permanently in Christ constituted Him equal to the task of reconciliation, and His act of making peace effected that reconciliation, His Blood being that which satisfied the just demands of the broken law.

**Through** (1223) (**dia**) is a preposition of intermediate agency. The idea is by means of. "It denotes the means or instrument in the hands of an individual by which an act is performed." (Wuest) Stated another way **through** refers to the means by which something is accomplished. So whenever you encounter a "**through**" (sometimes translated "**by**") used to express intermediate agency, pause and ponder what is the agent or instrument and what is accomplished? In the present context, the "intermediate agency" is Christ (His death, burial and resurrection) and the act or accomplishment is reconciliation.

We see a foreshadowing of **through Him** on the Day of Atonement - Leviticus 16:20-note "When he finishes atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat."

Hebrews 2:17-note writes "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

1John 2:2-note and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

**Reconcile** (604) (**apokatallasso** from **apó** = from = state to be left behind which conveys idea of complete reconciliation when combined with + **katallasso** = reconcile) is intensive and is not just simply "reconcile" but to reconcile fully! It means to exchange hostility for friendship. It pictures the total, complete, and full restoration of the relationship of disturbed peace. One might paraphrase it that Christ "*might reconcile thoroughly them both.*" This is great news for helpless, ungodly, sinners.

In Ephesians 2:16 Paul uses **apokatallasso** to describe the Jew and Gentile being reconciled with God. The only other uses of this verb are in Col 1:20 and Col 1:21.

See [Reconciliation - From Enmity to Amity](#) (many illustrations related to reconciliation)

**Mounce** writes that **apokatallasso** "appears to have an end-time emphasis. In Col 1:20, 22, Paul claims that reconciliation between God and human beings is effected by being washed in Christ's blood as shed on the cross. This reconciliation has ramifications for the reconciliation of the entire universe, which has been out of sorts with God since the fall of Adam and Eve and will not be fully restored until the return of Christ (cf. Rom 8:18–25; Rev 21:1–5)." (Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary)

**John MacArthur** - Paul used this stronger verb (**apokatallasso** compared to **katallasso** [word study]) in Colossians as a counterattack against the false teachers. Because they held that Christ was merely another spirit being emanating from God, they also denied the possibility of man's being reconciled to God by Christ alone. In refuting that denial, Paul emphasizes that there is total, complete, and full reconciliation through the Lord Jesus. Inasmuch as He possesses all the fullness of deity (Col 1:19-note; Col 2:9-note), Jesus is able to fully reconcile sinful men and women to God (Col 1:20-note).

**Reconciliation** produces the **restoration** of a **relationship** of peace which has been disturbed (Where? in the garden of Eden). At the right time (Ro 5:6, the "fullness [or pleroma] of time" Gal 4:4) through Christ's propitiatory (satisfying the justice God's holiness demanded) sacrifice, God was reconciled in that justice was satisfied at Calvary in the pouring out of His wrath on the Lamb of God. Sinful man is reconciled in that his attitude of enmity toward God is changed to one of friendship.

To reconcile is to take someone who is hostile towards someone else and change that into a friendly relationship. Unsaved ungodly man is an enemy of God and is hostile toward Him and God takes the initiative in this estranged relationship and sent Jesus to be our Mediator Who by faith in His sacrificial death and resurrection life brings us into a friendly relationship with God. (Eph 2:16-note)

The Greeks spoke of people in opposition to each other being "reconciled" or being made friends again. When people change from being at enmity with each other to being at peace, they are said to be reconciled. The root verb **katallasso** meant to legally reconcile two disputing parties in court and in the New Testament is used of a believer's reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

**Reconciliation** takes someone who is hostile towards someone else, and changes that into a friendly relationship. This word means to change thoroughly. The double use of prepositions as prefixes (**apo**, **kata**) emphasizes the totality of the reconciliation.

**H C G Moule** - Its form emphasizes the thought of conciliating back again, after breach of loyalty or amity. Ideally, the whole Church and each individual was (in Adam unfallen) originally at peace with God; then came revolt, and now re-conciliation. On such an ideal view (very different from that of personal conscious experience) see our note on Ephesians 2:12 (“being aliens.”) A simpler form of the same verb occurs e.g. Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 7:11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. The main notion of both verbs is the propitiation of an alienated superior, so that he accepts offending inferiors, who are thus and then “reconciled” to him. And the superior “reconciles them” so far as he acts on the provided propitiation. Here the Father “reconciles” by constituting His Son the all-sufficient and all-acceptable Lord of Peace. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**S Lewis Johnson** illustrates **reconciliation** - When we think of an illustration in the New Testament, one of the illustrations that comes to my mind is the **parable of the forgiving father**, often called the parable of the prodigal son (See Luke 15:11-32). But the important person in the parable is not the son, the important person is the father. That’s the way we do, we tend to want to look at things so selfishly that by the time we read one of the Lord’s parables we’ve turned it around and made it something else. In the parable of the forgiving father, the father with the two sons, one of whom is the prodigal and the other is the one who stayed at home, in that parable, the climax of the parable is when the father sees the son finally returning, and races down the road in order to fall upon his neck. It’s Jesus Christ’s picture of God. And the picture of the return of the prodigal, who forgives beforehand – who has already forgiven – is the picture of the reconciliation of the Jew to God and the Gentile to God, and of both together to the Lord God. **“That he might reconcile both to one God in one body.”** We often think of God as a God Who requires that we do certain things before he will love us. But that is so foolish. The Bible does not present to us a God before whom we must do certain things in order for Him to love us. The Bible presents a God Who has loved us before, and has given the Son as the redeeming sacrifice in order to save His people. Sometimes we sing Wesley’s **“Arise my Soul, Arise.”** It has a stanza that goes, **“My God is reconciled, his pardoning voice I hear.”** ([play](#)) Occasionally, in order to stress the fact that it is not God Who needs reconciliation but man who needs reconciliation – you’ll notice the text in verse 16 says “and that he might reconcile both unto God,” – we changed the first line of the hymn, **“To God I’m reconciled, his pardoning voice I hear.”** I think that’s much more harmonious with Scripture. ([Ephesians 2:11-22 Made Nigh by Christ’s Blood](#))

**Moule** has these devotional comments at this juncture - Once more the Apostle’s great flight of worshipping thought pauses, not to alight but as it were to hover while it prepares for a new movement. As it stays, let us rest awhile, in wonder and in faith. Let us take another long look upwards at this blessed Son of the Father’s love, Cause and Corner-stone of the Universe, visible and invisible, Head of the Church, giving law to His Body, and giving it also a law-fulfilling power. Behold Him; He is Tabernacle for ever of the eternal Plenitude, Bearer in His Incarnation of Godhead itself, and therefore infinite Fountain for us of every resource which we need for life and holiness. And then let us make haste again to the foot of the Cross. Let us see this most mysterious Being nailed there with nails, and crowned with thorns, and torn by the Roman lance; a dying, agonizing human frame yielding up a disembodied human spirit. And let us measure by such a Death, demanded, exacted, endured, accomplished, the immensity of our need as sinners, and the immensity also of the reconciliation which is now for us—not to make, but to take. To Him be glory. ([Colossians 1:15-20 The Pre-Eminence of the Son of God](#) in his book *Colossian and Philemon Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness*)

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:18?](#)
- [What is ultimate reconciliation?](#)
- Wayne House's article - [Colossians - The Doctrine of Salvation in Colossians - Redemption, Reconciliation](#)
- [Reconciliation - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Reconciliation - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Reconciliation - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Reconciliation - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Reconciliation \(Katallage\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Reconcile; Reconciliation - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Reconciliation - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)
- [Reconciliation - Charles Buck Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Reconciliation - Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Reconciliation - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Reconciliation with God - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)

## IS PAUL TEACHING UNIVERSALISM?

**All things** (Literally **“the all”** - Paul's last of 5 uses of this phrase describing Christ - Col 1:16-17, 20) - It is fascinating that **All**

**things** even includes the created universe which is somehow out of harmony with God (Ro 8:19-23-note). Sin in a way we cannot at this time fully comprehend has put the universe "out of joint". Christ will set it right.

Some try to twist the **reconciliation of all things to Himself** to mean that in the end everyone will be saved (universalism). However we cannot use this one verse as an endorsement of universalism, one of Satan's great lies! So how does one explain "**all things**?" As **J Vernon McGee** warns "My friend, don't listen to the deception, the siren song, that all is going to work out well. Don't think you can depend on God being nice and sweet and pleasant like a little old lady." Below are several well reasoned arguments from conservative evangelical writings.

**Wayne House** - God's reconciling of man to Himself is necessary because of the enmity of sinners toward God in their natural mind (Ro 5:8-11). **In what sense, however, does Christ reconcile "all things" (ta panta) to Himself?** If all things are reconciled by the blood of the Cross, does this teach **universal salvation**? Either the Bible is in error in numerous places or universal salvation is not what is intended in Colossians 1:20. The **reconciliation** in this verse points instead to the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the millennium when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil 2:10; cf. Ro 14:11). Through Christ all intelligent beings—both obedient and disobedient, and both human (those "on earth") and angelic (those "in heaven")—will acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Also a distinction must be made between **reconciliation** and **salvation**. **Reconciliation** removes the barrier between God and man and opens the potential for a new type of relationship between the two. All redeemed and unredeemed will acknowledge His sovereignty, and in that sense there will be "reconciliation." But this does not mean the unredeemed will be given **salvation**. The price paid to make possible this peace is **'the blood of His cross'** (Col 1:20). Jesus' vicarious death is the means of this peace. ([The Doctrine of Christ in Colossians](#))

**MacArthur** addresses the notion that Col 1:20 teaches **universalism** - Some have imagined **all things** to include fallen men and fallen angels, and on that basis have argued for universalism, the ultimate salvation of everyone. By so doing they overlook a fundamental rule of interpretation, the *analogia Scriptura*. That principle teaches that no passage of Scripture, properly interpreted, will contradict any other passage. When we let Scripture interpret Scripture, it is clear that by all things Paul means all things for whom reconciliation is possible. That fallen angels and unregenerate men will spend eternity in hell is the emphatic teaching of Scripture. Our Lord will one day say to unbelievers, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels," and they "will go away into eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:41, 46)...On the other hand, there is a sense in which even fallen angels and unredeemed men will be reconciled to God for judgment—but only in the sense of submitting to Him for final sentencing. Their relationship to Him will change from that of enemies to that of the judged. They will be sentenced to hell, unable any longer to pollute God's creation. They will be stripped of their power and forced to bow in submission to God. Paul writes in Colossians 2:15 that after Christ "disarmed the rulers and authorities [fallen angels], He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them." Because of Christ's victory, "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20). And "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). God has elevated Christ to a position above all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God "raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet" (Eph. 1:21-22). Though in the sacrifice of Christ, God made provision for the world (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), all persons will not be reconciled to God in the saving sense of being redeemed. The benefits of Christ's atonement are applied only to the elect, who alone come to saving faith in Him. From God's general plan to reconcile all things to Himself, Paul turns to the specific reconciliation of believers like the Colossians. ([Colossians and Philemon MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Well known Christian apologist **Norman Geisler** points out the important distinction between Universal Sovereignty and Universal Salvation - COLOSSIANS 1:20—**Does this verse teach that all will be saved (universalism)? PROBLEM:** The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, "For it was the Father's good pleasure ... through Him [Christ] to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1:19-20, NASB). If Paul says that all things are reconciled to Christ by His death and resurrection, this seems to imply that all people are saved. But other Scriptures declare that many will be lost (e.g., Matt. 7:13-14; 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15). **SOLUTION:** First of all, Paul is not speaking about **universal salvation** here, but simply **universal sovereignty** of Jesus Christ. In other words, all authority has been given to Jesus Christ in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). By virtue of His death and resurrection, Christ as the Last Adam is Lord over all that was lost by the First Adam (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-49)....When Paul speaks of being "in Christ" (i.e., being saved), he does not include "**those under the earth**" (i.e., the lost) (Php 2:10). However, all persons, saved and unsaved, will one day bow before Christ and acknowledge His universal lordship. But nowhere do the Scriptures teach that all people will be saved. Jesus will say to many, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41). John spoke of the devil, the beast and the false prophet, and all whose names are not written in the Book of Life being cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:10-15). Luke speaks of a great impassible gulf between heaven and hell in which those who have rejected God are living in torment (Luke 16:19-31). Paul speaks of punishment on the wicked as "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2Th 1:7-9). Jesus declared Judas was lost and called him "the son of perdition" (John 17:12). It is evident from all these passages

**HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS THROUGH HIM WHETHER THINGS ON EARTH OR THINGS IN HEAVEN: eirenopoiasas (AAPMSN) dia tou haimatos tou staurou autou (di autou) eite ta epi tes ges eite ta en tois ouranois:**

- Eph 2:13, 14,15 Ps 85:10,11 Lk 2:14
- Lev 6:30, Lev 23:19 Ro 3:25 Ro 5:1, Heb 10:10 Heb 13:20, 21
- Eph 1:10 Php 2:10 Ro 8:19, 20, 21, 22, 23
- Colossians 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:15-19 Christ Above All](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-19 The Image of the Invisible God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Colossians 1:15-20 The Child Who Was God](#) - John MacArthur

## PEACE THROUGH HIS BLOOD

**Having made peace (1517)** (eirenopoieo from eirene [word study] from eiro = join, set at one again, bind or join together what is broken or divided + poieo = make) means to be a peace-maker, to harmonize, to make peace. **Eirenopoieo** concerns itself with bringing about a cessation of hostilities.

Paul uses the **aorist tense** which speaks of a past completed (historical) event, in context, specifically speaking of Christ's Crucifixion, an efficacious finished work (Jn 19:30-note) that is credited (reckoned) to our (otherwise "bankrupt") "spiritual account" (Ro 4:5-note, Ro 4:24-note) the moment we are saved by grace through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Wuest** - Our Lord by His death on the Cross **bound together** (**Ed**: the literal meaning of eirenopoieo) again a holy God and sinful man who placed his faith in the Saviour. Likewise, the curse placed upon the material universe because of sin, will one day be removed through that same precious Blood.

**Peace (see discussion)** is not just the absence of strife. It describes the situation where two things come together and there is nothing in between anymore to cause friction. There is no longer a barrier between the two. Peace means to set at one again or join together that which is separated. In secular Greek eirene described the cessation or absence of war. Colossians 1:20 teaches the binding together together is by the means of His precious blood shed on Calvary for me. As alluded to above, even the curse that sin placed on the material universe will one day also be removed through His blood. Sin has disturbed the harmony of the entire universe! (Ro 8:18-23-See **notes** Ro 8:18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23)

In **Ephesians** we read a parallel truth **For (Be alert to this strategic term of explanation!** Ask "What is he explaining?") He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Eph 2:14-note; Eph 2:15-16 note)

**The blood** - The truth of fact that Jesus truly shed His blood on the Cross and that this shedding was efficacious in reconciliation may have been directed at the false doctrine that Jesus was not really human, but simply "seemed" be human, a lie which was propagated in the false teaching of **Docetism**.

**Wayne Grudem** asked - "Why Was Jesus' Full Humanity Necessary? When John wrote his first epistle, a heretical teaching was circulating in the church to the effect that Jesus was not a man. This heresy became known as **docetism**. (The word **docetism** comes from the Greek verb dokeo [Strong's 1506] "to seem, to appear to be." Any theological position that says that Jesus was not really a man, but only appeared to be a man, is called a "docetic" position. Behind **docetism** is an assumption that the material creation is inherently evil, and therefore the Son of God could not have been united to a true human nature. No prominent church leader ever advocated docetism, but it was a troublesome heresy that had various supporters in the first four centuries of the church. Modern evangelicals who neglect to teach on the full humanity of Christ can unwittingly support docetic tendencies in their hearers) So serious was this denial of truth about Christ, that John could say it was a doctrine of the antichrist: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist" (1 John 4:2-3). The apostle John understood that to deny Jesus' true humanity was to deny something at the very heart of Christianity, so that no one who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh was sent from God. (Systematic theology, page 540)

**Here is an interesting "side note" on the blood of Christ**- In Ps 22:6 speaking of His crucifixion Jesus called Himself a "**worm**" saying "I am a **worm** and not a man, a reproach of men and despised by the people." (Ps 22:6) The female **worm** of species **coccus ilicis**, when laying her eggs, affixes her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she never leaves again. The eggs deposited beneath her body are thus protected until the larvae are hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother dies, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding His precious blood that He might "bring many sons unto glory" The wood, her body, and the young are reddened with the death of the life-giving mother. In a similar image the Lord Jesus made "**peace through the blood of his cross**". It is fascinating and doubtless not a coincidence that the word **worm** (Hebrew = **towla**) used by Jesus in (Ps 22:6) is the same Hebrew word used by Isaiah (Isa 1:18) "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as **scarlet**, They will be as white as snow; Though they are **red** like **crimson** (Hebrew = **towla**) , They will be like **wool**. **Oh the deep, deep mystery of redemption. Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain as a "worm"**!

**WRITTEN INDELIBLY IN BLOOD** - On January 26, 2005, at 6:03AM PST, a southbound commuter train collided with a sport utility vehicle that had been abandoned on the tracks. The train derailed and stuck another train, causing eleven deaths and over 200 injuries. There was one story coming out of that accident that gripped Southern California. It involved a man who was on that train. Normally, he later said, he would not have taken the train, but he was called in early to work at an aerospace plant in Burbank. He was sitting upstairs in the double-decker car, asleep, when the wreck occurred. He recalled waking up to find himself trapped under the debris and covered with blood. He realized he had been badly injured, and with the blood oozing from his own body, he used his finger to write a note to his family, telling them that he loved them. That is what Christ did for us. Using His "precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless" (1Pe 1:19-note), He wrote a message of love in the "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins," the "blood of Jesus, God's Son, (which) cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7-note) Sin can paralyze us, but Jesus "pardons all our sins" (Ps 103:3-note), having "released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev 1:5-note) and having "made peace through the blood of His Cross." (Col 1:20-note) "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us." (Ephesians 1:7-8-note). Like the man in the story, Jesus did not need to "take the train," so to speak, (alluding to the Cross), but chose to do so out of love for us (Jn 3:16, Titus 3:4-note) and obedience to His Father's will (Isa 53:10, 1Jn 4:10), declaring "not My will, but Thine be done" (Lk 22:42) May this illustration of Christ's love for each of us stir our hearts to ponder deeply "how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." (1 John 3:1-note) Listen to the words of the great modern hymn "**How deep the Father's love**" sung by Fernando Ortega.

**Guzik** says "we should not regard the blood of the cross in a superstitious manner. It is not a magical potion, nor is it the literal blood of Jesus, literally applied that saves or cleanses us. If that were so, then His Roman executioners, splattered with His blood, would have been automatically saved, and the actual number of molecules of Jesus' literal blood would limit the number of people who could be saved. The blood of the cross speaks to us of the real, physical death of Jesus Christ in our place, on our behalf, before God. That literal death in our place, and the literal judgment He bore on our behalf, is what saves us."

**Lenski** - The cross affects "all creation." Each part of it is not affected in the identical way but according to the nature, the condition, and the relation of each part to the whole.

That is Gnostics taught that a man could be partially reconciled to God through the ministry of angels. Gnostics placed Jesus in the same category as angels, who they believed had the fulness of the Godhead, the nature of God within them. It was not just His death but the shedding of His blood.

The **death** of Jesus satisfied the **love** of God.

The **blood** of Jesus satisfied the **justice** of God.

His blood HAD to be shed and this blood was not just "divine" blood because a spirit does not have blood. This explains the Hebrews 10:5 passage "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT **A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED** (Heb 10:5-note)

**Comment: Why a body?** So Jesus could shed His blood on the Cross and die for you and I. An angel could not have done this. Only a man, in this case a perfect Man. His shed blood satisfied (propitiated) the Father and tore down the barrier, allowing man to be reconciled to God. He made "peace through the blood of His cross."

**EXCURSUS:**

## A Simple Study...Through Him

Consider the following simple study - observe and record the wonderful truths that accrue through Him - this would make an edifying, easy to prepare Sunday School lesson - then take some time to give thanks for these great truths by offering up a sacrifice of praise...**through Him**.

Jn 1:3 [NIV reads "through Him"], Jn 1:7, John 1:10, Jn 3:17, Jn 14:6, Acts 2:22, 3:16, Acts 7:25, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38, 39, Ro 5:9 [note], Ro 8:37 [note], Ro 11:36 [note]; 1Co 8:6, Ep 2:18 [note], Php 4:13 [note], Col 1:20 [note], Col 2:15 [note], Col 3:17 [note], Heb 7:25 [note], Heb 13:15 [note], 1Pe 1:21 [note], 1John 4:9

Would you like more study on the topic of **through Him**? Study also the NT uses of the parallel phrase **through Jesus** (or similar phrases - "**through Whom**", "**through our Lord**", etc) - John 1:17, Acts 10:36, Ro 1:4, 5-note; Ro 1:8-note, Ro 2:16-note, Ro 5:1-note; Ro 5:2-note Ro 5:11-note, Ro 5:21-note, Ro 7:25-note, Ro 16:27-note, 1Cor 15:57, 2Cor 1:5, 3:4, 5:18, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:5-note, Php 1:11-note, 1Th 5:9-note; Titus 3:6-note, He 1:2-note; He 2:10-note, Heb 13:21-note, 1Pe 2:5-note, 1Pe 4:11-note, Jude 1:25)

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**F B Meyer - THE BASIS OF PEACE** - THE BASIS of redemption and peace was laid on Calvary, when our Lord died for the sins of the world. In Lev 17:11, we learn that "the life, or soul, of the flesh is in the blood' (R.V. marg.); from which we infer that the forth-flowing of the blood of Christ was the forth-pouring of His soul as a sacrifice for sin.

It may be asked: Granted that the blood of Christ represents His soul which was poured out for sinful men, how did this marvellous act of self-sacrifice constitute a basis for peace? The full answer to that question is impossible in our present limited knowledge. It is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord our God, hidden from us now, to be revealed when we are full-grown.

But never suppose that the shedding of Christ's blood was necessary to make God love us, to appease His wrath or wring from His unwilling hand an edict of redemption. "God was in Christ reconciling the worm unto Himself." The Father does not love us because Jesus died, but He went to the Cross because of God's love for us who chose us to be joint-heirs with His Son.

But there is one condition to be fulfilled. The access into Peace is open only to those who believe. We are justified by faith; we have peace through believing. The Apostle says that "through our Lord Jesus Christ we have now received the Atonement" (Col 1:11). The redemption is accomplished; we have but to receive it. The atonement of peace is made, it is only for us to take it. "For as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." As we receive eternal life, and the Holy Spirit with open and thankful hearts, relying on the Divine assurance by faith, we enter into the great inheritance of Peace, and the gifts of God in Grace and Nature become our own.

PRAYER - O Most Merciful Lord, Grant to me, above all things that can be desired, to rest in Thee, and in Thee to have my heart at peace. Thou art the true peace of the heart, Thou its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless. In this very peace that is in Thee, the one Eternal God, I will sleep and rest. AMEN. - F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

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Some people think that they can "**make peace with God**." They are quite surprised if you tell them they are almost 2,000 years too late to do that. It was our Lord Jesus Christ who accomplished that tremendous spiritual feat "through the blood of His cross" — a thing impossible for any sinful man to do. No, we do not have to make peace with God, all we have to do is accept it!

Dr. F. B. Meyer tells of an experience he had with a woman in England. He had been speaking to her of receiving God's grace by faith. She could not understand his message, and told him so. At tea with her a day later, he suddenly turned and said, "Madam, may I please have a cup of tea?" She looked at his table and said, "Why, Dr. Meyer, you have a cup of tea." A little later he said again, "Will you please give me a cup of tea?" She replied, "Why, Dr. Meyer, don't you see, you have a cup of tea right there at your plate." In a few moments he said again, "Please give me a cup of tea! I'm so tired, and I need it." Utterly bewildered, his hostess started to speak, then caught her breath. After a moment she said, "Oh, Dr. Meyer, I see it all now. What you mean is that the Lord's blessing, power, and forgiveness are right here before me, yet I am asking and asking for it, instead of taking it and finding peace through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Some people say, "I prayed and prayed that God would receive me when I came earnestly seeking salvation, but I still do not know if I have it!" Why, my dear friend, God is much more eager to save you than you are to be saved. The very first time you came, He received you! For He has promised, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The devil is making you concentrate on your "feelings" and your own unworthiness, when you should be looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is His righteousness that you need. You can't make peace, He has made it — all you have to do to receive it is to accept Him.

Peace rules the day when Christ rules the heart !

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**F B Meyer - THE GOD OF PEACE** - WE ALL need Peace! There are sources of Peace which are common to all men. The peace of a happy home; of an increasing business and enlarging influence; of the respect and love of our fellows. As a man is conscious of these, he is inclined to say with Job, "I shall die in my nest." We can all understand a peace like that; but there is a "peace that passeth understanding." It is too deep for words. It is like the pillowed depths of the ocean, which are undisturbed by the passing storm. Here is a sufferer, almost always in acute pain, and needing constant attention, and yet so happy. Joy and Peace, like guardian angels, sit by that bedside; and Hope, not blindfolded, touches all the strings of the lyre, and sheds sunshine,—how do you account for it? Let the skeptic and the scoffer answer! Here is a peace that passes understanding which comes from the God of Peace.

For the Christian soul there is a silver lining in every cloud; a blue patch in the darkest sky; a turn in the longest lane; a mountain view which shall compensate the steepest ascent. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land. The thing impossible shall be; because all things are possible to God.

The peace of God is the peace of the Divine Nature—the very tranquillity which prevails in the heart of the God of Peace. It was of this that Jesus spoke when He said, "My peace I give unto you"; for His own being was filled and blessed with it during His earthly career. "The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always."

There are three things against which we must ever be on our guard lest they rob us of our peace. First, unconfessed sin; second, worry; third, the permission of an unrebuked selfish principle. The Apostle says, "Let the Peace of God rule in your hearts." The Greek word means arbitrate. Let God's Peace act as umpire.

We shall not escape life's discipline. We may expect to abound here, and to be abased there. But amid all, God's Peace, like a white-winged sentinel angel, shall come down to garrison our heart with its affections, and our mind with its thoughts.

PRAYER - I humbly ask, O God, that Thy Peace may be the garrison of my heart and mind; that it may ever rule within me, asserting itself over the tumultuous passions that arise within. And out of this Peace may I arise to serve Thee. AMEN.

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#### **Octavius Winslow Devotional - SEPTEMBER 6.**

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled." Colossians 1:20, 21

Only trust the salvation of Christ—He would have us commence with what He has constituted the central truth of the gospel—the cross. God has made it the focus of His glory—for around no object do such wonders and glories gather as the cross of Christ—and He would have us make it the central fact of our faith. What a sure ground of trust for a poor sinner is here—the great and complete salvation of the Lord Jesus! Here God Himself rests; for He has confided all His glory to Christ, whom "He has made strong for Himself." And surely if the work of Jesus were sufficient to uphold the moral government and secure the eternal honor of God, there need be no demur, no hesitation on the part of the sinner, there to place his entire trust for forgiveness and acceptance. Sinner as you are, here is a salvation worthy of your confidence. "Christ died for the ungodly." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." "Through His blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins." "By Him all that believe are justified." The great debt of Divine justice Christ has paid. His resurrection from the dead by the glory of the Father is His complete discharge, and now, "whoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely." To each guilt-stricken, heart-broken, sorrow-burdened, weary sinner Jesus says, "Only trust me." Beloved reader, no partial trust must this be. Your foothold on every other foundation must give way—your grasp upon every other support must loosen—your clinging to duties, to works, to self, in every form, must yield—and your whole, implicit, sole trust for salvation must be in the one atonement which God has provided, in the one salvation which Christ has finished, in the only name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Never was there before—nor has there been since—nor ever will be again—such ancient, marvelous, stupendous love as the love of Jesus. It is the astonishment of heaven, it is the wonder of angels, and, in their best, holiest, and most self-abased moments, it is the marvel of saints on earth, and will be, through eternity, their study and their praise. His condescending stoop to our nature—His descent from heaven's glory to earth's lowliness—His bearing our sins—His endurance of our curse—His suffering our penalty—His exhaustion of our bitter cup—His resurrection from the grave, and His ascent into heaven, are facts which speak, louder and sweeter than an angel's trumpet, the love of Christ to His church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." But not only was Jesus the unveiler of His own heart, but He came to unveil the heart of God. He came, not to inspire the heart of God with an affection for man, but to make known a love already and from eternity existing. He, who only knew the secret love of God's heart, came to reveal that love, its only revealer, and its most precious gift. Christ is God's love embodied—God's love speaking, God's love acting, God's love weeping, God's love dying, God's love inviting. Blessed truth, that he

whose arms of faith embrace Christ, in and through Christ also embrace the Triune Jehovah. The Lord Jesus would have us trust His love when it wears the disguise of displeasure—when, changing its appearance and its tones, it looks and speaks threatening and unkind. What a harsh disguise did Joseph wear to his brethren; and yet beneath it there never heat a more loving, tender, or kinder heart than his. Such is our Jesus—the Brother who has saved us from famine and from death, and has done for us more than Joseph did for his brethren—has died for us. Let us trust this love. Trust it when veiled—trust it when it threatens to slay—trust it when it appears to frown—trust it when even we cannot trace it; still, oh, still let us trust in Jesus' love, when, to our dim sight, it would seem never to smile or speak to us again. The time may come, or the circumstances may arise, that shall put to the utmost test our confidence in the Savior's love. When it shall say to us, "Can you make this sacrifice—can you bear this cross for me?" oh, blessed if your heart can reply, "Lord, relying upon Your grace, trusting in Your love, I can—I will—I do!"

## **In the Manger: The Maker of the Milky Way**

### **Robert Morgan**

John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2

December 13, 1998

The other day, Michael J. Fox, the actor, announced to the world that he is suffering from Parkinson's disease; and he gave a long, open interview to a national magazine about his feelings and reactions to the diagnosis. He said that he has resigned himself to the fact that he must enjoy the best and the highest quality of life that he can right now, because he knows the future is bleak and it offers no hope. "The end is not pretty," he said. "I'd like to stop it from its logical conclusion. I've realized I'm vulnerable, that no matter how many awards I'm given or how big my bank account is... The end of the story is you die. We all die."

Michael J. Fox is living in a world without Christmas. At least, he is living in a world without the Christ of Christmas. He is living in a world whose philosophy has been miserably set by the lies and deceptions of Darwinian evolutionists.

"Some ideas are so bad," wrote John Ankerberg, "...they should be rejected on the basis of their implications alone."

Let me just mention four implications of the theory of evolution.

First, evolution destroys any and all inherent moral law. If there is no creator, no God in the universe, then there is no divine moral authority. We can justify whatever we want, from premarital sex to homosexuality to irresponsible genetic engineering to mercy-killing to genocide. Dostoevski said, "If God is dead, everything is justifiable."

Second, evolution destroys any and all intrinsic basis for self-image. When we teach children the Bible, they learn we are made in the image of God. We are his children, valuable and precious in his sight. But here, in contrast, is what one textbook teaches children: "To be sure, both butterflies and humans have descended from a remote common ancestor, most likely a small worm-like marine animal resembling a flat worm."

George Gaylord Simpson, a leading evolutionist, now dead, wrote, "In the world of Darwin, man has no special status other than his definition as a distinct species of animal. He is... is akin, not figuratively but literally, to every living thing, be it an amoebae, a tapeworm, a seaweed, an oak tree, or a monkey."

What long-lasting, generation-shaping impact do you think that kind of teaching has on an individual's self-worth?

Third, evolution destroys any and all eternal purpose in life.

Fourth, evolution destroys any and all hope in the human heart. This is what Michael J. Fox is trying to deal with. If evolution is true, we're all doomed. We're all aboard the Titanic, and there are no lifeboats. We can sing and dance and throw the dice and drink the beer, but there is no escaping the iceberg. We are all living on a doomed planet in a doomed universe which will one day grow cold and dark and still; and all will become as though nothing had ever been. We are no more than a match struck in the dark and blown out again.

One evolutionist, J. W. Burrow, described man was a "lonely, intelligent mutation... in a cold passionless universe. (There are) no clues for human conduct, no answers to human moral dilemmas."

Another, Professor William Provine of Cornell University, said: "No inherent moral or ethical laws exist, nor are there absolute guiding principles for human society. The universe cares nothing for us and we have no ultimate meaning in life."

Some ideas are so bad they should be rejected on the basis of their implications alone.

In last week's message and in today's I want to suggest an alternative. I would like to suggest that the Christ of Christmas is the Creator of the Cosmos, that the Baby in the Manger and the Builder of the Universe are one and the same. And he does offer divine, moral laws and principles for the universe and for our lives. He does offer a basis for a healthy self-image. He does offer eternal purpose in life. He does offer hope for the human heart.

Where does the Bible teach such a thing? Where in Scripture are we told that Jesus Christ is himself the maker of heaven and earth? We know from Genesis 1:1 that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But where in the Bible does it tell us that Jesus Christ, the teacher of Galilee, was the agent of the creation who spoke the words that brought all things into existence.

I have found five different passages in the Bible that teach us such a thing as that, I would like to show you them this morning, beginning with a brief revisit to the passage we studied last week in John 1.

### **John 1:1-3**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

The New Testament opens with four books written by the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The last one—John's Gospel—is distinct from the first three. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us the life history of the one who was born of a virgin, laid in a manger, hung on a cross, and resurrected from a tomb. John takes a somewhat different approach. He tells us that the one who was born of a virgin, laid in a manger, hung on a cross, and resurrected from a tomb was none less than the immortal King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Son of God and God the Son, who was and is and is to come.

John's great theme is the transcendence and deity of Jesus Christ. From the very get-go, he tells us that Christ is the agent of creation, the one who said, "Let there be light." All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made that has been made.

This week I read an interesting story about a prominent Russian nuclear scientist named Boris P. Dotsenko. After getting his degrees in the physical and mathematical sciences in the Ukraine, Leningrad, and in Moscow, he worked in the prestigious Academy of Sciences of the USSR on intercontinental and space rocket research; then he was moved to Kiev where he eventually headed up the Nuclear Laboratory before defecting to the West.

Dr. Dotsenko said that while he was growing up in Siberia during World War II, he faced very harsh and difficult circumstances and the very existence of life was in doubt. That made him very curious, and he often asked himself questions about the meaning of life. After the war, he enrolled in college in the Ukraine, and on a hot and humid afternoon in August, when he was at his grandfather's home recovering from pneumonia, he wandered into an old barn and fell asleep on a pile of hay. When he awoke, he discovered that he had slipped down between the hay and the rough wooden back wall of the barn. Struggling to get up, he fell further to the floor and there at his feet he saw some old papers.

Reaching down, he found parts of a very old book without a cover. Its pages were yellowed with time, and covered with old Slavic script. As he investigated the papers, he found there a copy of the Gospel of John, and he quickly hid the papers in his shirt and snuck back to his room. There he began reading: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Those words struck his mind with great force, for they completely contradicted everything he had been taught. He continued reading, and though he resisted the words, their meaning sunk deeply into his heart. As he continued his university studies in Kiev, he kept reverting to the implications of John's words.

Furthermore, as he studied the world of science, he grew increasingly amazed at the organizing force that seems to be contained in nature, the intricacy and beauty of the cosmos.

Dr. Dotsenko went on to the University of Leningrad, and while studying there he found another Bible in an unlikely place, in the study of his professor, Dr. Jakov Frenkel, a world-renowned Russian scientist. He was greatly impressed that such a brilliant man would unashamedly keep a Bible displayed prominently in his study in Leningrad.

Dotsenko went on to become one of the leading rocket scientists and nuclear scientists in the USSR, and in that role he was asked by Russian officials to meet with Canadian scientists and to report on their activities. As he unpacked his luggage in his hotel room in Edmonton, he found a third Bible, one placed there by the Gideons.

/My hands trembled as I lifted the Bible. It opened to John 1:1, and I was reminded of that verse that had struck me so forcibly 22 years before in the Ukrainian barn.

/He spent virtually all his time reading that Bible, and soon thereafter he prayed, asking Jesus Christ to become his Lord and Savior.

Dr. Dotsenko is one of many scientists who are convinced that All things are made by him, and without him nothing has been made that is made.

### **1 Corinthians 8:6**

The second passage that speaks of Christ as the Creator is 1 Corinthians 8:6, and here we have a very interesting verse that indicates to us the roles of both God the Father and God the Son in the creation. Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Notice the prepositions. All things came from God the Father, and all things came through God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, creation was not the solitary act of either. Both were at work. The Father designed the creation, but He did it 'through' the Son. Put differently, the Father is the primary source, and the Son is the intermediate agent.

### **Ephesians 3:9**

The third passage that speaks of Jesus Christ as the agent of creation is Ephesians 3:9. Paul is talking about the mystery of God "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (KJV). Not all the ancient Greek manuscripts include those last three words ...by Jesus Christ; and that is why you'll not find that phrase in the New International Version, for example. But it is in some of our best manuscripts, and it is theologically accurate. How did God make the universe? He created all things by Jesus Christ.

### **Colossians 1:15-17**

We have the same truth reiterated in Colossians 1:15-17: He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

One translation renders that last phrase, "In Him all things cohere." In other words, this passage tells us that Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the agent of creation in the beginning, the goal of creation in the end, and between the beginning and the end, it is the Son who holds the universe together. He is the creator and he is the sustainer.

As William Barclay puts it, "All the laws by which this world is an order and not a chaos are an expression of the mind of the Son. The law of gravity and all the so-called scientific laws are not only scientific laws; they are divine laws. They are the laws which make sense of the universe."

### **Hebrew 1:1-2**

Now, there is a sixth passage in the Bible that speaks of this same truth. The unknown author who wrote the book of Hebrews began his book in this very same fashion: In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

In other words, the baby in the manger is the Maker and Master of the Milky Way. The one who hung the stars is the one who later hung on the cross. The one who raised the heavens above the earth is the very one who raised up from the dead on Easter Sunday. The one who created light is the one who communicates life.

John 1—All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made that has been made.

1 Corinthians 8—...there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Ephesians 3—God... created all things by Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1—For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Hebrews 1— In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son... through whom he made the universe.

And it was this one, Maker of heaven and earth, Creator of the cosmos, God of the galaxies, who entered humanity through the virgin-womb of Mary and was laid in a bed of hay.

No wonder the Bible tells us to consider the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that we, through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Out of the ivory palaces, Into a world of woe,

Only His great, eternal love, Made my Savior go.

And that is why Christmas never fails to astound and to confound us.

This fall I read the autobiography of Britisher Geoffrey T. Bull, mid-century missionary to Tibet. He told of having been seized by Communist troops following their takeover of China in 1949, and Bull felt the future was bleak. His captors drove him day and night across frozen mountains until he despaired of life. Late one afternoon, he staggered, hungry, exhausted, and half-frozen, into a small village. He was given an upstairs room, swept clean and warmed by a small charcoal brazier.

After a meager supper, he was sent downstairs to feed the horses. It was very dark and very cold. He clambered down the notched tree trunk to find himself in pitch blackness. His boots squished in the manure and straw on the floor. The fetid smell of animals was nauseating. The horses sighed wearily, tails drooping, yet the missionary expected to be kicked any moment. Geoffrey, cold, weary, lonely, and ill, began to feel sorry for himself.

"Then as I continued to grope my way in the darkness," he later wrote, "it suddenly flashed into my mind. What's today? I thought for a moment. In traveling, the days had become a little muddled in my mind. Suddenly it came to me. 'It's Christmas Eve.' I stood suddenly still in that oriental manger. To think that my Savior was born in a place like this. To think that He came all the way from heaven to some wretched eastern stable, and what is more to think that He came for me. How men beautify the cross and the crib, as if to hide the fact that at birth we resigned Him to the stench of beasts and at death exposed Him to the shame of rogues.

"I returned to the warm clean room which I enjoyed even as a prisoner, bowed to thankfulness and worship."

Perhaps today you would like for the Maker of the Milky Way to become the Master of your heart. Perhaps you need Christ Jesus in your life, serving as your Savior and Lord. It isn't a transaction to put off. You can be saved today, now, at this moment. You can meet the Master. For the Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation."

## **JUST TELL US ABOUT JESUS**

### **Colossians 1:15-18**

**by Rob Morgan**

This week, I had a little out-of-town trip, and I was working out in the health club of a hotel. There was another man there and we struck up a conversation. This was in Toronto, Canada, where the number of people who go to church is significantly less than in the United States, especially here in the South. But I managed to get him on the subject of church, and to my surprise he told me that he has just recently begun going to church. I asked him why. He replied, "My five-year-old daughter. I felt that she needed a spiritual exposure and a spiritual foundation in her life, and so I've gone back to church for her sake."

Well, I gently tried to suggest that he, too, needed a spiritual foundation to his own life; but I was intrigued with the fact that one of the best ways of winning adults to Christ is to have a strong ministry for their children. And that's one of the reasons we're launching into this stewardship campaign that we're calling Loving God, Loving People. It's designed to enable us to complete of the lower level of our Celebration Center as an expanded arena for children's ministry and to renovate our total church facility for the sake of winning more people to Christ.

So I've been preaching a series of sermons about the great stewardship campaigns in the Bible, and so far we've looked at the endeavor to raise money for the building of the Tabernacle, for the building of the Temple, and for the building of the Second Temple. I had intended today to look at the fourth great stewardship campaign in the Bible, which was the one conducted by the Apostle Paul and described in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, when he was raising money for among the Gentiles for the impoverished churches of Judea.

But I'm going to take a different approach this morning. I was deeply moved last Sunday when a lady came up me and said, "Pastor Morgan, I have a question. We don't have a lot of money, but there is in my possession a precious heirloom which my great grandfather first owned, and which has now been passed down to me. It is a prized and deeply treasured possession, but I feel that God would have me donate this to the stewardship campaign. Do you think the church could take such an object and find a way of selling it for the highest amount possible?" I assured her that we had antique dealers and auctioneers and other people in our church who could do that, and if that's what the Lord would have her do, we would assist in that. At this assurance, her face broke into a great smile of joy and relief, for now she knew what she felt God wanted her to do.

And I've thought about that conversation all week. You know, David said, "I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing." And remember the woman in the Gospel who broke her alabaster box and poured its contents on the feet of Jesus. Well, it's all made me change my message for today, because I had originally planned to speak about the great stewardship campaign of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, but instead I would just like to devote today's message to the One who is the recipient of our gifts.

My wife, Katrina, has been telling me how rich and good the stewardship lessons have been in her Sunday School class. As you can imagine, Katrina has heard her share of stewardship sermons and Sunday School lessons through the years, but she said that there is something unusually rich and enjoyable about the lessons our Sunday School classes are all using right now, and last week she was struck by something her Sunday School teacher said: When we give to this campaign, we aren't really giving to the campaign. We aren't really giving to the church. We aren't giving to the building program. We're just giving to the Lord Jesus Himself.

So today, let's just talk about Jesus Himself—the recipient of our gifts. Look with me at the way Paul describes the Lord Jesus in Colossians, chapter 1:15-18:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 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.

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There was a newspaper story from Germany this week about a nurse in a German hospital who was asked to change his name. His name is Jesus, but it was causing confusion among the patients. When they were told that Jesus was coming soon and that Jesus was on his way, they got the wrong idea. So Jesus complied with the request and began going by his middle name, Manuel.

Well, in the first century, some of the Christians in the town of Colosse were in danger of getting the wrong idea about the person of Jesus Christ. Paul himself had not been to Colosse. The church there had been started during the days of Paul's Ephesian ministry in Acts 19 by a man named Epaphras, and Colosse itself was a relatively small town in the interior of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). But Epaphras had come to Paul in alarm, telling him that false teachers had come into the area and were confusing the doctrine and theology of the person of Christ. That is the core and central doctrine of all the Scripture, and so Paul wrote the book of Colossians, and it is the most Christological of all Paul's letters. The great Bible commentator, Bishop J. B. Lightfoot, says about Paul's epistle to the Colossians: "The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here stated with greater precision and fullness than in any other of St. Paul's epistles."

Well, this paragraph we're coming to is a prime example of that. What a marvelous paragraph about Jesus. It gives us three different layers of His divine identity, and that's what I want us to look at.

#### Jesus - As He Relates To His Father

The first verse tells us about Jesus as He relates to God the Father. Verse 15 says: He is the image of the invisible God. The Bible consistently refers to God as being invisible.

Ø No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only (Son), who is at the Father's side, has made Him known—John 1:18. In other words, God the Father is invisible, but Jesus Christ reveals Him to us in visible form.

Ø For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made—Romans 1:20. In other words, God the Father is invisible, but we can learn about some of His qualities and attributes by studying His handiwork in the creation.

Ø Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever—1 Timothy 1:17

Ø God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honor and might forever. Amen. – 1 Timothy 6:16

Now, interestingly, physicists are helping us understand how this might work. Until modern times, we only knew about a three-dimensional world. And then Einstein began talking about the fourth dimension of time, and his research paved the way for scientists in the 1980s and 1990s to conduct experiments that have provided strong evidence that the universe contains additional space dimensions beyond the three that we can commonly observe. This is commonly known as the String Theory of physics.

According to astronomer Hugh Ross, breakthrough experiments in 1994 indicate that this universe began with not three, but with ten or eleven different dimensions of reality, and that it did so in a split second of creation. Let me read something from his book on this

subject:

At the very heart of string theory is the proposal that the cosmos experienced a dimensional split at 10<sup>-43</sup> seconds (a ten millionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second) after the creation event began. At that instant, the ten-dimensional expanding universe split into two: a six-dimensional piece that permanently ceased expanding and never produced matter, and a four-dimensional piece that became our dimensions of length, width, height, and time. That four-dimensional system continued to expand and eventually produced matter and stars.[1]

There is a web site devoted to this subject, sponsored by Public Television and its scientific program, Nova. Here's what they say:

For most of us, or perhaps all of us, it's impossible to imagine a world consisting of more than three spatial dimensions. Are we correct when we intuit that such a world couldn't exist? Or is it that our brains are simply incapable of imagining additional dimensions—dimensions that may turn out to be as real as other things we can't detect?

String theorists are betting that extra dimensions do indeed exist; in fact, the equations that describe superstring theory require a universe with no fewer than 10 dimensions. But even physicists who spend all day thinking about extra spatial dimensions have a hard time describing what they might look like or how we apparently feeble-minded humans might approach an understanding of them. That's always been the case, and perhaps always will be.[2]

So even scientists are telling us that all around us are zones of reality we cannot see with our eyes or hear with our ears. We live in a multi-dimensional universe, and the Bible teaches that this room is filled at this very moment with the presence of God and with the presence of angels and heavenly beings of the invisible realm or dimension. Do you remember the story in the Old Testament when Elisha was in a city surrounded by hostile enemy troops, and his servant was alarmed? But Elisha just prayed, "Lord, open his eyes," and behold, he saw the city enveloped by angelic horses and chariots of fire, undetected by human eyes. The angels were there to protect God's prophet, but they occupied a fifth dimension of reality. It's the same at this very moment. We cannot see God the Father with our eyes, but His presence is just as real and as certain as my presence here or yours.

But Paul teaches in verse 15 that God chose to enter our time-and-space bound, 3-D world by becoming a man named Jesus Christ. In becoming a man, however, Jesus did not discard His divinity, His divine identity. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. The Greek word for image is εἰκών (eikōn), from which we get our English word icon. It means that He is the exact representative or manifestation of the invisible God. He is the invisible God made visible for our sake. No one has seen God at any time, but God the Son has made Him known to us.

In the book of Colossians, Paul goes to lengths to affirm that all the qualities of God the Father are fully vested in God the Son, and this is a point he makes repeatedly.

Ø For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him (1:19).

Ø For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (2:9).

Jesus is not just the Son of God, He is God the Son, and all the fullness of God dwells in Him. Everything that is true of God is true of Christ. Every attribute of God is present in Christ. Every characteristic of Almighty God is found in Christ, who is Himself God Almighty. That's Jesus, at it relates to God.

Jesus, as He Relates to His Creation

Now, Paul is going to present another layer of Christology—Jesus, as He relates to His creation. And in this section, he's going to tell us for things about Christ. First, He is the Heir of Creation. Look at verse 15: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Now, some people have been confused about that term "firstborn," because it sounds as though Jesus was the first thing created by God, and then He created all the others. But that is contrary to everything else that Paul is saying, and whatever else you may say about Paul, He was not an illogical or irrational man. The word "firstborn" in the Bible was a synonym for heir. In modern times, most of us who are parents try to treat all our children more-or-less equally in our last wills and testaments. But in Bible times, that was impossible. Let's say that a man had a five-acre farm, and he had ten children. Well, in one generation the family farm would be dissembled into ten half-acre tracts and, for all practical purposes, lost as a family legacy. So the firstborn became the heir of the property and whenever possible the other children were given some sort of cash settlement.

When it says that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, it means that He is the heir, the owner, of the entire universe.

Second, He's not only the heir of creation; He's the agent of creation. Verse 16 goes on to say: For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him.

This is what John 1 and Hebrews 1 also say. Jesus is the member of the Trinity through whom the entire cosmos was created. He is

the One who said, "Let there be light."

Third, Jesus is also the object of the creation. Look at verse 16 again and notice the last three words of the verse: For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.

That's why Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they find their rest in You."

I came across a song recently by Johnny Mayer that says:

I'm not alone, I wish I was.  
Cause then I'd know, I was down because  
I couldn't find, a friend around  
To love me like, they do right now...  
Something's missing  
And I don't know how to fix it  
something's missing  
And I don't know what it is  
At all...

I believe this is why we're hearing so much nowadays about the Hollywood celebrities and their various causes. They get into the movies and onto television and they become rich and famous beyond belief, but to their utter surprise, they're still unfulfilled and unsatisfied and empty and restless on the inside. Something's missing. So they find a cause. It might be the environment or animal rights or a particular political agenda. But what they don't realize and what many people do not realize is that it isn't a cause we need, but a Christ. We need a relationship with our Creator. We need intimacy with God. Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Him, because we are made by Him and for Him.

Then notice the fourth way in which Jesus relates to His creation. He's not only the heir of creation, the agent of creation, and the object of creation, but He is the sustainer of creation. Verse 17 says: He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Literally, all things cohere. There is some sense in which Jesus Christ is the central pulsating power of the entire cosmos, and without Him everything would totally and instantly disintegrate. I don't know how to explain this scientifically, but there it is, right in verse 17.

#### Jesus, As He Relates to His Church

So Jesus relates to God the Father in that He is the exact image and icon of the invisible God. He relates to the Creation in that He is the heir, the agent, the object, and the sustainer of the cosmos. Finally, He relates to the church in that He is its Head. Continue reading with verse 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.

As you read through the letters of Paul chronologically, you find that this idea of Jesus being the Head of His body, the church, has developed in Paul's thinking over time. In his earlier letters, for example 1 Corinthians, Paul began using the human body as an analogy for the church. He said that just as the body has many different bodily parts, so the church has many different people and all of us have our own function to fulfill as God has gifted us.

But now in his later epistles, Paul adds a critical point to the analogy—that Christ Himself is the Head of the body. He's the brain. He's the controlling force. He directs all the parts of the body as He sees fit. The problem is that sometimes His church develops Multiple Sclerosis. Some of you know that my wife battles Multiple Sclerosis, so we have become well acquainted with that disease. It's when the myelin sheath around the nerves breaks down and doesn't allow messages to get through from the brain. The brain sends out instructions, but there are transmission gaps in the cables, in the nerves, and the various parts of the body don't respond to the messages.

Jesus is the Head and when you and I remain in good, unbroken, abiding fellowship with Him, we're sensitive to His messages and to His will, and our lives are lived in obedience to Him. And in all things, He must have the preeminence, the supremacy. This is one of the greatest verses on the Lordship of Christ found anywhere in the Bible. In all things, He must have the preeminence and the

supremacy. That includes your life and mine.

That comes when we say:

Have Thine own way, Lord,  
Have Thine own way,  
Hold o'er my being  
Absolute sway.

Last year when I was in China, I was asked to speak to a small group of Christian workers there, operating on one of the great university campuses of China. I asked my host, "What should I speak about." He thought about it for a moment, then he said, "Just tell us about Jesus."

Recently someone gave me a clipping they had found about the person of Christ, and I'd like to end with it today, for it expresses the all-encompassing view of Christ espoused by our text in Colossians.

To the Artist, He is the One Altogether Lovely.  
To the Architect He is the Chief Corner Stone.  
To the Astronomer, He is the Bright and Morning Star.  
To the Baker He is the Living Bread.  
To the Banker He is the Hidden Treasure.  
To the Biologist He is the Life.  
To the Builder He is the Sure Foundation.  
To the Carpenter He is the Door.  
To the Doctor He is the Great Physician.  
To the Educator He is the Great Teacher.  
To the Engineer He is the New and Living Way.  
To the Florist He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.  
To the Geologist He is the Rock of Ages.  
To the Horticulturist He is the True Vine.  
To the Judge He is the Righteous Judge, the Judge of all Men.  
To the Jeweler He is the Pearl of Great Price.  
To the Lawyer, He is the Advocate.  
To the Journalist, He is the Good News.  
To the Musician He's the Horn of our Salvation.  
To the Philanthropist, He is the Unspeakable Gift.  
To the Philosopher, He is the Wisdom of God.  
To the Preacher, He is the Living Word of God.  
To Rulers and World Leaders, He's the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.  
To the Sculptor He is the Living Stone.  
To the Servant, He is the Good Master.  
To the Diplomat, He is the Desire of All Nations.  
To the Student, He is the Incarnate Truth.  
To the Theologian, He is the Author and Finisher of Our Faith.  
To the Shepherd, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.  
To the Jew, He is the Son of Abraham, and to the Gentile He is the Son of Man.

To the Sinner, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

To the Worried, He's the Prince of Peace.

To the Downtrodden, He's the Friend of Sinners.

To the Sick, He's the Great Physician

To the Thirsty, He's the Water of Life

To the Christian, He is our Christ who is our life, the Name above All Names, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Lover of our souls and the Redeemer of our Lives, the name that charms our fears and bids our sorrows cease; 'tis music in the sinner ear, 'tis life and health and peace.

And in all things, He must have the supremacy!