

Jesus is Everything I Need (Col. 1:13-19)

In our last lesson, we looked at Paul's initial remarks to the Colossians, learning two main truths. First, these Christians were righteous and faithful (1:2-6). The Colossians were not feeling confident in their faith and needed to hear such encouraging words from the apostle. Second, there was a type of lifestyle expected from those who claim to follow Christ (1:9-12). If the believer knows and does the right things, then he is right with God.

After comforting the church, we might think that Paul is going to address those disturbing the church, right? No. Paul waits until chapter two to deal with those discouraging influences. What Paul does now is very interesting; he shifts the focus away from the Christian and puts it on Christ. In this study we will learn more about the nature, descriptions, and positions of Christ than perhaps in any other passage of Scripture.

Jesus is Our King (1:13)

Paul says the Father *"rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son"* (1:13). If Christ has a kingdom and Christians are in it, then He is our reigning king. Other passages teaching Jesus is King are Psalm 2:1-7; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14; Luke 1:32-33; John 18:33-37.

Jesus is Our Redeemer (1:14)

Paul continues by saying *"in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"* (1:14). To redeem typically means to loosen or free something from its poor circumstances (though there are other situations where redemption applies). God redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:6). The poor slave could be redeemed from the debt to his master (Lev. 26:23-55). Jesus redeemed us by freeing us from our debt caused by our sin. He *"gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless work"* (Titus 2:14).

Jesus is the image of God (1:15)

While the Father is *"invisible,"* we can know of His nature and character when we come to know Christ (1:15). Jesus is described as *"the exact representation of His nature"* (Heb. 1:3). So we are not without an idea of who our heavenly Father is. Though *"no man has seen God at any time"* (John 1:18), he who has seen Christ has seen the Father (John 14:9; see also 2 Cor. 4:4).

Jesus is the firstborn over creation (1:15)

The word *"firstborn"* gives some readers a difficult time, perhaps gaining the impression that Christ is a created being. The Greek word for *"firstborn"* is *prototokos*. At one point *prototokos* had the literal rendering of the first one who was actually born, the one with the inheritance, birthrights, etc. But over the course of time, the word's meaning had evolved to *"preeminent one"* or *"first rank/place."*

You don't need lexicons or need to be a Greek scholar to have learned this, only your Bible. In Psalm 89, we read about the good God has done for King David (Ps. 89:19-29). After mentioning all of the ways God has blessed David, the Scripture reads *"I also shall make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth"* (Ps. 89:27). This certainly doesn't mean that David was the first created being, but that he enjoyed a preeminent position with God. A careful reading of Psalm 89 shows us that being the firstborn came to mean being of first rank, or placed in a position of superiority.

From this understanding of *prototokos*, we see that Jesus is superior to all that is created. No one enjoys a loftier, higher spot than Jesus Christ. He is not only King of His kingdom, He is lord over all other lords and king over all other kings (Re. 17:14).

Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer (1:16-17)

In order for this to be true, then we must know that Christ is not a created being (now understanding what “*firstborn*” means from Colossians 1:15). He also has to have existed before Creation, which Paul teaches with the phrases “*He is before all things*” (1:17) and “*He is the beginning*” (1:18). With these things being true, Paul says “*by Him all things were created*” (1:16). Creation being brought about through Christ is found in other New Testament passages (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14). Paul also attributes Christ as sustainer of all created things with the phrase “*in Him all things hold together*” (1:17).

Jesus is Head of the Church (1:18)

Christ told Peter that He would build His church (Mt. 16:18). He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Paul told the Ephesians that the Father gave Christ the position as “*head over all thing to the church, which is His body*” (Eph. 1:22-23). Just as Christ is King over his kingdom, He is head over the church.

Jesus is the firstborn over the dead (1:18)

Like Psalm 89, this verse is another great place to see what “*firstborn*”/*prototokos* means. Christ wasn’t the first person ever be raised from the dead, was He? Of course not. Rather, this means that Christ enjoys superiority over the realm of the dead as well as the living. Just as Christ created all dominions (1:16), so He is ranked above all dominions. This is so “*He Himself will come to have first place in everything*” (1:18).

Jesus is the fullness of deity (1:19)

The Greeks had a word that embodied the whole realm of that which was spiritual and deity, the word *pleroma* (it is translated “*fullness*” in Colossians 1:19, NASB). Paul is using that word in this verse to help the Colossians see that there is nothing lacking in Christ; He is God. Later, Paul says that in Christ “*all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form*” (2:9). These two verses might be the two strongest and clearest about the divine nature of Christ.

How Does This Fit in Colossians?

What we just did in this study wasn’t as textual as our other studies will be. And that’s okay, I believe it was appropriate to see these descriptions and roles of Christ with other Scriptural references. But we must ask how this section is relevant to the overall context of Colossians. Why would Paul give so much detail into who Christ is when the Colossians needed to be encouraged?

The answer is that Paul is trying to give the Christians some perspective. If they are faithfully living for Christ, then they do not need to worry about the naysayers and discouraging people who are judging them. Christ is the only one who matters! If He is King, Creator, Firstborn over the living and the dead, Redeemer, Head of the church, and the Fullness of deity, then why would the Christian place stock into the opinions of man? Jesus is everything, and everyone, the Christian needs!