

## The Preeminent Christ # 4

Colossians 1: 15-20

It quickly becomes evident that Paul is deeply concerned for the church at Colossae and committed to their endurance in the faith. In our introduction we discussed many of the issues that plagued their society. Surely these influences found their way into the church and there were those who had been tempted to abandon the foundations of the faith for a more modern and philosophical approach.

Paul was not unaware of these issues and he was determined to do all he could to point them to Christ and settle their faith in Him. He knew the temptations they faced were strong. He knew they were greatly outnumbered by the false teachers and Gnostics. Paul used the greatest resource he had: he preached Jesus unto them. Paul knew if they ever saw Jesus as He truly is, the struggles they faced would be much easier to handle and they would gain a newfound commitment to Christ and the church.

You will have to agree that modern society in America shares many similarities with the society of Colossae in Paul's day. The Christian presence and influence in mainstream America is no longer as it was. In fact, many seek to label believers as intolerant bigots who have lost touch with modern culture and ideas. Our stand for truth is no longer being embraced or promoted. We have become a society with an "anything goes" mentality that dares anyone to stand in their way. There are many approaches we could take to combat the moral decline of our day, but there is only one approach that will be effective. We are wasting our time arguing with the world. They are not interested in our opinions or our values. If we are to see real, profitable change, we must do as Paul did and exalt Christ to a modern society who knows nothing of Him, but desperately needs to see Him. I want to examine the [attributes](#) Paul affirms concerning our Lord as we think on: [The Preeminent Christ](#).

**I. Christ is Preeminent in His Person (15) – [Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature](#):** Paul declares that Jesus is the express image of the invisible God. He is the very likeness and resemblance of God. Many in that day, as well as in our day, served gods imagined in the minds of men. They worshipped ideas and philosophies. They sought to obtain a measure of righteousness through personal works or sacrifice. Paul points them to the eternal God, the God-Man Jesus Christ. He was not just a figment of man's imagination. He was not just a legend passed down through time. He came to this earth robed in a body of flesh. He came as the embodiment of holiness, revealing God for all to see! [John 1:1, 14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.](#) <sup>[14]</sup> [And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, \(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,\) full of grace and truth.](#) Through Christ we see the Father; in Him we see the magnificence and deity of God.

- Paul also declares Christ the *firstborn of every creature*. This speaks of His rank and position. It has the idea of “*priority, superiority, preeminence, supremacy.*” Some argue this reveals Christ was a created being, but such thinking is heresy. He was and is the eternal God. He had no beginning and He has no end. Throughout history, rank has been identified with the firstborn, with these typically assuming the role as patriarch of the family. Paul does not speak of time, but of deity and perfection. Christ existed before all creation and He stands as the Sovereign with authority over all. We need not look to any other. Through faith we experience salvation, resulting in a personal and lasting relationship with Christ the Lord. He is the One we need to see!

**II. Christ is Preeminent in His Power (16-17)** – Paul further declares the preeminence of Christ in the power He possesses. None rival Him in power and majesty. Consider His power in:

**A. The Creation (16)** – *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:* Christ is declared the Creator of all things in heaven and in earth. Everything was created by Him and for Him. It is impossible to deny His power when we consider His creation. Long before time began, Christ inhabited heaven with the Father and the Spirit. They were co-laborers in creation. The triune God stood on nothing and spoke everything into existence! *John 1:3 – All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Hebrews 1:2, 10 – *(God...)Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;*<sup>[10]</sup> *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:* Who is God save the Lord? What need do we have to depend on another? He is mighty!

**B. The Subordination (16b)** – *For by him were all things created... whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:* I do not speak of subordination in regard to Christ, but in regard to all else. Paul encountered those who put their faith and trust in man. They were looking to man’s ability and philosophy. They sought wisdom and providence among the world. The reign of Rome was viewed as unconquerable, and yet Paul declares that all power pales in comparison to Christ. Caesar may have enjoyed power, but it was granted of the Lord. Rome may have conquered vast empires, but they did so according to the sovereignty of God. Satan himself is subject to the rule and authority of Christ! What have we to fear? We may be persecuted for our faith. We may be called upon to suffer while in this life, but we belong to the King of glory, the God of all power!

**C. The Dominion** (16b-17) – all things were created by him, and for him: <sup>[17]</sup> And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. They likely never imagined a day when Rome's power would diminish. They couldn't imagine a time when the philosophies of the great thinkers of their day would be challenged with another line of thought. Their influence was great and far reaching, but eventually it came to an end. Rome is now just a shadow of her former glory nationally. Philosophies and ideas come and go, but the reign of Christ is eternal. His glory and power exceeds all boundaries. His reach is limitless and His power is unstoppable. He moves and works as He pleases, all according to His divine will. Men may have placed their trust in human institutions, but Paul was committed to placing his trust in One who would never fail! Heb.1:3 – Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things by the word of his power**, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

**III. Christ is Preeminent in His Position** (18) – Here Paul deals with the preeminent position Christ possesses and the blessings we enjoy associated with His position. He is:

**A. The Head of the Church** (18a) – And he is the head of the body, the church. Christ is the head, the uppermost part, the authority of the church. Many of the Jews in that day were presumed to serve God whole-heartily, and yet many of them looked to the high priest or those within the Sanhedrin. Many of the Greeks worshiped Caesar or great philosophers. They also worshiped various imagined gods. The church was separate from each of these in that they worshiped Christ, the head of the church. Paul assured them their hope was not in the frailties of man or within human reasoning, but in Christ the Lord. As long as they allowed Him preeminence in their lives and worship, they would enjoy the abundance of God. The head is essential for life in the body and so Christ is essential for life in the believer!

**B. The Hope of the Church** (18b) – who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Mere religion and human philosophy may have offered a measure of comfort or structure while in this life but it would not last beyond the grave. It could never satisfy the longing in the soul for peace and security. Religion was based on works, and it seemed as if there were never enough to satisfy. Philosophy was subject to debate and change. Christ offered hope and assurance the world could not give. He died while bearing our sins upon the cross, was buried, and rose again, triumphant over death and the grave. Because He lives, we too have the assurance of a future resurrection. All the other religious icons worshiped of men have died and their remains decayed in the grave. Christ came forth triumphant, and we have the promise of resurrection as well. 1 Thes.4:16-17.

**C. The Help of the Church (18c)** – [that in all things he might have the preeminence](#). As we have discussed, many placed their trust in the frailties of the flesh. Those who look to anything other than Christ are placing their trust in things or people that are at best limited by space and time. They are limited in ability and resources. The church has no such worry. We serve the risen Christ, the Lord of glory, the eternal God. He is above all and beyond all. His wisdom is beyond comprehension; His power is beyond equal; His reach is without limits, and His love exceeds all sin. What could we possibly face that our Lord could not handle? What path could life lead that He could not guide? What storm could arise that He could not calm? What enemy could advance against us that He could not defeat? What a Savior we serve! He is more than able to provide help in our time of need.

**IV. Christ is Preeminent in His Plan (19-20)** – Paul continues to exalt the preeminence of Christ as he discusses the eternal plan that Christ fulfilled. Let's look at the aspects of this plan. We see:

**A. The Pleasing of the Father (19)** – [For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell](#). As Christ came to earth in the form of a man, He completely fulfilled the desire of the Father. This was not a "hail Mary" pass at the end of a difficult struggle. This was not an effort God hoped would work. Christ came to earth, revealing God to humanity, bore our sin and atoned for that sin as He offered Himself as the sacrificial atonement. His death upon the cross fully satisfied the righteous demands of God and provided a means for reconciliation to Him. He ascended back to the Father where He is seated at His right hand. [Phil.2:8-11](#).

**B. The Peace of the Cross (20a)** – [And having made peace through the blood of the cross](#). We know we all inherited the sin nature by virtue of being born in flesh. Since the fall of Adam, all who have breached the womb are born in sin, at enmity with God and condemned in sin. God is holy and righteous and can have no fellowship with sin. Sinful humanity stood in rebellion against God. We had no hope of ever being reconciled in and of ourselves. For sin to be atoned and salvation offered, there had to be a sacrifice to reconcile sin. Christ became that sacrifice and through the blood of His sacrifice upon the cross, peace was achieved between sinful men and holy God.

- All who come to Christ by faith are no longer at enmity with God. We are no longer considered rebels against holiness. We can approach God without fear or dread. Christ provides peace with God through the precious blood He shed. [Rom.5:1 – Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:](#)

**C. The Purchase of the Redeemed** (20) – *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.*

Paul was well aware of the reconciliation available in Christ. He lived as a religious zealot and yet he remained lost in sin. He kept the letter of the law and yet it wasn't enough. He knew the course many in Colossae followed would never lead to salvation. Man is incapable of securing righteousness in himself. God demanded complete holiness that humanity could never obtain. For us to be reconciled a price had to be paid. Christ paid the sin debt we owed, bearing the judgment for sin in His body as God poured out His righteous wrath upon His Son. Through His death on the cross, Christ obtained redemption for humanity. The saved are reconciled through the Son. 2

*Cor.5:18-19 – And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>[19]</sup>To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* Heb.2:17 – *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* Christ fulfilled redemption's plan so that you and I and all humanity might be saved.

**Conclusion:** Many in Colossae were confused and deceived by religion and popular philosophy. Their hope was being placed in people and institutions that could never save or reconcile to God. Paul knew Christ alone could offer salvation. He was convinced Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He was man's only hope. He is preeminent to all others. He is the True and Living God. He pointed the confused and deceived to Jesus. We too need to point others to Him. We need to live in light of His holiness and rest in His presence and power.

What are you trusting in this evening? Was there a moment in your life where you realized you were lost and undone without God? Have you trusted Christ in salvation? If not you remain in your sin, separated from God and at enmity with Him. Christ paid your ransom. There is salvation and life in Him. Come to Him in salvation if He has spoken to your heart!