



## A Study of Colossians

Wednesday, June 20 – Tuesday, June 26

Week #2 | Colossians 1:15-23

**Background** | On the heels of Paul's prayer that the Colossians would "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects," Paul turns to one of the greatest sections of scripture explaining who Jesus is.

**Intro** | Paul is addressing improper thinking and living within the church of Colossae. The improper thought was that Jesus was one of many deities and the improper living was the notion that if I abstain from certain foods, actions, etc. and apply myself to specific spiritual practices that I become more spiritual and closer to "the gods" of the universe. The combination of Gnostic and Jewish thought was a powerful blend of a new form of Christianity. Paul wanted to address this issue and put an end to it before it put an end to the church in Colossae.

**THEME** | The Deity of Christ. For a broader explanation of this subject please refer to the link below and take some time to read the article by J. Gresham Machen: [www.thehighway.com/deity1\\_Machen.html](http://www.thehighway.com/deity1_Machen.html)

**PURPOSE** | If pleasing Jesus Christ is the greatest accomplishment/goal I can have in life, then there should be a good motivation to do so. This passage explains that Jesus is God and deserves all of my attention.

**KEY IDEA** | Everything I do is directly or indirectly connected to spiritual matters. Whether it's my relationships with family, friends or the church or its how I conduct my private life from travel to taking out the trash, how I build a house or how I treat the earth on which I live. Life is spiritual.

**GOAL from this passage** | As a result of what I understand to be true about who Jesus is, I want to please Him (the God of the universe) in every way imaginable.

**THE PASSAGE: Colossians 1:15-23**

### THE QUALITY & AUTHORITY OF CHRIST'S POWER v15

*'the firstborn over all creation,'*

#### What is the meaning of first born?

Example: If I said you were gay, what would you think? The modern use of the term has a different connotation than the historical/traditional use. Historically you would interpret "gay" as happy, joyful, inspiring, a pleasure to be around, while today's version of the same word refers to sexual orientation. Think about how words change over time so when you read "first-born" you're careful not to apply a modern idea to a word that is referring to an ancient idea.

Today, when we say someone is "first-born" we're referring to who was the first in a family to be born, the first one created in the Petrik family was Kate, she is "first-born." This is the modern understanding of the term.

When the Bible says that Jesus was "First-born" it refers to the "heir" or "Chief" or "principle" or "owner" not the first one born of a family (or created by a mom and dad). This phrase means that the Jesus stands in relationship to creation just as an heir stands in relationship to his father's property. A good example of how "first-born" is used this way is Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25. Esau was the elder son (the first one created in this particular family) but the birthright was given to Jacob and he was called the "first-born."

### THE DEPTH and BREADTH OF CHRIST'S POWER v16

*v16 | for all things in heaven and on earth were created by him – all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers – all things were created through him and for him.*

**KEY** | Prepositions—they get the point across: the "in Him" is the beginning of a series of prepositions which focus on the subject of the creation of "all things": "through Him, by Him, for Him. This is the best way to sum up the idea: Christ is creator of all things, everywhere.

**Note** | Jehovah's Witness New World Translation adds this: "all other" things were created by him." This addition (which is NOT in the original text) implies that Jesus was created and then he created everything else. This is significant in that it significantly lessens who Jesus is: He is not God, just another of many deities. Implication: Jesus was "created." Jehovah's Witnesses and many other religious movements attempt to remove Jesus from the center of everything and place him as "one of the created things."

### THE SCOPE/EXTENT OF HIS POWER v17

*1:17 | He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.*

**NOTE:** The idea of beginning or end find their very definition in Christ Rev. 22:13

The science community's answer to "how things fit together."

No matter how you see the age and complexity of the universe, Paul teaches us that it is Jesus who holds it all together.

## THE PROMINENCE OF HIS POWER v18

1:18 | *He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things.*

As explained in the upcoming verses (v20), Christ was the first to be raised from the dead. He set the stage for redemption of mankind. It was Jesus and only Jesus who accomplished this and in doing so, displays the reason why he is first in all things. His power over death expresses His prominence over everything, including the church. No matter how powerful a pastor may be as a leader, he still leads to serve the ultimate leader of the church: Jesus Christ.

## THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER vv18, 19

1:19 | *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son*

This passage emphasizes the incredible act of Christ on the Cross. Christ willingly went to the cross to die. He had all the power that created the universe in Him yet he chose not to change this painful experience so that he would accomplish His goal for the world. . . .

## THE PURPOSE OF HIS POWER v20

1:20 | *and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross – through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*

Christ's death on the cross was a one time act for all time. In other words, all who came before Christ who believed that God would redeem his people (Abraham, Moses, David, etc. etc. i.e., those who didn't exactly know how God would redeem his people) and all who came after who recognize Christ's sacrifice as God for mankind for eternity, receive the blessing of eternity with Him.

## PAUL'S EXPLANATION OF OUR HUMAN CONDITION

1:21 | *And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds*

**EMPHASIS** | All of us at one time were strangers and enemies of God's kingdom. It was made evident through our actions. For some of us however, that was a far more significant experience than for others (i.e., some of us came to Christ early on in life and have experienced Him in us for a long time while others can recall easily the feeling of living in a world of sin, darkness and despair. No matter where you fall on this continuum, we are all in need of redemption/salvation (we need what vv12-14 describe: qualification (into a new kingdom), rescue (from the wrong kingdom—of darkness), transfer (someone to take us from one to the other).

## THE POWER: CHRIST'S GIFT

1:22 | *but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him*

**IDEA** | It is Christ (not anyone else. . . ever) who qualified, rescued, transferred ("reconciled") each of us through Himself on the Cross in His death and resurrection. And in doing so he has given those who have faith in Him who are presented holy and without blemish. . . i.e., able to enter in to a relationship with Him, the God of the universe. There is one more component, v23

## THE REQUIREMENT for POWER

1:23 | if indeed you remain in the faith, established and firm, without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has also been preached in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become its servant.

**KEY** | Our perseverance as followers of Christ is proof of His reconciling work in us. This includes how we think of Jesus (as God i.e., v15-20) and how we follow him (to please him v10) and as we live out these things this will determine our experience as Christians. Paul makes it very clear that our response to WHO Jesus is should affect HOW we live.

## REMINDERS

**Paul's focus** | "Christ in you" is a powerful concept and once we "get it" it should make a difference in every aspect of our life.

**KEY POINT** | No need to look any further for a rich and meaningful spiritual experience—Christ is the totality of life BECAUSE He created everything, even you and me. Not only was it created IN and THROUGH Him everything was created FOR Him. . . even you and me. No one else will give us what we need better than Jesus.

## BIG PICTURE: 1:27 THE GREAT MYSTERY—"CHRIST IN YOU"

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### This week

**THURSDAY** | READ THIS ARTICLE on the deity of Christ: [www.thehighway.com/deity1\\_Machen.html](http://www.thehighway.com/deity1_Machen.html) And, be sure to read a bit about J. Gresham Machen at the bottom of this article.

**FRIDAY** | Write out an explanation of "the deity of Christ" in your own words & ideas.

**SATURDAY** | How has this passage influenced your understanding of Jesus Christ?

**SUNDAY** | How does a clearer understanding of the deity of Jesus affect your time in worship at Church?

**MONDAY** | What does it mean to "please Him in all respects"? v10

**TUESDAY** | What is the motivation for "pleasing Him" according to Paul? (vv3, 14).