

# The Preeminence Of Jesus Christ

## Colossians 1:15-20

Message by Michael J. Barnard

August 1, 2010

**Teaching Aim:** To demonstrate the “preeminence” of Jesus Christ “in all things”. To understand Jesus is: the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn over all creation, the Creator of the universe, the Head of the Church, the Firstborn from among the dead, the Fullness of God, and the Reconciler of all things.

### DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

#### Part I: The Colossian heresy and it’s similarity to the cults today (Col. 1:15)

1. Paul wrote this epistle in response to the Colossian heresy which was invading the church. In review, the Colossian heresy combined pagan astrology and philosophy with Jewish legalism, asceticism and the worship of angels. All of these elements were blended together into a faulty and heretical Christian message. The Colossian heresy was an early form of Gnosticism believing that a higher secret knowledge of God was necessary for salvation and that Jesus Christ was less than God. To them anything made of matter was evil which led to problems with the person and work of Christ. Why was this heresy so dangerous to the people in Colosse? Why is any heresy dangerous to the church today?
2. If God is invisible, how can we possibly see Him (**vs. 15**)? What does it mean to be an “image” of something? (See Dictionary) Who is the perfect image of God? What can we learn about God through the person and work of Jesus Christ?
3. Does the title “*the firstborn over all creation*” indicate that Jesus is a created being as some of the cults claim? Why or why not? (**See Heb. 1:1-12**) The title “firstborn” can either mean “firstborn” in the chronologically sense, or “firstborn” in the sense of position or rank. During Old Testament times the child with the right of the firstborn did not necessarily have to be the firstborn chronologically (**See Psalm 89:27-29** in referring to David – the youngest of eight). In this sense the firstborn was the “*superior one*” or “*preeminent one*” in the family, or in David’s case, the kingdom. Which definition of “the firstborn” best fits Christ in **verse 15**?
4. The modern cult Jehovah’s Witnesses (*very similar to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Arian heresy*) use **Colossians 1:15** to teach people that Jesus was a created being. Furthermore, the JW’s believe that Jesus is actually Michael the Archangel rather than God manifest in the flesh. (**See Isa. 7:14**) How can you respond to this false teaching when the JW’s show up at your door? Read **verse 15** once again, but this time plug in the words: “*Superior One or Preeminent One*” instead of “firstborn”. Does this reading stand with orthodox Christianity and help you to better understand the verse?

5. One of the hardest doctrines in the Bible to understand is the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine states God is one in essence, yet three in persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Using an egg, attempt to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. NOTE: An egg is “one” in essence, yet consists of an egg shell, an egg white and an egg yoke, all equally egg yet different in role. Although there are no perfect illustrations of the Trinity, how can the egg be helpful in explaining the doctrine to somebody? Try explaining it to your small group Bible study.

## **Part II: The preeminence of Jesus Christ in creation (Col. 1:15-19)**

1. According to **verse 16**, who is the creator of the universe? (See **John 1:1-3,14**) In what way does this scripture enlighten your understanding of Jesus? What is Paul speaking of when he refers to, “*visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers*”? Why is it important for Paul to address the topic of angels in light of the Colossian heresy? (See **Part 1, number 1 above.**)
2. According to **verse 16b**, who was everything created for?
3. The New International Version of the Bible translates **verse 17** as: “*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*” This leads to a very profound question: “Did God die on the cross?” If God died on the cross, wouldn’t the universe spin out of control? Explain your answer. Jesus is one in person but has two natures, He is fully God and fully Man. How does understanding “the hypostatic union of Christ” (*the union between His deity and humanity*) help lead us to the answer of the question: “Did God die on the cross?” (See **1 Cor. 15:3-4, John 3:16**)
4. Why is the human head essential to a healthy functioning human body (**vs. 18**)? Can you think of an example where a person you know suffered a serious head injury? What was the end result? Why is the metaphor of the head and the body a good illustration of the proper relationship between Christ and His body, the Church?
5. Was Christ actually the first person to rise from the dead (**vs. 18**)? (See **2 Kin. 4:35; Luke 7:15; John 11:44; Acts 9:36-41; 20:7-11**) Why is Christ called “*the firstborn from the dead*”? In what way was the resurrection of Christ different from any previous resurrection? According to **verse 18b**, what is

the end result of Christ's resurrection and ascension 40 days later to the position of King of Kings and Lord of Lords? (See **John 17:5; Acts 1:9-11**)

6. The Gnostics believed Jesus was only an "emanation" from God (*in other words, from God but less than God*), just one of many ways to get to heaven, but certainly not God Himself. (See **1 John 4:1-3**) How does Paul counter this false teaching in verse 19? In **Colossians 2:9** Paul writes, "*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*" What can we learn about Christ from this statement?

### **Part III: The preeminence of Jesus Christ in redemption (Col. 1:20)**

1. In **verses 15-19** we find Jesus to be the preeminent One (*or superior One*) over all creation. What do we find Jesus preeminent of (*or of first importance*) in **verse 20**? According to **verse 20**, what is the purpose behind the ministry of Jesus Christ? How far does this reconciliation extend?
2. Define "reconciliation" (**vs. 20**). (See Dictionary) Who is Jesus reconciling us to and why is reconciliation needed? (See **Rom. 5:1,10-11,19; 8:6-7; Eph. 2:11-19; Jam. 2:10**) According to **verse 20**, what is the means of this reconciliation? (**Eph. 2:14-18; 1 Pet. 2:22-24**) Have you recognized your need for a Savior and been reconciled to God? If not, why not?
3. Did we initiate, or did God initiate this reconciliation? Discuss the only way a person can be reconciled to God. (See **John 1:12-13; 3:16,36; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9**)

### **MINER'S CORNER – *Manna to live by!***

- \* Jesus is the perfect representation of the invisible God, He is God manifest in the flesh. Through Christ we see in human form the character and attributes of God.
- \* "He is the image of the invisible God, (*the preeminent One, or superior One*) over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth..."
- \* We learn seven things about Jesus from this section of scripture: He is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn over all creation, the Creator of the universe, the Head of the Church, the Firstborn from among the dead, the Fullness of God, and the Reconciler of all things.
- \* The only way to reconciliation and peace with God is through the cross of Christ.