

COLOSSIANS

a life worth living

The Winner of Our Race
Colossians 1:13-23
Bob Stone

Two big questions: Why is Jesus first every time and in everything? How do we keep Him “first place” in our lives? Colossians 1:13-23 gives some very helpful answers.

I. **THANK HIM FOR OUR SALVATION.** vv. 12-14—“...*giving thanks to the Father...* 13] *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* 14] *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*”

A. How should we thank Him? Here are four thanksgivings that transform our lives:

1. He **RESCUED US - DELIVERED** us—v. 13.
2. He **BROUGHT US - HE TRANSFERRED** us—v. 13b.
3. He **REDEEMED** us—v. 14.
4. He **FORGAVE** us—v. 14b.

B. What’s the impact of thanksgiving to the Father? Are we giving thanks for what Jesus has done? What will consistently thanking do for us?

In addition, to keep Jesus in first place:

II. **BELIEVE AND MEDITATE ON THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM (WHO HE IS)**—vv. 15-18.

A. **What heresy did the Colossians face that threatened their view of who Jesus really is?** (A mixture of Gnosticism, Judaism & their own thinking mixed together.)

B. **What threatens OUR view of Jesus?** Any doctrine/belief that diminishes the truth about who Jesus really is by taking Him out of first place, is an error or a heresy.

C. **Who is He?** (Is this a hymn?)

1. **He is GOD.** v. 15a:

“He is the image of the invisible God...”

- The Greek word for image is “eikon.” The word was used of a small portrait or image of a person. **Image** was also used for a brief summary that was put into a contract, describing the characteristics and distinguishing marks of those making the contract.
- Jesus is the **visible image of SOMEONE invisible.**
- In Jesus, we have a reflection/revelation of God’s true identity.
- That means all we need to know about God is revealed in Jesus—John 1:18; 14:9. **(He is 100% God and 100% man.)**

2. **He is THE FIRSTBORN.** v. 15b—“...*the firstborn over all creation.*”

- **“Firstborn”** didn’t necessarily have to do with the order in which a person was born as much as the position of honor they were given.
- So, **firstborn is not a word that only refers to birth.** It’s a word that “refers to a position of honor.” Again, Jesus has the place of **prominence and preeminence.** (See Psalm 89:27; 1 Corinthians 15:47.)

3. He is **THE CREATOR**. v. 16—*“For by him all things were created...”* That means we know He understands everything about us because He made our world and us. He is **THE Creator** of the heavens and the earth.
4. He is **THE OWNER**. v. 16b—*“...all things were created by Him and FOR him.”*
 - This entire world is **not only** made **by** Jesus, but **FOR** Jesus; **FOR** His glory, **FOR** His pleasure, **FOR** His joy. He’s the **OWNER**!
 - We can stop living like a **SELFISH OWNER** and start living as a loving **STEWARD** because all of God’s creation is His!
5. He is **THE SUSTAINER**. v. 17—*“He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.”*
 - Jesus didn’t just wind up the universe and let it start ticking down! (He’s intimately involved in **every tick of the universe.**)
 - He is also **SUSTAINER**. Everything holds together in Him/by Him.
6. He is **THE HEAD OF THE BODY/THE CHURCH**. v. 18—*“...he is the head of the body, the church...”* That means He is the source and origin!
 - He is the active head of the church; He’s not watching from afar.
 - This HEADSHIP implies honor, authority and that direction comes from Him.
7. He is **THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH**. v. 18—*“... he is the beginning...”*
 - He started the church, He continues to be the operator of it.
 - He’s both the founder and the facilitator.
8. He is **THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD**—v. 18.
 - It means Jesus was the **FIRST to be RESURRECTED**.
 - Jesus is our **HOPE** and **MODEL** for all eternity.

D. **How do we respond to this summary of who Jesus is?** There are 3 levels of response to the Truth: **learn** about Him, **love** Him, **live** His life and teaching out every day. We know we’ve recognized the truth when it changes our LIVES.

E. **What will be the greatest temptation to our understanding/relationship with Jesus?** Again, in order to live in commitment to the truth about Jesus, we all must recognize and refuse the temptation to **LESSEN HIM**.

1. To do this, Paul says he wants us to remember **three THINGS** that will help us **refuse** the temptation to **lessen** Jesus (See Colossians 1:19-20).
2. **Therefore, two simple questions with amazing answers**—v. 20. What was God reconciling? How did God do it? **God reconciled us to Himself by dying for us.**

III. TRUST HIM FOR OUR FUTURE—vv. 21-22.

A. Paul uses **THREE** striking words to describe our condition prior to the cross: **alienated, enemies in our minds, doing evil deeds** - evil (doing).

B. Then he uses 3 phrases to express our condition after the cross—v. 22: **reconciled; holy in his sight; without blemish and free from accusation. WOW!**

Review

- Look with me at this list of the truths about Jesus Christ.
 - Let these descriptions soak in for a minute, because these are the truths that **SHOULD CHANGE OUR LIVES**.
 - These truths change how we **ACT**, as well as how we **SEE & WORSHIP** Jesus.
 - Let this sink into our minds and hearts as we describe and prepare to worship Him: Who is Jesus?
1. **He is GOD.** That means all we need to know about God is revealed in Jesus. He is 100% God and 100% man. In Jesus we have a reflection/revelation of God's true identity. Jesus is the visible image of SOMEONE invisible; therefore, we can depend on Him as our God, our Savior and our High Priest!
 2. **He is THE FIRSTBORN.** That means we're going to look to Him as the Leader. He has the place of prominence and preeminence! The word not only refers to birth, but also the position of honor.
 3. **He is THE CREATOR.** That means we know He understands everything about us, because He made our world and us. He is THE Creator of heaven and earth: visible, invisible, thrones, powers, rulers, or authorities.
 4. **He is THE OWNER.** That means we give everything back to Him because He owns it. We're not to be selfish owners; we're to be stewards. This entire world is NOT ONLY made BY Jesus, but FOR Jesus - His glory, His pleasure and His joy.
 5. **He is THE SUSTAINER.** That means we can absolutely depend on Him. The power that holds the universe and my life together is Jesus Christ. If God ceased to exist, this world would cease to exist. Everything holds together in Him/by Him.
 6. **He is THE HEAD OF THE BODY.** He is the source, origin and head of the church! That means we look to Him for our direction, individually and collectively.
 7. **He is the BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH.** That means we should praise Him because He's the founder and the facilitator of the church.
 8. **He is THE FIRST RESURRECTED.** Because He is the first to be resurrected, that means He gives us a hope for our eternity with Him. He has proven by His resurrection that we can have an eternity with Him, which includes our new body in a new heaven and a new earth.

WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT? *"...SO THAT in everything he might have the supremacy"*—v. 18.

- This is an extraordinary and wonderful list of truths about Jesus.
- It CAN AND SHOULD BE a list we meditate on over and over again!!
- It can be the basis for our PRAISE, our WITNESS and our PEACE. Try it!

Application Questions

1. What questions or comments about Jesus do you hear most often from those who don't know Him, especially those who are antagonistic to Him? How does this passage help YOU with those questions or comments? (How about the cults?)
2. Why not pause and praise God for the 4 ways Jesus has/will transform our lives. (See verses 13-14.)
3. Verses 15-16 & 17-20 are considered by many to be a hymn with two stanzas. What description of Jesus speaks to you the most? Why?
4. How will you translate/apply these 8 descriptions into everyday life? How might they impact our/your worship? If you are in a group, why not pause and praise God for these characteristics? If you're applying this lesson alone, take some time to write out your praise for these 8 characteristics. (How will a study of God enhance our worship/life?)
5. From verses 19-20, what was God reconciling? How did God choose to reconcile?
6. Reflect and meditate on verses 21-22. What creates praise in you?
7. What does the following survey say to you?

A nationwide survey conducted by The Barna Group: For the purposes of the survey, a "biblical worldview" was defined as believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today. In the research, anyone who held all of those beliefs was said to have a biblical worldview. **National Results: Overall, the current research revealed that only 9% of all American adults have a biblical worldview.**

Among the sixty subgroups of respondents that the survey explored, was one defined by those who said: they have made a personal to commitment to Jesus Christ that is important in their life today, and they are certain they will go to Heaven after they die only because they confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their Savior. Labeled "born again Christians," the study discovered that they were twice as likely as the average adult to possess a biblical worldview.

However, that meant that even among born again Christians, less than one out of every five (19%) had such an outlook on life.

8. **Something to think about:**

False teachers (popular culture) don't usually deny Christ: They simply try to dethrone Him - make Him a little bit smaller; they don't deny Him prominence (being important), but they deny Him preeminence (being first); they don't deny Him being "A way", it's just impossible for them to say Jesus is "THE way."