

# Preeminent

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[ 0 : 00 ] Evelyn is serving us this morning, and then I'm going to pray for us that the Holy Spirit does those things among us. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Thanks, Evelyn. Amen. Father, we are gathered here this morning not only to give our praises to you, not only to lift our voices in worship, but also to hear from you, to receive from you.

We come to give, and yet we very much expect that we are going to receive. We want to hear what your word has to say to us, what you have to say to us in your word.

So, Holy Spirit, would you please help us as we approach this wonderful portion of the book of Colossians? Would you please keep my words precise and careful so that we do not wander off into anything that would be confusing or distracting or unhelpful?

[ 1 : 52 ] Would you please keep our hearts appropriately focused on you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? May our attention be turned to you.

May we be reminded of who our Savior, the Lord Jesus, is and what he has done for us.

We look forward to receiving what you will give to us now from your word. Holy Spirit, please be with us. In Jesus' name, amen. Here's a quick way to find out what someone believes about Christianity.

You can ask two questions. Who is Jesus? And secondly, what happened on the cross?

Who is Jesus? And what happened on the cross? When you ask these questions, you will get a variety of answers. You may hear that Jesus is the teacher, or the prophet, or the exalted angel, or that Jesus is a God, but not the God.

[ 3 : 16 ] You may hear that his death on the cross was a symbol, or maybe it was a martyrdom. Maybe it was an example for others to follow.

Historic Christianity answers these two questions this way. Who is Jesus? He is God in the flesh. What happened on the cross? Jesus died in the place of sinners. These answers are non-negotiable for Christians.

Because every deviation from these answers either devalues who Jesus is.

He is less than God, or other than God. Or it diminishes or devalues his work on the cross. He may have done something, but he didn't deal with sin.

[ 4 : 24 ] And the consequences for sin, which is death. The church has been answering these two questions from the very beginning.

And this includes a congregation in the city of Colossae. Remember, Paul and Timothy, neither of them planted this church at Colossae.

Epaphras planted the church. And after planting, he has since returned to Paul and his ministry partners, and he has given them a report about the status of this church.

And his portrait is beautiful. They are saints set apart for God.

They have heard the word of truth, the gospel. They have received it, understood it, believed it. Their faith is genuine. Their love is motivated by the Spirit.

[ 5 : 26 ] Their hope is evident in the way that they are living. The Father qualified them. He delivered them from the domain of darkness.

He transferred them into the kingdom of his beloved Son. It is in the Lord Jesus that they have redemption, and that they now enjoy the forgiveness of sin.

They are, as Paul reminds them, chapter 1 and verse 2, in Christ. Christ. But there is a problem in Colossae.

Christianity is not the only belief system. A recognizable teacher is influencing the Colossians. Someone is saying, if you really want a full spiritual life, follow me. I can show you how to access heavenly realities through mystical experiences.

[ 6 : 41 ] But, in order to get there, you must observe the Sabbath. And you're going to have to keep some holy high days on the calendar.

Monthly rituals. No, we don't eat that. And we don't eat that either. In fact, we don't eat a lot of things. Pay attention.

Because if you want to reach God, there are spiritual powers along the way. And you need to know how to navigate through these spiritual powers as you are ascending your way up.

These powers need to be navigated. They need to be appeased. But don't worry. I can show you how to do that.

Jesus. Just one piece of a larger spiritual system of powers and dominions and rulers and authorities. You're going to need him.

[ 7 : 50 ] But you are also going to need the angels. And these special days that I have mentioned. And visions. And you're going to need a whole lot more self-discipline than you have right now.

Your faith in Jesus? That is so good. But you don't really think that faith is enough. Do you? Do you? They didn't deny Jesus. They diminished him.

Jesus is helpful, but not sufficient. He is important, but not ultimate. These were not irreligious people.

In fact, they would have seemed, they would have been perceived as very religious people. And apparently influential. Here's an implied warning for us.

[ 9 : 01 ] The most dangerous false teaching rarely comes from outside the church. It most often comes from within the church.

And often uses the right words. The danger then and the danger now is not abstract.

It is personal. It is persuasive. And it is plausible. Christianity is not the only belief system. But Paul refuses to let Jesus be diminished.

His response is not a debate. His response is not a discussion. He does not engage in a careful rebuttal.

Did you notice what Paul does? He just worships. Look again in your Bible at verse number 15. He is.

[ 10 : 09 ] We should ask ourselves, because we're careful students, who is this he? Look back up. Just one verse. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

And if you back up to the end of verse 13, what do you find there? It is his beloved son. It is in the son. It is in Jesus Christ that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul is singing about Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Do you remember seeing this word image before, hearing about this before in scripture?

We find it back in Genesis chapter 1. I think it's worth taking just a brief segue out to this. This word image. Genesis 1 verse 26.

[ 11 : 18 ] God creates humanity, male and female, in his image. I'm going to read this for you.

Genesis 1 verse 26. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them, humanity, male and female, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man, humanity, in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

God created humanity, male and female, in his image. They were created for what purpose? To rule over the earth.

To have dominion over the earth, under God's authority. To be faithful stewards under him of the earth.

To be fruitful and multiply on the earth. But Adam and Eve believed the serpent's lie. And they rebelled against God, plunging the universe into corruption, and decay, and sin, and death.

[ 12 : 43 ] And so God sent his son. Jesus. He is the exact representation of God.

The embodied reality of the invisible God. If Jesus is the image of God, then humanity is made in his image.

Jesus is, according to the New Testament, the second Adam. But Adam is the second image. Because that place first belongs to Jesus. Jesus Christ. The image of the invisible God. And that means he is the firstborn over all creation. Claiming the spot squandered by Adam and Eve in the garden.

[13:50] Firstborn in the ancient world didn't always literally mean the first one born. It could also mean first in rank. First in honor.

The greatest. Think about the Olympics. When a gold medalist stands on the platform and they are at the top.

We don't say that they came in first because they were the firstborn. They're not the oldest one there. First place means something different.

It means supreme. It means the one with the highest honor. It means they are above all others in the competition. That's the word that Paul uses here.

Firstborn over creation is not the first thing that God created. It means that he is above and over every bit of creation.

[14:54] Supreme. The one deserving the highest honor. First place. He is over all of it. Let's keep reading and see if the text confirms this.

Verse 16. For by him. By him. All things were created in heaven and on earth.

Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things.

And in him all things hold together. Together. Do you see those words? By him. Through him. For him.

Because of him. All creation holds together. He is the firstborn over all creation.

[15:51] And yet that creation is broken because of sin. And so the son enters into creation. The one who made it became a man to redeem it.

Verse 18. And he is the head of the body. The church. He is the beginning. The firstborn from the dead.

The firstborn. Supreme over creation. But also the firstborn. Supreme over the new creation. His resurrection makes him the head of the body.

Which is the church. Verse 19. For in him. All the fullness of God. Was pleased to dwell.

And through him. To reconcile to himself. All things. Whether on earth. Or in heaven. Making peace.

[16:58] By the blood of his cross. Every attribute of God. His power. His wisdom. His holiness.

His love. Not distributed in part to Jesus. Not delegated. Not partially present. Fully. Fully dwelling in Jesus.

The influential teachers say. Have Jesus. But he is insufficient. And so the Colossians are being tempted. To add to Jesus.

We must need more than him. But it is through Jesus. That God reconciled.

All things. To himself. Earthly things. Heavenly things. Visible things. Invisible things. Thrones and dominions.

[17:57] Rulers and authorities. All of it. Has been reconciled. By God. Through the death. Of Jesus. How?

How? How did Jesus accomplish this? It was not through. A plausible. Persuasive. Argument. It was not through.

A bloodless. Anemic. Help yourself. Get to God. Kind of spirituality. God. God. God. Reconciled. All things. To himself.

And made. Peace. Through. The bloody death. Of the firstborn. From the dead.

God. Every attribute. Of God. Fully. Dwelling. In Jesus. And yet. He humbles. Himself. And becomes.

[18:54] Obedient. To the point. Of death. Even. Death. On a cross. And then. God. Raised him. To the highest.

Place. Seated him. At his. Right hand. So that. Verse. 18. In. Everything. He.

Jesus. Might. Be. Preeminent. Preeminent. Preeminent. Means.

There is. Nobody. Greater. Nobody. Higher. Nobody. More. Powerful. No. One. More.

Deserving. Jesus. Is. First. In. Everything. Everywhere. And. Forever. I love.

[19:51] This. Idea. Of. The firstborn. The firstborn. From. The dead. Is. Also. The firstborn. Among. Many.

Brothers. And. Sisters. We read. In Romans. Chapter 8. The Colossians. Are. Already. Being. Conformed. Into the image. Of. Jesus. And so. Are you. If you are. A follower. Of Christ. He is. Preeminent. Over. Your. Transformation. To Christ likeness.

The Colossians. Are being told. To honor angels. As intermediaries. To reaching God. But in Hebrews. Chapter 1. God. tells all the angels to worship the Son, the firstborn. And God has spoken to us by His Son. And the things that you and I are afraid of, powers and principalities and dominions and rulers, all those things, they are afraid of Him.

[ 21 : 00 ] Jesus is preeminent over every spiritual power, principality, and dominion. The author of Hebrews calls the church in chapter 12, the assembly of the firstborn.

Jesus is the head of the church. Not a pastor, not a preacher, not a priest or a pope. He is the builder. He is the shepherd, the great shepherd of the sheep.

He is their bridegroom. He is preeminent over those who gather in His name. Paul refuses to let Jesus be minimized.

He rejects any notion that Jesus is helpful but not sufficient. He will not tolerate Jesus being important but not preeminent.

His response to those who diminish Jesus is not debate. It is not discussion. It is doxology. He worships.

[ 22 : 19 ] He just puts all of the attention right back on Jesus. My brother, my sister, there is no category in your life where Jesus is irrelevant.

There is no crisis deeper than what Christ addressed on the cross.

There is no greater comfort than confessing that you are not your own but belong body and soul to your Savior, Jesus Christ.

But like the Colossians, we are also tempted to see Jesus as less than who He is. A comfort, perhaps, but not a king.

A consultant, but not the Lord of all things. A fixer. A fixer. Because sometimes we need things fixed.

[ 23 : 30 ] But we see Him as a fixer instead of the one who holds all things together. Perhaps we see Him as an important part of life rather than the very reason we live.

You don't need more than Jesus. You need more Jesus. Since all things were created through Him and for Him.

Verse number 16. Since all things were created through Him and for Him, then there is no area of your life that is spiritually neutral.

your Tuesday afternoon has eternal value. The conversation that you will have tomorrow, it has value.

The work sitting on your desk has value. Your singleness, your marriage, your parenting, your relationships, they have value. The meal that you are going to eat tonight, none of that is strictly secular.

[ 24 : 51 ] not if we really believe that all things were created through Him and for Him. So you can repent of compartmentalizing Jesus into a certain part of your life and you can live holy and holistically for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Christ. If you believe all things are for Jesus, then you will be harder to bore and more difficult to make cynical.

Since verse 17 tells us in Him all things hold together, then we can be sure, you can be sure, that your day, your relationships, whatever is happening inside of your body right now, your activities, your job, none of it is accidental, none of it is chance, none of it is fate.

Jesus holds all of it together. So then you can repent of believing that you're all on your own.

You can repent of believing, I've got to hold all of this together. You can repent of believing that this world is spiraling out of control.

[ 26 : 27 ] If we believe that Jesus holds all things together, then we can stop white-knuckling our way through life and we will sleep better at night.

since he, verse 20, made peace through the blood of his cross, then you can repent of thinking that reconciliation is all on you, that it's all on your shoulders.

It's okay, follower of Jesus to say, I can't fix this and not have that shameful feeling of failure.

You can bring your broken heart, your broken relationships, your broken promises to Jesus, and he will give you peace.

peace with God, peace that passes all understanding. The scripture says God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[ 27 : 53 ] If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, young one, if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, you are not in Christ, you may have peace with God today through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Since it is in him, verse 19, that all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, then we can repent of settling for a question like what can Jesus do for me?

And instead, we can ask a question like what does it mean that Jesus is for me? Not just available, not just useful, not one piece of a larger spiritual system system that you're trying to navigate and figure your way out on your way to God.

No, the supreme, sufficient, preeminent Christ is personally, covenantally, irrevocably for you, child of God.

as you grow in seeing that Jesus is for you, then your worship will become less transactional and your gratitude will become more reflexive.

[ 29 : 40 ] All things were created through him and for him. in him all things hold together.

All the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in him through the death of Jesus. God reconciled all things to himself.

So it is no wonder that Jesus is preeminent over all. Through creation, he owns it.

Through the cross, he redeems it. And through the resurrection, he rules it. The gospel is not where you start.

It's where you stay. And if we ask the question, is the gospel enough, then we can affirmatively answer and celebrate, yes, the gospel is enough.

[ 30 : 41 ] how can you be so sure? Because Christ is all. And you are in Christ.

So you can stop adding to him. And we can grow in seeing who he is more clearly. You don't need more than Jesus.

You need more Jesus. Live, live this week like you believe that Jesus is preeminent.

Let's pray. pray.