

Jesus is Supreme! (Colossians 1:1-23)
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Colossians is a beautiful book of the Bible. One of my favorite things about Colossians... is that it's short. Only 4 chapters! But every time I read it, I am so encouraged. Although it is short, it is incredibly dense; filled with theology, doctrine, and application.

First, we will talk about the context of the book. In the past few months, the children have been studying about the early church in Acts and also about Paul and his letters to the churches. The Charis Young Adult Fellowship has also been studying the book of Acts for the past few years and it's been an incredible encouragement to me – seeing the passion of the apostles and the courage of the early church to be such strong and faithful witnesses of the Gospel.

As some of you know, Paul's life as an apostle was FILLED with drama. He was formerly a Jewish leader of the strictest sects and he used to actively persecute the Christians. Then he had that very special encounter with Jesus and he became one of the most famous evangelists; a missionary going from church to church to church to share the Gospel to others. On many occasions, he was persecuted by his formerly fellow Jews because of what he was doing. The book of Colossians is a letter that Paul wrote while he was in prison; under persecution.

At the time Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae, there were these highly intellectual people called the Gnostics who were basically teaching things that diminished the identity of who Jesus is. Therefore, Paul writes this letter to encourage the Christians in their faith and teach them doctrinal truth about Jesus.

In the opening of the letter (vv. 1-12), Paul basically praises and thanks God for the Christians at the church in Colossae. He testifies to their faith and prays that God would continually reveal Himself to them. He asks God to increase their knowledge and understanding about who He is so that they can continue in their relationship with Him. This points back to the context in which the Colossians find themselves. The hope is that they would increase in knowledge and understanding of God so that they can stand up in their faith while also not being influenced by false teachings.

If you take a look at verses 13-20, you will see that the main subject of the passage is Jesus. Every single verse refers to Jesus and who He is, what He has done, what He is currently doing, and what He will do. Additionally, the words “all things” and references to “all creation” are mentioned multiple times. Paul is clearly teaching not only about Jesus, but about the relationship between Jesus and all of creation.

In verse 15, Paul describes Jesus as the “image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” This verse should take the reader back to the start of Creation in Genesis 1. Mankind was made in the image of God and Adam was the “first” man to be created, but Paul is showing a contrast. Jesus *is* the image of God, not just made in the image. And Jesus is the firstborn over all creation. This is new revelation to the readers at that time. Jesus is more supreme than Adam; than all of mankind that has ever been, since He is the Son of God, the image of God. No other human has this claim.

In verse 16, Paul points to the divinity of Jesus. In writing that all things were created in Jesus, and through Jesus, and for Jesus...Paul is referring to Jesus as being one with the Creator. Jesus is not only the supreme human as the Son of God, He is also God Himself in human form! Jesus was there at creation and all things were created through Him. Jesus is the image and complete fullness of God. He is 100% God and 100% man. When we look at Jesus, we see who God is. Jesus should be set apart from every other human being because He is God. This teaching would go against anything that the Gnostics taught that diminished the person of Jesus.

Another point that Paul seems to be teaching is the idea that Jesus is an eternal being. He is the past, present, and future king. In verse 18, Paul mentions that Jesus is the “beginning and firstborn.” As mentioned before, Jesus was there at creation in the past. And presently, He is the sustainer of all creation and the head of the church body (vv. 17-18). All other rulers, authorities, and kings are nothing compared to Jesus because He is the eternal King. They are all on a short leash under His sovereign reign. And what did this King, the Son of God, the image of God do for all of creation? He humbly went to the cross and took the punishment for our sins in order to reconcile us to Him. Mankind rebelled and messed up at the beginning of creation, but Jesus brings those who have faith in Him into His kingdom. And one day, this King will return and reign on His righteous throne.