HARVEST SPRINGS
COMMUNITY CHURCH

SUNDAY | November 1, 2026

JESUS FIRST: A STUDY OF COLOSSIANS | WEEK 02

The Center

Primary Text: Colossians 1:15-23 | Michael Stambaugh

> *Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead.* ***So he is first in everything****.*
>
> *Colossians 1:18*

Colossians 1:15-20 is one of the most important passages in the New Testament about the nature of Jesus. It is written like a poem and was likely an early Christian hymn. Within about thirty years of his resurrection, believers were singing that the crucified man from Nazareth is the one through whom everything was made. The hymn arises out of Paul's prayer for the Colossians. This is an all-encompassing picture of Jesus, as the adjective "all" occurs eight times in six verses. The hymn has two halves that mirror each other: "through him God created everything" (1:16) and "through him God reconciled everything" (1:20).

Creation (1:15-17)

- **Jesus shows us God.** "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God" (1:15). The word is *eikon* (icon). Coins in Colossae bore Caesar's image. Jesus is the true image of God, and the true image humans were made to bear (Genesis 1:27). **God is exactly like Jesus.**
- **Jesus is first in rank.** "Supreme over all creation" (1:15) is literally "firstborn." In the Bible, the firstborn is the heir with the father's authority. Jesus is not the first thing created. Everything was created through him.
- **Jesus made it all, and it's all for him.** "Everything was created through him and for him" (1:16), including "thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world." Every power you fear is a created thing, not a rival. You were made for him, so a life centered on anything else wobbles.
- **Jesus holds it all together.** "He holds all creation together" (1:17). Not *held*, but *holds*, right now. Jesus is the keystone. Holding your life together was never your job.

New Creation (1:18-20)

- **Jesus is first in the new creation too.** Jesus is "the head of the church" and "the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead" (1:18). That second "supreme over" is also "firstborn." Jesus is **firstborn of creation** and **firstborn from the dead.** Easter was the first morning of the new creation.
- **All the fullness of God.** "God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ" (1:19). Like God's glory filling the temple, everything God is came to live in Jesus. The false teachers said fullness was found beyond Jesus. Paul says it's *in* him (see 2:9-10).

- **Reconciled everything.** "Through him God reconciled everything to himself" (1:20). Sin broke our relationship with God, with each other, our bodies, and creation itself. **The scope of the rescue is as big as the scope of creation.** "Look, I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5).
- **Peace through the cross.** "He made peace... by means of Christ's blood on the cross" (1:20). The one who holds creation together was nailed to a piece of it. Rome kept its peace by crucifying its enemies. God made peace by being crucified for his enemies. This peace is *shalom*: wholeness, everything in its right place.

New Creation People (1:21-23)

Notice how Paul turns from Jesus to the Colossians: "This includes you" (1:21). The new creation has already begun, and the Colossians were the evidence. Paul tells their story in three tenses:

1. **Past: What you were.** "Once far away from God... his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions" (1:21). The problem isn't only that we didn't know God. We wanted to be our own center.
2. **Present: What you are.** "Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body" (1:22). You stand before him "holy" (set apart), "blameless" (like a lamb without defect), and "without a single fault" (no charges on the record). "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
3. **What you must keep doing.** "Continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away" (1:23). Continuing doesn't earn your place. It's evidence that God has hold of you. Nobody plans to drift. It starts with *Jesus plus*.

- **A preview of the new creation.** In Colossae, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free sat at one table as brothers and sisters. The church is a sneak preview of a reconciled world.
- **The Good News keeps spreading** (1:23). The Colossians heard it from Epaphras. "God has given us this task of reconciling people to him" (2 Corinthians 5:18). "Lost people" are the ones who are far away. Centering their lives on Jesus means coming home to the one at the center.

Bible Engagement

- Read the whole letter of Colossians (ch. 1-4) each day. This should take about 15-20 minutes.
- Memorize Colossians 1:18
- Watch the BibleProject summary of Colossians.

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