

God the Son

By Matt Sanders

Scripture to Memorize

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13–14

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will have a basic understanding of who God the Son is, His relationship to the Father, and how His identity is related to their lives.

It's in the Book

Imagine you immediately became friends with a new coworker. He emails you a message that said, "Read the attached file." You were busy, the message seemed odd, and you never opened the attachment. Then another coworker who always struggled in performance reviews got a raise. She said the new worker helped her. Another friend's broken-down car began to run better. He said the new worker helped fix it. Friend after friend had the same story—the new worker helped them. You finally asked him, "Why didn't you help me?" He answered, "I did. The file I sent had answers for everything you are struggling with here at work. Didn't you read it?"

We have a friend like that. Jesus. Some people say He's a friend but still struggle along through life not knowing who He really is. But His identity is all in the "file." What do you really know about Jesus? Let's see what we can add when we look at the file in Colossians 1:13–20.

Read Colossians 1:13–23 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 13–17

Many scholars believe this passage was a hymn sung by the church. **Verse 13.** This bridge sentence connects the previous section about giving thanks to God to the main focus of the letter—Jesus Christ, the awesome Son of God and Savior of the World. **He rescued us.** "He" is identified as the Father because the verse also says that He **transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.** In the Bible the word *God* almost always refers to God the Father. That is the case here.

The Father-Son relationship in this passage reveals that the Son is equally God. Just as kittens come from cats and human beings from other human beings, the Son of God comes from God. If a cat birthed a puppy or a human being, that would be a strange world. Only God can come from God. Jesus is God, the Son of His Father who is God. **Verse 14.** The Son has a kingdom and has given us **redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

Verses 15. the image of the invisible God. Genesis 1:26 says we were made *in* the image of God. The Son *is* the image of God. He is not made *in* the image. He *is* the image. If we want to know who God is in human form, we look at Jesus. The Old Testament said that if people saw God, they would die. God the Father is invisible for our protection. But in Jesus we see the image of God.

Verse 15. firstborn of all creation. This is a misunderstood phrase. Some people say **firstborn** proves the Son was birthed or made. The next verse shows that is not correct. Colossians 1:16 makes clear that the Son is the Creator of all things. He cannot be *part* of creation if He created *all* of creation. From the Old Testament forward, *firstborn* also had the sense of having a special relationship with the father and was often used figuratively to mean "the highest." Here it points to the unique relationship that Jesus has with the Father and the unique relationship He has with us. Jesus is before us and above all creation because through Him all was created.

Verse 17. He is before all things. In case the point was missed, Paul repeated himself, noting that the Son existed before all things. And in case someone still did not get it, Paul added **in Him all things hold together.** Jesus, the Son, did not simply create and turn the world loose. Our great Savior has actively held things together, is doing so right now, and will continue to do so forever.

Studying the Passage, Colossians 1:18

Verse 18. head of the body, the church. The Son is the head of the church. This means the church belongs to the Son

and the Son is the leader of the church. This also means that if a church is not led by the Son, *it is not a church*—not by the New Testament definition. In other places Paul calls the church “the body of Christ.” We are His hands and feet, but He is the head, the brain. We operate under His direction.

Verse 18. the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Paul stated some ways the Son is the head. The Son is literally the beginning of the church. Without Jesus and all He did, we would have no church. The word *beginning* in Greek also communicates the idea of authority. Both beginning and rule are connected here. As an example of such authority, Paul referenced the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the “firstborn from the dead.”

Discussion Questions

How can the church recognize Jesus as its head? How can believers know what Jesus wants their church to do and be?

Studying the Passage, Colossians 1:19–20

Verses 19. the fullness of God. For the fullness of God to live within the Son, Jesus must be able to “contain” all of God. This is another indication that the Son is indeed equal with the Father. Otherwise, how could the limited contain the unlimited?

Verse 20. reconcile all things to Himself. The mission of Jesus is to bring reconciliation. Reconciliation is the idea of making peace or restoring a broken relationship. This is more than just forgiveness. Reconciliation is making the relationship right. The death of Jesus on the cross is much more than paying the penalty for your sins so you can go to heaven. His blood reconciled “all things” to Himself. Paul told the Colossians that Jesus was not their personal Savior whom they could customize to fit their lives.

Discussion Question

If Christ had not redeemed you, what would you be like today? How would you spend your time? What problems might you have? What would your relationships look like?

Studying the Passage, Colossians 1:21–23

Verses 21. alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds. Paul wanted believers to remember how deeply sin had affected them and how lost they were. **Verse 22. holy and blameless and beyond reproach.** Then Paul wanted believers to remember the miracle reconciliation had produced in their lives.

Verse 23. continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel. If we truly know how deep our sin is and how far we were from what God created us to be, we see how great a Savior the Son of God must be

At Home: Nail It Down

If we do not know who God the Son is, we will get everything else wrong. Colossians 1:13–23 proclaims the Son of God as even more than the Lord of your life or the church or even humanity. He forever is the Lord of all creation, the seen and the unseen, the past and the present. Some believers want to reduce Jesus to their personal friend or genie or 911 emergency line. But the Colossians passage is so clear that He is so much more. He is: King, Redeemer, Forgiver of sins, The image of God, The One who has all rights and authority over all creation Creator of all creation, Lord of all creation, One who holds together all creation, Head of the church, Founder of the church, Conqueror of death, One in whom the fullness of God lives, Reconciler of all things, and One who reconciled you to God and you to other believers. This is no mere man. Jesus is so much more. For what purpose would One so awesome save us? Would it be simply to live out our days the best we can and live with Him forever? The Lord of all creation has much bigger purposes than that. We may like a smaller Jesus because it seems easier to control Him. We don't mind Little Jesus hanging out with us at church or during a daily devotion time or when we are facing challenges. But we don't want Colossians Jesus around when we are buying a car, shopping for clothes, deciding what movie to watch, choosing the music to listen to, or even thinking about what school we should go to or career to pursue. Such a Jesus might ask annoying questions like: “How is buying that car part of My kingdom plan for your life?” “What do these clothes say about Me, the One you call Lord?” “Can you watch that movie or listen to that music with an eye and ear to know what is evil presented as good?” “Is the purpose of life really simply to live comfortably and do some good along the way?” “Or did I die for you and call you and make you into a new creation for something much more?” Reread the Scripture verses and add to the list above the ways Jesus is described. And as you read through the list, ask yourself these questions: Can I detect ways I am trying to keep Jesus little? Why would I do that? What might I be afraid of? Am I ready to go all in for the Son of God? Am I ready to declare that He alone is King over my heart, my life, and my future? Am I prepared to make His glory the primary passion of my life?