

Fill Up! On the Supremacy of Christ

Col 1:15-23

Intro

Ever sit in conference and feel overloaded with all the information coming at you?
It's like drinking from a fire hydrant with a straw!
That's what this passage feels like
So much here

One reason so much here – creed or hymn of the early church; a confession of sorts
This is what we believe, sums up our convictions; expresses the truths of God
Packed in really tight; Keeps coming at you
Have to pay close attention and Fill Up! with it

Read Col. 1:15-23

Having just referred to Jesus (v12-14) through whom we are saved
Takes a little side track to say, “Let me tell you about this Jesus”

Starts by saying . . .

15 – *He is the image of the invisible God* . . .

At first glance, might think Jesus is like a statue or picture, a representation of God
That's what *image* means to you and me
But a little cultural digging is needed to understand meaning
Bottom line . . .

He is God made visible (v 15,19)

In the thinking of Paul's day, the image IS the real thing
It was not considered distinct from that which it represented
One and the same

He's not a *representation* of God – he *is* God
He's the *visible* manifestation of the *invisible* God; He is God made visible

Nor is he partially God; or sub-God; or a little less God because . . .
19—*In him ALL the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*
He embodies all that God is
All of God's attributes – wisdom, power, knowledge, glory – was/is embodied in Christ

Jesus is *God* made visible

He rules over all creation (v 15-17)

Paul lays out 4 reasons for the supremacy of Christ over all creation . . .

1. Because of his position of authority and privilege

Position of authority in that . . .

15—*Firstborn of all creation*

Another phrase that could be misconstrued if not careful
Does not mean he was the first being created or born

Rather, it's a title of authority, control, and status
Ps 89:27—God says, “I will make him [David] the firstborn, the highest of the kings

of the earth.”

Ex 4:21-23—God refers to Israel (his people at that time) as his firstborn son
Jer 31:9—“Ephraim [term of endearment for God's people] is my firstborn”

They were his chosen; Nation above all other nations – *authority*
Rightful heir of God's blessing; Focus of his plan – *privilege*

Position of privilege in that . . .

16—*All things were created for him*

Everything is his; Everything exists for his glory and enjoyment
Everything exists to exalt and glorify him

So, as the *firstborn of all creation*, Jesus is in the privileged position of authority to rule over all creation

Jesus rules over all creation . . .

2. Because he created it all

16—*BY him all things were created . . . all things were created THROUGH him*

Just like a playwright has free reign to write whatever he wants in his script because he created it

So too, Jesus has free rule and reign over the whole universe because he made it all

According to John 1:1-3 . . .

It was by his power/authority that all things were brought into existence

In the beginning was the Word . . . all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made

No distinction here between the spoken word of God and the creative action of Christ

Not only did *Jesus* create it, but he created *all* of it . . .

16—*In heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*

Spiritual realm and physical realm; Seen and unseen

Spiritual forces (both good and evil), and earthly forces (good and evil)

That means as believers we don't have to fear or wonder about satanic or demonic forces

They are entirely within God's rule

Nor do we have to fear political powers that spiral out of control

They too are entirely within God's rule

Christ's dominion and rule is all-inclusive and all-pervasive because . . .

He created it; and *He* created *all* of it

Jesus rules over all creation because . . .

3. He existed before all things

17—*he is before all things*

There was nothing that existed before him

Nobody can claim superiority over him by saying “I was first”

Do your kids ever say that?

“I was here first” – I deserve whatever it is (front seat, in line, bathroom)

It's mine, I have priority over you, you're playing second fiddle on this one

No thing and no being can say to Jesus, “I was first”
No one can claim superiority over him because they existed before him
He alone can say “I was first” and therefore I rule, have authority, priority

Jesus rules over all creation because . . .

4. He controls all things

17—*in him all things hold together*

Implication – nothing in the universe is self-sufficient, including you and I
All are dependent on Christ for their purpose, function, existence
It is only within his design, purpose, authority, that the world functions

Yes, the laws of nature exist

But who do you think established them in the first place?!

Christ did – he established them and continues to uphold them

Jesus rules over all creation because . . .

1. Of his position of authority and privilege
2. He created it all
3. He existed before all things
4. He controls all things

Fill up on that

He is Lord of the church (v 18, 20)

18—*He is the head of the body, the church*

The one in charge, authority, in control, indispensable leader, directing, guiding
Dependent on; Deserves our honor and worship
Put all that together – Lord

As your head is to your physical body, so is Christ to the church

As the head of a corporation is the leader and one in charge, so is Jesus to his church
Difference – CEO is not to be worshipped

18 – *He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*

The firstborn from the dead . . .

He’s the first one to rise from the dead for the purpose of redeeming mankind

He is the beginning . . .

He’s the beginning of resurrection life for all who believe

He’s the start of the church; the reason there’s a church in the first place

No wonder he’s the head and deserves to be worshipped as Lord

He rose from the dead . . .

18—*That in everything he might be preeminent*

He already had supremacy over everything, but hadn’t exercised it over death

When he did, he proved he was preeminent – supreme, matchless, unsurpassed . . .

Lord – over everything, including death

In the same way . . .

He has not yet exercised his full reconciling power over creation

20 – *God was pleased through Christ to reconcile to himself all things*

God was pleased through Christ’s death *then*, to restore a right relationship with his creation, *now* and in the *future*

Rom 8:19-22 – Creation waits/longs to be set free from its bondage to decay (future)

It is ongoing now through his people as we manage his creation and resources

Christ has the supremacy but he has not yet fully exercised it

The restoration is not complete; It is ongoing, and yet to come

All this is accomplished by . . .

20 – *the blood of his cross*

Did you see what just happened?

He made a massive shift with just one phrase

Suddenly, the Lord of the church, the ruler of all creation, God in the flesh is referred to as the one who was shamefully and brutally crucified

For the forgiveness of sins, that the reconciliation and peace can take place

Great reminder that our salvation is not rooted in some voodoo story or mythical account made up by people with over-active imaginations

Rather, it’s rooted in an actual event in history

About now, you might be saying, “So What!”

What does this have to do with me?!

So keep the faith (v 21-23)

Jesus is God made visible – so keep the faith

Jesus is ruler of all creation – so keep the faith

Jesus is Lord of the church – so keep the faith

With the words *and you*, he gets personal in a hurry

Where the rubber meets the road of life for you I

21 – *And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds*

You were once separated from God due to your sinful nature (Is 59:2)

22 – *He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death*

He has restored a right relationship with you by taking on your sin and dying for it

1 Pet 2:24 – *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin*
[free from sin’s grip and consequences] *and live to righteousness* [pure, free and able to live for him].

For the purpose of . . .

22 – *presenting you holy and blameless and above reproach before him*

Christ has reconciled you so you can stand in the presence of God, set apart (holy), pure (blameless), and beyond any legitimate accusation of sin (above reproach)

So, having been alienated from God, he has now reconciled you to him, holy and blameless in his sight . . .

23 – *If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard*

Christ has saved you in the past (22 – *has now reconciled you*), and it is still in effect now, if you keep the faith in the future

Your salvation is proven by your continuing faith
Hold firmly to the truths of the gospel
Persevere in the hope of life forever and life to the full
Remain steadfast in your convictions about the Lord of your life

Paul is *not* saying that you can lose your salvation if you don't persevere in the faith!

- Look carefully at what the text says
He *has now* reconciled you . . . *if you continue* in the faith
Has now – indicates your salvation was something carried out, accomplished, and completed by God in the past
V12-14 – Our qualification, deliverance, transfer, redemption is not in question

Which means there's nothing more for your faith to accomplish in terms of your salvation, except to prove/show it
It's not ensured by it; Maintained by it; Guaranteed by it
Rather, your salvation is *proven* and *shown* by your continuing faith

- If your continuing in the faith kept your salvation or maintained it, the text would say . .
He *will completely* reconcile you (v22), if you keep the faith
But until you keep the faith, your salvation is in question
If Paul intended that meaning, that would have been the clearest way to put it
But he didn't put it that way because he didn't intend that meaning
- If your continuing faith maintained or ensured your salvation, that would be works
Contrary to Eph 2:8-9
Anything you think you *do* to gain salvation or keep salvation is a work – not biblical

So there is nothing that we can do to gain our salvation, and nothing we can do to keep it
It's a free gift that we receive and continue to trust in
Proving that our salvation was real in the first place, and still is

Put him first in your life, give him first place, continue in your faith
Seeing who he is, why wouldn't you?
Seeing that he's worthy, why wouldn't you?
Put him first in your life where he belongs
Then continue in your faith as long as you live

My mom held an after school Bible club called the JOY Club
Order our life and priorities around putting . . .
Jesus first, then Others, then Yourself

Give him the place of supremacy in your life that he deserves
He's God made visible
He rules over all creation
He's Lord of the church
He has reconciled you to himself by the blood of the cross

Come forward for prayer or to pray during song