

Colossians 1:15-20

“Jesus Christ Is Lord”

Sermon

ESV Text

Tim Black

1.

Intro

1.

Tow truck operator

1.

Conversation

1.

“I have earned millions by catching deals at the right place, at the right time.”

-

A: “You should know better than I do that everything we have is a gift from God.” (No! “Dumb luck.”)

-

“I’ve cheated casinos of tens of thousands to send aid to hurricane victims.”

-

A: “It was still wrong to cheat.” (No! “It ended in a good result.”)

-

“No one owns me.”

-

A: “No one owns any of us (Yes!), except God.” (No!)

-

“God couldn’t forgive me for where I’ve been, for what I’ve done.”

-

A: “God can forgive you.” (No!)

-

“I’m dying of diabetes and cancer, and when it’s my time to go, I’m going to end my life with my .38. No one has a right to play God by prolonging my death.”

-

“Only God can play God. You’re playing God by rushing your death.” (No!)

-

“Jesus was a man who died to be a martyr. No one can fight a martyr, a ghost.”

Col. 1:15-20 - Jesus Christ Is Lord

Written by Tim Black

Tuesday, 05 June 2007 18:24 - Last Updated Tuesday, 05 June 2007 18:50

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A: “But Jesus is more than just a martyr who died. He is God, He rose from the dead and is alive.” (No! “Jesus was just a man.”)

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Small view!

1.

This man had a ***small view*** of

-

God’s providential care

-

God’s moral authority

-

God’s right of ownership

-

God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

-

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And his mind, heart, and life were captivated by

-

money

-

power

-

by playing God

-

by being his own savior.

-

He has a philosophy that is according to the basic principles of the world, and is not according to Christ.

-

Principle: If you have a small view of Christ, you will capitulate to the life-philosophy of this world.

-

Principle: If your mind is captivated with Christ, it will not be taken captive by the things of this world.

-

“Jesus is Lord”

1.

Who then is this Christ from whom our religion derives its name? Who is He, and what bearing does He have on how I need to view this world?

2.

Early church

1.

The early church knew without a shadow of a doubt that this **Jesus Christ...“is Lord.”**

They knew that what it meant to be a Christian was to fully affirm the statement that “

Jesus Christ is Lord

.” They knew He had to be worshiped, because He died for our sins, because He rose from the dead, because He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father, because He would come again to judge the living and the dead. They drew the words of this confession from many passages like **Romans 10:9**

:

-

Romans 10:9 “if you confess with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

”

-

But it was not until the 300's AD that they came to a clear formulation of the doctrinal implications of this confession. A controversy arose over whether Jesus was fully God, was only partially God, was a lesser God than the Father, or was merely a man. Arius argued that Jesus was not fully divine. Alexander of Alexandria, and Athanasius after him, argued from the passage before us today, that Jesus was fully divine, "being of one substance with the Father." Athanasius and the truth of scripture won the day, and was written down in the Nicene Creed in 325 and 381 AD. [1](#)

-

In this passage today, Paul wants you to confess without a shadow of a doubt that "Jesus is Lord," and to know all of what that means for who Christ is, and for how you should view this world.

[1](#) In brief, the church's controversies over the deity of Christ and the unity and diversity between the Father and the Son were:

a. **325 Nicea – same substance**, decided in Council but not in whole church

b. **381 Constantinople – same substance**, decided in whole church

c. **(451 Chalcedon – two natures)**

1.

Body

1.

Jesus is Lord over all Creation 15-16

1.

First in vv. 15-16, Paul tells us that **Jesus is Lord over all creation.**

1.

Colossians 1:15-16 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For 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.

2.

Divinity & Priority over all creation 15

1.

“Image of the invisible God” - Divinity 15a

-

In v. 15 Paul tells us two things—1) Christ is the “**image of the invisible God**

,” and 2) Christ is “

the firstborn over all creation.

” Christ’s being “

the image of the invisible God

” emphasizes His

full divinity

; His being the “

firstborn over all creation

” emphasizes His

priority over all creation

▪

-

This word “**image**” is the word “icon” in Greek. We might think an “**image**” is empty of real substance, like the way a paper photograph does not actually *contain* the objects of which it is a picture. But this word “icon” has a different meaning in this passage. It doesn’t mean Christ is an *empty* picture of God, but rather that He is *full* of the being of God.

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Example: I have in my hand a small piece of stone that came from a church which sent bishops to the Council of Nicea. It’s a piece of a carving in the ruins of a church

building in Susita (aka Hippos) in Galilee.

1

The church building was toppled by an earthquake in the 600's, right before the controversy over iconoclasm. The reason this is such a small piece of stone is that "iconoclasts"—which means icon-breakers—came with hammers and beat the church of Susita's religious decorations—its "icons"—to bits. You see, the Greek churches from the 300's to the Eastern Orthodox churches of the present day, believe that we should venerate pictures of Christ, pictures of saints, because those pictures connect us to Christ, to those saints, and thereby to God, because Christ, the saints, and God are present through their representation in those pictures. Through those "icons." The iconoclasts, remembering the Second Commandment: "**Thou shalt not make any graven image**," rejected the worship of icons, and beat them to bits.

2

The Eastern Orthodox claim from this verse that because Christ is the “*icon*” of God, it is right to make “icons” of God.

3

The iconoclasts, and the Reformers after them, claimed from this passage that because *Christ* is the “icon” of God, we should not look for any other representation of Him than those representations which God has appointed in His word—which are especially the image of God in man, and the sacraments. For Christ Himself is the fully sufficient revelation of all of who God is, for Christ is Himself fully and truly God.

-

Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,

-

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

-

John 14:9 Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

-

Nicene Creed

-

“God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God; begotten, not
made, being of one substance
with the Father, by whom all
things were made.”

-

Christ is the “icon” of God. We don’t need to look to a carving, to a stone, to see God. We need to look to Christ.

-

This stone gives us a *physical* connection with a distant place and a distant time, an *historical* connection with the saints of the ancient church, but *not* a *spiritual*

connection with God's grace
which is to be found
in Christ alone
!

-

Christ presents the fullness of
God to us, because He is in fact
fully God.

-

“Firstborn over all creation” - Priority over all creation 15b

-

Because Christ is fully God He has the right of ownership over all creation, like a firstborn son in the OT had the right to inherit his father's wealth. And so in **v. 15b** Christ is called the “
firstborn over all creation.” This shows that He has a divine

priority over all creation

. He is greater than all creation, more deserving of praise, of reverence, of worship, than all created things.

-

In fact, He owns you, and He owns me. Therefore He has a *right*

to receive our worship. He is the “

firstborn over all creation.

”

-

**Because He created all
things 16**

1.

Christ's divinity and priority

are expressed in and demonstrated by the fact that He created all things. We see this in **v. 16**.

-

Colossians 1:16 “For 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.

”

-

**Comprehensive *Extent* of
Christ’s Lordship over
Creation – “all things”**

-

In every (metaphysical)

realm - “in heaven and on earth”

-

**Under every
(epistemological) aspect -
“visible and invisible”**

-

**Over every (ethical)
power - “whether thrones or**

dominions or rulers or authorities”

-

Spiritual powers, highest
angelic or demonic forces,
greatest earthly kings or
nations—all were created by
Christ. “Every knee will
bow, and every tongue
confess, that Jesus Christ is
Lord, to the glory of God the

Father. ”

-

We see then that Christ is Lord in every area of being, thought, and activity.

-

Abraham Kuyper -

“There is not one square inch of God’s creation over which Jesus Christ does not declare, ‘It is mine!’”

-

Covenantal *Endpoints*

of Christ's Lordship – Origin & Goal

-

“By Him”

-

All things come from
Him. There is nothing you
can see around you,

nothing you own, which did
not come from Christ its
Creator.

-

“For Him”

-

And so who are you not
to use these things **for Him**,
in service to Him?! Who
are you to claim that your
property
is completely for you to
do with as you please
?! Who are you to claim
that you are the
creator
, the
origin
and

goal

of the things around
you?! Who are you to take
such a high view of

money

, to put your trust in the
worldly knowledge

you have amassed, to
claim you grasp the
basic principles

of the world?! Who are
you to claim you are
Lord of your life

?

!

-

I have news for you. I
tell you the truth, you are not
your own, but ***Jesus***
Christ is Lord

. He is before all things,
and in Him all things hold
together.

-

**Conclusion: Jesus is
Lord of Creation, and Lord
of Salvation 17-18a**

1.

This is the conclusion Paul is driving us to in this whole passage. ***Jesus Christ is Lord***. He is the Master, the Owner, the Ruler, of all things. He is the Lord of the universe, and Lord of the church.

2.

Paul summarizes this conclusion in the central two verses of this passage, which both begin with the words “**and He is.**”

3.

Lord of Creation 17

1.

**Transcendent eternal
preexistence - “before all
things” 17a**

-

Christ is “before all
things.” This
means He has a
**transcendent, eternal
preexistence.**

-

Arius misunderstood this verse when he argued that “there once was a time when [Christ] was not.” Arius took passages like the above, “**he is the firstborn over all creation,**”

and

Prov. 8:22

– “

God created me at the
beginning of His work,
”

4

to teach that Christ
was the first creature, and
did not exist eternally
before creation.

-

Hilary of Poitiers

in his book titled

On the Trinity

, or

De Trinitate

,

5

demonstrated that
Scripture

does

teach Christ's eternal
preexistence and divine
nature.

-

I AM. This is what
Christ told the Jews
when He claimed the

divine name YHWH,
which means “

I AM

,” and which we
translate “Lord,” in
John 8:58 -

“

**before Abraham
was, I AM.**

”

-

Christ is in fact the
true, eternal,
supremely exalted *God*
of
the OT and the
New, even from all
eternity past

▪

-

**Immanent
sustaining
providence - “in Him
all things hold
together” 17b**

-

“In [Christ] all things hold together.”

This means there is nothing that is not held together in its existence by the **immanent sustaining providence**

of Christ. He holds all
things in His hand.

-

Lord of Salvation

18a

1.

Because of Christ's
preeminence over all
creation, as its
Creator and
Sustainer, He alone

can have the position of complete preeminence in our salvation. No one else can save us as He can. Only God, only the Creator, only the Sustainer, can save His fallen creation. So just as

Christ is Lord of
Creation, so He is **Lo
rd of Salvation**

. He is Lord of the
first creation, and of
the new creation.

Lord of Heaven
and Earth, and Lord
of the Church.

2.

Paul summarizes
this point in v.

18a

,

“

He is the head of
the body, the church.

” He elaborates it in

what follows. Vv.
18b-20 are the
second main section
of this passage,
which is evident in the
Greek because 18b
begins with the same
phrase with which
15 began: “
He is

”

■

3.

Lord of Salvation

18b-20

1.

Production of Reconciliation 18b

1.

Foundation/Fountainhead – Beginning

-

In v. 18b, we see
that **Christ is**
Lord of the

production
of our salvation
, from its
beginning
to its
end
.

-

He is its *beginning*. In
His Person, His
divine and human
natures, He is the
source, the
foundation, the
fountainhead of our
salvation.

—

Firstborn — End

—

He is the *end* of the production of our salvation. His resurrection fully accomplished His victory over our sin and its consequence of death. He is already completely victorious; there is

no more battle yet
for Him to win in
regard to producing
our salvation,
because He has
risen from the dead.
This is what it means
that Christ is the “
firstborn from the
dead.

” We in our old hearts were dead in our sins, and our bodies will die. But because He has risen, He is fully able to raise our hearts to new life, and we await the certain hope of Him

raising our bodies
from the dead when
He comes at the end
of the age.

-

So Christ tells
us in **Revelat**

ion 1:17-18

“

Fear not, I am
the first and the last,
18 and the living
one. I died, and
behold I am alive
forevermore, and I
have the keys of

Death and Hades.

”

—

Product of Reconciliation 19-20

1.

Fullness – Beginning

–

In vv. 19-20, we
see that Chr
ist is Lord over

the
product
of our
salvation
, also from its
beginning
to its
end

■

—

The product of
our salvation
begins
in Christ in Himself,
who is all the
fullness of God. All

the
incommunicable
attributes of
God—His
eternality,
omniscience,
omnipotence—are
what we need to
sustain us in our

salvation, and all of
His communicable
attributes—His
knowledge,
righteousness, and
holiness—are
the core of the
benefits we receive
from Him in

salvation. John
tells us that “
from his fullness we
have all
received, grace
upon grace.
” (

John 1:16

)

-

And so also
Paul tells us in **Col
ossians
2:9-10,**

“

9 For in him the

whole fullness of
deity dwells bodily,
10 and you
have been filled in
him, who is the
head of all rule
and authority.

”

—

Reconciliation

— End

—

The product of
our salvation *ends*

through the
finished work of
Christ's
reconciliation—it

is through Him
that God is
reconciling all
things to Himself,
by making
peace through the
blood of His
cross, whether

those things
are in heaven or
on earth.

-

You see, God
is in heaven, and

you are on earth.
You have sinned
against God,
and deserve His
wrath, deserve
the pains of Hell
forever. You
have no means of

reconciling
yourself to God,
because apart
from what He did
in Christ you are
guilty, period.
But in Christ is all
you need to be

reconciled to
God—He died
to take the
punishment for
your sins, and
God promises to
cover your
guilty record with

Christ's righteous
record, if you
believe on Christ
as the Lord of
your salvation.

—

Conclusion

1.

And so I must
ask you today, do
you recognize that
Christ is Lord of
all creation? He
is. Do you

recognize that He
alone is Lord of
salvation as well?
I tell you that “ther
e is salvation in
no one else, for
there is no other
name under

heaven by which
we must be saved

”

(

Acts 4:12

)

2.

My friend who
drives the tow
truck believes he
can save himself
by making sure
his adult children
are financially set
for life, and then

by taking his own
life when he
determines it is
the time for him
to die. He trusts
in his wealth, and
in himself as lord.

3.

Jesus Christ,
Lord of heaven
and earth, and
the Lord of
salvation, has an

answer for any
who trust in their
own wealth to
save their soul:

1.

“You fool! You don’t know whether this very night your life will be demanded of you.”

2.

“What does it
profit a man to
gain the world,
and lose his
soul?”

3.

Don't be fooled
by the
philosophy and

empty deception
of this world, but
look to Christ.
Exalt Him in
your hearts
above all else,
for He is Lord
of all creation,

and Lord of our
salvation.

4.

Let us exalt
Him, and give

Him the praise
that is due His
name, for “God
has highly
exalted him and
bestowed on
him the name
that is above

every name, 10
so that at the
name of Jesus
every knee
should bow, in
heaven and on
earth and under
the earth, 11

and every
tongue confess
that Jesus Christ
is Lord, to the
glory of God the
Father.

”

(

Philippians

2:9-11

)

1 The church's columns are still there, and a marketplace connected to the church remains visible.

2The
iconoclasm
controversy
went from
726-843 AD.

3The Seventh
Ecumenical
Council, held in
Nicea, 787,
proclaimed:
“We define that

the holy icons,
whether in color,
mosaic, or some
other material,
should be
exhibited in the
holy churches of
God, on the

sacred vessels
and liturgical
vestments, on
the walls,
furnishings, and
in houses and
along the roads,
namely the

icons of our Lord
God and Savior
Jesus Christ,
that of our Lady
the Theotokos,
those of the
venerable
angels and

those of all
saintly people.
Whenever these
representations
are
contemplated,
they will cause
those who look

at them to
commemorate
and love their
prototype. We
define also that
they should be
kissed and that
they are an

object of
veneration and
honor (timitiki
proskynisis), but
not of real
worship (latreia),
which is
reserved for Him

Who is the
subject of our
faith and is
proper, for the
divine nature,
rendered τυπῆς
icon, is in effect
transmitted to

the prototype;
he who
venerates the
icon, venerated
in it the reality
for which it
stands.”

4LXX: e;ktise,

n

(ektisen)

“created me” (as

the first

creature); MT:

“In the beginning

(qanani)

“possessed me”

(as an

instrument by

which to create

all creatures.)

Arius & Hilary

regrettably both
worked off the
LXX, not the
MT.

5Or perhaps

more true to
Hilary's intent,
De
Fide
or
On
the Faith

■