

Christ Community Covenant Church
Colossians: Redeemed! “The Preeminence of Christ”
(Introduction/Overview of the Colossians Series)
Pastor Dave Scherrer - June 7, 2015

Admiring a piece of art

Imagine coming upon something of upmost Beauty and Truth and Goodness that you simply must stop and examine it and meditate on it and apply it as though your life depended on it.



Winged Victory (or Nike) of Samothrace, discovered in 1863, 200. 190 BC



Madonna of the Rose, Raphael, early 16th century oil on wood, 1520ish



Leonardo de Vinci had no income during the spring of 1503, which may in part explain his interest in a private portrait. In 1506 Leonardo considered the portrait unfinished. He was not paid for the work and did not deliver it to his client. The artist's paintings traveled with him throughout his life, and he may have completed *Mona Lisa* many years later in France in one estimation by 1516.



[Illustration of a student reviewing art]

Imagine coming upon something of upmost Beauty and Truth and Goodness that you simply must stop and examine it and meditate on it and apply it as though your life depended on it. We are about to

experience such a moment! . A moment of ecstasy where we encounter a great passage on the supremacy of Christ.

I know you can't wait . . . but you will have to wait for a moment because I want to catch you up on Asia Minor in the 1st Century for a moment first.

Catching up with Asia Minor



Letter to the Colossians

- 100 miles east of Ephesus, and like Ephesus was the home of many temples to Roman gods, a part of Asia Minor and one of the smaller and newer home churches
- Written by Paul to a church he had never visited
- Probably in 61 or 62 AD from Rome where he may have been imprisoned
- Colossae was a port town of sorts, 100 miles inland but at that time on a large river that has largely now disappeared.
- Two main themes: Christ has his supremacy and something I am going to call ~~Extreme~~ Redemption

Famous verses

- **Colossians 2:12** *Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.+*
- **Colossians 3:1** *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.+*
- **Colossians 3:13-14** *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."*
- **Colossians 3:16** *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.+*
- **Colossians 4:6** *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.+*

Colossians is a short book or letter but it is a great study of the person, work and teachings of Christ.

The person, work and teaching of Christ

These three ways of understanding Christ are how theologians think of Jesus. They call it Christology. The study or examination of Christ and one way that we can wrap our mind about Christ is by using this system of looking at the person, work and teachings of Christ.

The teaching part is pretty easy. He teaches mostly on the Kingdom of God and uses parables and sermons and real life teachable moments to teach us about the Kingdom and its purposes and values. This one is kind of easy for us because it is where we spend most of our time.

The person of Christ. This idea is a little harder for us... A distinctive feature of this epistle is its Christology, the study or examination of the character of Christ. His nature and attributes. Not unlike answering the question at a back yard barbeque where one of the guests doesn't know the host very well and someone might ask, *What kind of person is he?+* It is a good way of testing our knowledge of Christ by answering out loud, *What kind of person is Jesus?+* It takes first-hand information to be able to

answer this question well. We will see that this letter to the church at Colossae is full of great theology and doctrine about Christ. Which is great because as Christians, we want to know well the person that we are following! Then there is the work of Christ.

The work of Christ. In Colossians one finds the familiar themes is the cross (1:20; 2:14, 15), the death (1:22; 2:11, 20; 3:3), the resurrection (1:18; 2:12; 3:3) and the second coming (3:4). When you hear the term "the work of Christ" does not appeal to His human places of employment, it refers to what he accomplished in his purposes on earth. Theologically words like redemption, justification, and salvation . this is the work of Christ through his death on the cross and Colossians is all about this study as we will see.

Colossians . a great read and a favorite of mine. It is filled with great doctrine and deep theology but at the same time the letter gives us practical answers as to how we are to apply that deep theology with a working practical theology as well. It tells us how to live as individuals in Christ, as wives and husbands, children, workers and earthly citizens. It is really a great read for a beginning Christian because there is so much packed into it!

The Occasion of the Letter: "The Colossian heresy"

My recent retreat:

God showed me that despite my past sin and failings, he loves me. Despite how I fail him today and even tomorrow he loves me. Someone on the retreat shared with me that God loves me far more than he loves his work for me. I know that but I still have to know that in the deep places of my life. I am not defined by my work for Christ but by his love for me and my love for Him. Really, that's it.

He showed me a need to slow down and reflect on the things that are good and beautiful and true. To cherish love, light and life and especially to cherish the Lord and his majesty.

So let's get to that moment I was telling you about. A moment of supreme beauty and truth and goodness; a moment that will want you to simply sit and take it all in. Turn with me to Col. 1 verse 15 and read about as lofty and magnificent a passage as there is in all of literature. It is not so much the flair of the writing as it is the supremacy of the subject:

The Supremacy of Christ

Colossians 1:15-20

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. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

The supremacy of Christ is a doctrine surrounding the authority of Jesus and His God-nature. In the simplest of terms, to affirm the supremacy of Christ is to affirm that Jesus is God and is the God above all gods.

This brief passage is labeled by the editor as "the Supremacy of Christ" in some Bibles. In this passage, Paul makes it plain that Jesus is over all things. Christ is called "**the image of the invisible God**" and "**the firstborn over all creation**" (v15). Image isn't like a terrific portrait or an amazing photograph. The

Greek word for image is more like imaging ~~an~~ exact another. And the word *firstborn* may seem confusing. It does not imply that Christ was created (as in the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses). Instead, the term *firstborn* refers to a position of authority. To be *firstborn* was to hold an honored position. Paul immediately goes on to explain **Jesus' role in creation**: "For by Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him+(v16). **This means that Jesus is not created but is Creator. He is God.**

When we understand the supremacy of Christ, we have a more accurate view of Him. We more fully understand the depth of His love; we are more able to receive and to respond to His love. Theologians believe that Colossians was written, in part, to combat heresies rising in Colossae. Paul used the supremacy of Christ in order to quash these misled beliefs. He affirmed Christ's supremacy, His lordship, and His sufficiency for us.

There is another great passage that goes after the same subject found in Hebrews:

Hebrews 1:1-4

"God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Why it matters . . .

Too many of us are living within earshot of the liar's lies. We at times listen to those lies and it impacts us in our deep parts. The prince of lies is also a thief and he seeks to steal your joy and your assurance and your hope. Jesus also calls him a murderer who wants to murder the trust in your life and he wants you to listen to a lie that who you are and what you are doing doesn't matter to anyone.

So that you might know how radically and completely that you have been redeemed!

Colossians 1:21-22

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

The Message

You yourselves are a case study of what he does. At one time you all had your backs turned to God, thinking rebellious thoughts of him, giving him trouble every chance you got. But now, by giving himself completely at the Cross, actually *dying* for you, Christ brought you over to God's side and put your lives together, whole and holy in his presence. You don't walk away from a gift like that! You stay grounded and steady in that bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message, careful not to be distracted or diverted. There is no other Message- just this one. Every creature under heaven gets this same Message. I, Paul, am a messenger of this Message.

You have a new name because you are new. And because what this new name represents you and I can join Jesus at the Table of Life.

Listen to this song and you will hear that you are not defined by the mistakes you have made but now you are defined by the work and person of Christ in your life. You are new and you have a new name. Listen with me . . .

***Forgiven, Beloved
Hidden in Christ
Made in the image of the Giver of Life
Righteous and holy
Reborn and remade
Accepted and worthy, this is our new name***

Communion