

5/15/22 - Col. 1:15-20 - "Who is Jesus Christ?"

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[0 : 00] Let's not delay any longer to turn to God's Word today, and I invite you to turn with me on this special In-Between Sunday between the ending of the Gospel of John series, which was up there in the 40th message or something along those lines, and before we get into following the historical movement of the church into the book of Acts, I invite you to turn to Colossians today, and we will be in chapter 1, starting in verse 15.

As you do, if you're new with us, if you've come to see your family be baptized, or if you're a first-time visitor here at the church, I want to welcome you to Steel Valley Church. It's great to have you here today.

My name is Brent. I serve here as the lead pastor, and along with other very godly men as well, and I welcome you here today. It's great to have you.

Now, Colossians is a letter written by Paul to the church in Colossae, and it's unique. It's a unique letter because Paul's concern throughout the letter seems as if his top priority is changed behavior for the church in Colossae, rather than correcting beliefs of saying, throw out that garbage, throw out that garbage.

Changed behavior. And it's true that Colossae, just like any day and age, you're surrounded by secular theology and ideology and whatever you want to stamp it as.

[1 : 43] It's just surrounding us at all times. It changes, but really there's nothing new under the sun. And so back in this time period, in Paul's day, this was more so pagan Greek philosophy was winning the day in Colossae.

We saw Jewish mysticism, Jewish legalism, known as cynicism of harshness to the body, and all sorts of things that basically dilute the work that Christ just completed a couple years prior in his earthly ministry, just as we studied in the Gospel of John.

And so it is the doctrine of Christ that propels the behavior of the church. And I want us to see that today. The doctrine of Christ propels the changed behavior of the church.

And it is the doctrine of Christ that I sense the utmost importance to come to you today with Colossians chapter 1, verse 15 through 20, and to proclaim that doctrine for you.

Within these five verses we'll see today, we enter into arguably the richest passage in the entire Bible that exposes the most reasoned and illustrated presentation of Christ's supremacy.

[3 : 03] And in fact, it is known by history that Colossians chapter 1, verse 15 through 20, was actually crafted into a hymn to be sung in the early church because of its richness.

So let's read together Colossians 1, verse 15 through 20. It reads, This is God's word.

I have chosen a sermon title today that will hopefully hit Google search analytics.

Usually I craft it in such a way that adds a little suspicion and everything. I want to be straightforward to what the world is searching for. So when it's typed in Google, they'll find something here.

Who is Jesus Christ? And we're going to study that. I have three points today. And I'm excited to dive into the doctrine of Christ.

[5 : 02] We see the first point in this passage that Jesus Christ is over all. And we see this as Paul writes from verse 15 and even back into 18.

I don't want to get into a literary theological class, but this verse is a chiasm. So if you're familiar with chiasms, it's chiasm.

If you're not, I'm not going to teach you what it is right now. Go ahead and Google search that on your free time after the service. But Jesus Christ is over all. Jesus Christ is over all.

Verse 15 says, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. And now, not ripping this from its original context, we have to keep in mind that in Paul's day and age, we have to

consider that Jesus Christ was just one of the many emanations of the unseen God. One of the expressions of the unseen God. And it's not that no one necessarily denounced the existence of Jesus Christ. They just basically skewed, heretically skewed his identity and his purpose of who he actually is.

[6 : 22] So Jesus became a lesser spirit being, like one of the many rungs, as well as Muhammad or Allah, right?

Just one of the many rungs, the emanations of an unseen God, right? And so this denounces right then and there what we studied in John 14, 6, that he is the way, Jesus Christ is the way, he is the truth, he is the life, that no one comes to the Father except through that rung.

He's the only rung that exists to God. But in the person in revelation of Jesus Christ on the earth, God literally forged his image.

We see a Greek word here. He is the image, icon, of the invisible God. This is, this means representation that in Christ we see the unseen God represented in physical form.

This is who Jesus was. It's just like John 1, 18 says in our series. No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side.

[7 : 35] He, God, has made him known and sent him to earth. Icon, the word icon for image, provides us with the same impression that's placed upon a coin that gives the dictation of every edge and bevel within that piece of copper or nickel, whatever have you, to represent that which was stamped.

Or similar to back in the olden days, or I think it's coming back, wax seals. You see the wax seals just being stamped on the envelope with that emblem. It's that same image.

God has literally given us a portrait of who he is in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the portrait of God. He's God incarnate, God divine. And we see and have seen that evidence all throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.

Have we not? Through the signs, through the miraculous raising of Lazarus, who is four days dead. This is something that no one has ever done before, and Jesus Christ did it.

[8 : 50] He is the portrait of God. But not only is he the portrait, he is the image of the invisible God. His supreme status reigns over everything that has been created.

Everything that has been created. Verse 15 says he is the firstborn of all creation. Now, I want you to think about this and what this is actually saying.

Rest on that for a moment. Let's put the car in park here for a moment and take a look at the trees. Being the firstborn of creation isn't necessarily at all meaning anything to being the firstborn, like having a birth order.

This has everything to do with his status, his ranking, his honor. This is Jewish language of ranking and honor that's been used throughout the Old Testament.

From David, he was the firstborn of the covenant community in Psalm 89, 27, where it says, I will also appoint my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.

[10 : 02] And leading even back to Exodus with Israel as the nation was known as the firstborn of all the nations to indicate their status of receiving God's love and provision.

And just as Exodus 3, 22 says, You shall say to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Church, there is nothing that compares to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

There is nothing that compares. Regardless of if that religion kind of has a good end in mind of giving human life dignity, if it is stripped apart from the doctrine of who Jesus Christ is, it is folly, it is foolish without Christ.

It is Christ without a cross. And so no other religion on earth has the capacity to represent such consistent theological revelation of God's redemption to humanity than these 66 books that we have in our hand.

[11 : 35] And within our hand, we find absolute truth. Truth that the disciples have suffered greatly for. And the church has, even Tyndale, has suffered greatly for.

We have in our hands a book that has floated through generations in blood for that truth. And so this is why Paul goes on to say about the headship in verse 18 on the other half.

He is the head of the body of the church. He's the beginning. The firstborn from the dead. That in everything he might be preeminent.

Firstborn there again. Meaning that, yeah, there have been many people raised from the dead all throughout the centuries. Even Lazarus being four days dead.

But Jesus Christ is the only one who is firstborn, the highest ranking who left the grave. He is distinguished.

[12 : 44] He's the only one who didn't deserve the wrath of God and the punishment thereof. Why? Because Jesus Christ not only is over all created.

He's even over death itself. As he conquered death. Jesus Christ is preeminent. A fancy word for outstanding.

Supreme over all. Distinguished. What a God we serve. What a God that we worship.

That compels our lives. You can trade in the best sounding theological argument for a Christless cross. That might sound good in the end.

But if it's stripped from Christ, it's folly. And you can have the best sounding solution. But we have the solution here. The firstborn solution in Jesus Christ, in Christ alone.

[13 : 48] Don't try to solve theological problems in this life with cultural solutions. If the problem is theological, the solution is theological.

And it has to do with who Christ is and what he's accomplished to solve for us. Boy, we got a knock on our door just yesterday from a congregation not too far away that asked us if we want to participate in putting a sign of inclusivity on our lawn that says, like, Black Lives Matter, Women Equal Rights, and something about abortion.

And love is love. Now, I heard the guy out. I got his phone number. I'll be following up later on to let him know my decision.

I'll talk to the elders too if they want to come. But the world has a problem. And we'll get into that in a moment.

And while all the intention behind all of the slogans and all the inclusivity, I mean, we understand that every human life has dignity, even the ones that are in rebellion against God.

[15 : 02] They have inherited dignity as image bearers. But as the campaign of the world is inclusivity, their campaign needs to be repentance.

The campaign, this sign that we need to show the world is to repent and come to Jesus Christ. That is the only hope that we can ever have of bringing absolute dignity to every racial issue that we have in this country is to come and solve in Jesus Christ.

Every gender issue that we have in this country, it can be solved in Jesus Christ. And every issue of hatred. I don't know, turn on the news and what happened in Buffalo just recently.

Like, this world is messed up and needs Jesus Christ. When we turn on the news, we should see a theological problem. This problem cannot be solved in legislation.

If you take away their guns, they're going to find a rock. You can't take away all the rocks. Come on, people. It's a heart problem in this world. Church, don't be duke for secular ideology.

[16 : 16] Our solution is in Christ. And not only that, not only is Jesus Christ overall in point one, Paul goes on to say another point.

To inform the church in Colossae, surrounded in all sorts of religious mumbo-jumbo, that Jesus Christ is not only over all things, he's in all things.

And we see this in verse 16 through 17. It says, And he is before all things, that in him all things hold together.

A couple things here.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is in all? What does that mean? Paul gives us three things of what that means. The first, what does it mean that Jesus Christ is in all?

[17 : 28] Number one, Jesus is the creator of all things. All matter came into existence through Christ's hand. That is a matter of fact concerning physical matter and unseen matter.

We see that in Paul's writing. Whether it's far away in heaven or here close in proximity on earth. Or visible or invisible.

Thrones or dominions, rulers or authorities. Referring all to angelic classifications that Jesus Christ is even over the angels. And created the angels.

How many have heard stories of churches really getting this wrong? Of the angel appearing in the congregation. The church bows down in worship. So dangerous.

So dangerous. Jesus Christ is over them. Jesus Christ created them. They don't deserve our worship.

[18 : 36] Now consider what's going on in the culture back in this time period. I'm not going to go into a very long dissertation about that. But considering the various Greek pagan theology that was going in philosophies.

Stirring the minds of people in Colossae. Christ is gone. Think about just this episode of just the guy's gone.

Jesus has returned to the Father. They're on their own by the power of the Holy Spirit. And we'll see that in the book of Acts. And they're getting invaded by the world.

Darkness is really looming around them. And Paul basically confronts all their little g-gods.

Paul confronts every one of them in a simple manner of explanation. That all their wood that they used to carve was made by God. Those little rocks that they worship to and cuddle and keep with them close tightly.

[19 : 42] Was created by God. The sun, the moon, the stars which they worship. All by God. And we see the problem is theological.

The theological problem is found in Romans 18 through 23. Which Paul says to the Romans. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them. Because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes. Namely his eternal power and divine nature. Have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world.

In the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Verse 21 says. For although they knew God.

[20 : 40] They did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking. And their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise. They became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. Resembling mortal man. And birds.

And animals. And creeping things. The theological problem. That stems back to the garden church. It's found right there. It's idolatry. We have replaced. The good news of the gospel. For things that we perceive as better than the gospel.

Idolatry. So if Jesus Christ is in all. Then all things. Seen or unseen. Ought to drop us to our knees.

[21 : 39] Peace. In proclaiming. The glory. Of God. All things. Seen or unseen. There was an article.

Just recently. That was. Published. I think it was by NASA. That they. They were able to capture. The. Center of our Milky Way galaxy.

Did anybody see that? Yeah. Any. Yeah. Nerds. You can raise their hand. Yeah. I'm one of them. Yeah. We saw it. So it is so cool. To see something like that.

Even to hear the sound. If you heard the audio. I went a little bit further. I heard the audio too. And. To think. That the picture that is depicted in that.

Is what we now can see. That was unseen. Perceivably unseen. And God created that. A massive.

[22 : 36] Super massive. Black hole. Right? This thing. Is massive. It is 40 million. Miles.

In length. From one side to the other. That's basically saying. If you head. In a plane. Where's

Bellaria? There's Bellaria. So if you head in a plane. Over Bellaria. And just keep going.

Until you come back. Across the street. By a spectrum. On the other side. You have to do that. Over 1600 times. To finally reach the other side.

Of that. Super massive. Black hole. Go around the world. Over 1600. Times. And God. Created that. That brings me to my knees.

In just. Amazement. Of the glory of God. And that. Is in which. Is its attention. It is brought. Bringing us to our knees.

[23 : 36] To glorify him. Might this be why Paul. Explains the points. That Jesus Christ. Is in all. Right? The second thing.

What does it mean to. That Jesus Christ. Is in all. Is that Jesus Christ. Is the objective. In all things. In verse 16. That all things.

Were created. In verse. Verse 16. Through him. And. For him. Through him. And.

For him. This is a. Theological. Understanding. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Glory. Is the objective. Of creation.

All the observable. Complexities. Of this life. Are to stir up. Our hearts. As human beings. In glorifying. God.

[24 : 32] The creator. And church. Just as. All things. Began. At. God's. Mighty. Word. And commands.

Let there be light. All things. One day. Will return. By the same. Mighty. Word. Of his command. Let those. Graves. Open.

Come. Home. Through him. And for him. Not only that. But verse 17. Tells us. That not only. Is he before. All things. First in. Rank. But in him. All things. Hold. Together. How is Jesus Christ. In all. Thirdly. And lastly. Verse 17. Jesus is the sustainer. In all things. Meaning that without the. Divine working.

[25 : 28] Of Jesus Christ. His hand. In creation. Everything. Would. Fall. Apart. Without his.

Divine working. In creation. Everything. Would. Fall. Apart. And church. I'm here. To tell you. And not to minimize.

The things that we go through. In this life. As horrific. That it can be. In Buffalo. And things like that. Not to minimize. But regardless of. Anything that we.

Experience. In this life. Whether. Glorious. Or tragic. God intends. To alleviate. Every ounce. Of our worry. And our anger. Bitterness. Our hatred. To give us rest. In him alone. This is found.

[26 : 23] In Jesus Christ alone. He is. Holding all things. Together. Together. And how wonderful. It is to know. That Jesus Christ. Promises to hold. Us.

Together. As well. Come what may. Feast. Or famine. Our hope. Is found. In Christ alone.

Youngstown. Needs. This type of hope.

I have not seen. A day go by. Where there hasn't been. Another shooting. We don't even. We only get. News. Of the updated. Reports. Of actually. Actual. Deaths.

On the streets. We don't get. Flooded. With all the. Spurring bullets. At family members. In their houses. Or cars. And things like that. Going on. On the south side. And east side.

Youngstown. Needs this hope. So. Desperately. Because. Their anger. That they have. In these revenge. Killings. Of these young kids.

[27 : 18] On the streets. Avenging the death. Of their friend. Or family member. Is only. Found. In Jesus Christ. Peace. Can only be found. And reconciliation.

Can only be found. In Christ alone. This is a theological problem. Like I said. We can take all the guns. Off the street. If we wanted. People will find. A way. To revenge. Because.

Why? Romans 1. 18. Through 23. Idolatry. Sinful man. Will find. A way. But how wonderful.

To know. That God. Is holding. All of this chaos. That we perceive. Together. The last point.

That I have. For you today. Is that Christ. Is the bridge. To God. And we see this. In verse 19.

Through 20. For in him. All. The fullness.

[28 : 11] Of God. Was pleased. To dwell. And through him. To reconcile. To himself. All things. Whether on earth. Or in heaven. Making peace.

By the blood. Of his cross. Not only. Is Jesus Christ. The image. Of the invisible. God. Jesus. Is. The essence.

For in him. Verse 19. All the fullness. Of God. Was. Pleased. To dwell. And consider.

For a moment. What this means. We just got out. Of the resurrection. The crucifixion. If what Paul. Is saying. Is true. Consider. The torture. And the pain. The blood. Of his cross. The atonement. That he made. For our sins. To set us free.

[29 : 12] He died the death. That we deserve. We heard it. Three times. This morning. To think. That Jesus Christ. Was the dwelling.

Place. Of God. That it was not. A coercion. For God. To do this. He was. Pleased. To dwell. And if he was. Pleased. To dwell. In the. Beginning.

His pleasing. Never. Was. Reduced. Even at the cross. God. God. Was pleased.

To dwell. And die. As a sacrifice. A propitiation. A substitution. For our sin. Jesus Christ.

In him. The fullness. Of God. Was pleased. To dwell. By the blood. Of his cross. He was pleased. To suffer. For us. To set us free. This is.

[30 : 08] Life changing. Church. Jesus Christ. Is the bridge. To God. We see. That. It's not only. Through the dwelling.

Of God. In human form. That he would. Be able to accomplish. The very miracle. Here. This is the. The miracle. That we see. Throughout this. This story. Of redemption. Called reconciliation. To reconcile. To himself. All things. To reconcile. To bring together. Which was once. A part. Come on. I know the drama. That goes on in life.

I know you have those. Family members. That are kind of. We're not talking to them. We need this. A little reconciliation. Power. In our own lives. And God. Has done this.

And accomplished this. In Jesus Christ. Alone. Christ. Was the means. Of reconciliation. A holy God. To very. Unholy people.

[31 : 05] Very sinful. People. Idolatrous. People. Just as Galatians 4 says. But. When the fullness. Of time had come. God sent forth his son. Born of a woman.

Born under the law. Under the law. To carry the law. To accomplish. What we can accomplish. To live a life. That we can't live. As we heard this morning.

To redeem those. Who are under the law. To redeem you. And me. And Jesus Christ.

Accomplished what no human being. Can do. He died a sinner's death.

In exchange of life. To the sinner. Jesus Christ. Alone. Holds things. All things together. And he also holds. The road.

Of salvation. Together. One hand. On one. And one hand. On the other. And he's holding it all together. How could we ever doubt. That he will not hold us. Together as well. Through the sacrifice.

[31 : 58] Of Jesus Christ. On the cross. We experience. And we know. The apex. Of all salvation's history. It is accomplished. It is finished. Upon that cross. The penalty.

Has been paid. Our old self. Can now be gone. And we can put on. The new self. In the power. Of the spirit. I don't know.

Every one. Every individual. In this room. But I can only assume. That we might have. A non-Christian. With us. In our midst. Or possibly somebody. Who's been on the fence. For a while. Or maybe he's been. Living. Living.

Kind of walking. Through the motions. They grew up in the church. And they look like a Christian.

Smell like a Christian. But they know. That there's something. Disconnected. In their hearts. That is not.

Reconciled. With God. A little bit. Doubt. So at this moment. I know that. I can't. Persuade you. Any more than the Bible. Can persuade you. And the Holy Spirit.

[32 : 52] Can convict you. But this is a moment. Where you can take. What Paul has written. To the Colossian church. And make it personal. To make it individual. To your life.

This comes through faith. In Jesus Christ alone. So I give you. A second way. To live this morning. To live for the glory. Of God. And to trust in Jesus Christ.

As your Lord and Savior. If that is you today. Even on the live stream. Send us an email. Or see me after the service. And I can help you. In your next steps. And get you some good resources.

And discipleship material. To walk with you. But for the church. In the scope of what Jesus Christ. Has accomplished. On the cross. Who do we ever think.

That we are. Who. What holy roller. Do we think. That we have become. In order to make much of Christ.

[33 : 46] We have to remember. We have to make very little. Of ourselves. There's nothing. That we accomplished. All has been accomplished. By Jesus Christ alone.

Now. It's true. In light of. God's supremacy. He is supreme. Over all. Regardless of. If. If. The world acknowledges it or not. He is who he is.

I am. Who I am. He is sufficient. He doesn't need us. But he invites us. To be partakers. Of his sufficiency. Of his supremacy.

And so. Remember. I'm going to go back. To the beginning. Remember. Paul. Is addressing. Not necessarily addressing. Beliefs. And false beliefs. In this time. He is.

Addressing. A changing. Behavior. For the church. In Colossae. Changed. Behavior. And what's the changed. Behavior. That Paul. May be addressing. In this church.

[34 : 43] Humility. Humility. So where do we fit. In light of.

In light of. The vastness of God. In the smallness of us. You can have a city named after you. And it doesn't mean anything. In the next life to come.

It doesn't matter. What you accomplish. In this life. We can't. Carry all that baggage. To our graves. What does this mean.

In light of his supremacy. The aim of our lives. Ought to be. To live. Under his. Glory. Under. His. Glory. And obediently.

Participate. In his supremacy. Live. Under his glory. And obediently. Participate. In his supremacy. In our lives. That church.

[35 : 43] Is the motive. To change our attitudes. To change our ways. To change our behavior. And submitting. Our lives. Away from self supremacy.

And self sufficiency. To divine supremacy. And divine sufficiency. In all things. We find. It. In Jesus Christ. In our confusion.

We find. Order. In him. Alone. Not through some. Bookshelf. In the. In the. Christian section. Christian section. At the bookstore. Not in our.

Losses. In this life. We find. Our fulfillment. In him. In our. Questions. In this life. We find. Our answers. In him. Within our doubts.

We find. Our assurance. In him. In our diversity. Whatever they want us. To put in our front yard. To. Campaign. Along with them. We find.

[36 : 38] Our unity. In him. And in our brokenness. We find. Healing. In him. And if you are broken today. I encourage you. To find your healing today.

In him alone. When Christ reigns supreme. Over his church. It is easy. For the watching. World. Campaigning. For. What the church. Has. Has. Has. At hand.

Which Christ. Has accomplished. They start. To take. Notice. And when. A church. As. Jesus Christ. Reigning supreme.

Within. It is easy. For them. To see. That something greater. Is holding that church. Together. And that is true. For us today. So as we close. I hope that we can.

Understand. A couple things. As we are to. Live under the glory. Of Christ. Supremacy. If we are to.

[37 : 34] Live out our lives. Obediently. As participating. In his supremacy. This is going to change. A couple things. It's going to change. A couple things. That we see in Romans.

Some theological problems. That we see in Romans. Chapter one. That we are to strive. To glorify God. In our individual lives.

In our individual lives. Striving. You will never. Arrive. I got some people. Who arrive. And it just. It just. Further proclaims. That they actually.

Have it all. A little bit confusing. A little bit. Chaotic understanding. Of what that means. But if we are to strive. For the glory of God. In our individual lives.

We ought to give. Christ. The first. Born. Place. In all. The first. Place. In all. So that includes.

[38 : 29] Everything. Is his. Our families. Are his. Our marriages. Are his. Our singleness.

Belongs to him. Our professions. That we have. Our jobs. Our ministries. Our intellect. Our calendars.

Our calendars. Our calendars. Representing your time. Your love. Your money.

Your conversations. Ought to have first place. Your conversations that you have. Ought to have. Christ. First place. Your eating. Your eating. Habits. Drinking. Habits. Ought to have Christ. First place.

[39 : 26] What you listen to. In your earbuds. What you watch. On the television. Ought to have. Jesus Christ. First place. And last.

Our worship. Corporately. And individually. Ought to have. Jesus Christ. First place. If this is true. Church. If this. If Jesus Christ.

Is that God. If what Paul is saying. Wake up church. If what Paul is saying. Is true. And if Jesus Christ.

Is that God. In which he is. Christ. Is the very purpose. Of life. That we seek. First.

First. He knows. How best. To order. And fix. Our lives. Better than any. Philosophy. That you can find. On a bookshelf. Or any. Wacko. Writing a blog.

[40 : 20] On the internet. That we decide. To tailor our lives. After. Right? Christ. Is our hope. In all things. That are brought. Into our lives.

Whether it be. Feast. Or famine. Blessing. Or tragedy. Christ. Is our hope. Because we know. It is him at work. And if Jesus Christ.

Is at work. Jesus Christ. Will sustain. And may we wake up. And focus our eyes. Upon. No other than.

The one. Who deserves all the glory. Jesus Christ. Don't lose sight. Of his work. In your life. Come under his glory.

Come under. Obediently. In his supremacy. And may. All who. Walk into this church. As we get things. As we're striving together.

[41 : 15] Outside of this wall. In your relationships. And in life. May this church. Have a banner. Over the entryway. For the world to see. That Christ.

Reigns. Supreme. Here. And may our lives. Never contradict. That claim. Amen. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.