

“Jesus”

COLOSSIANS 1:13-20

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
September 25, 2011**



Of all of the people who have ever lived on this earth, we can probably agree that very few have really made a lasting and dramatic impact on society. Experts tell us that there are roughly 7 billion people now living on this planet, and we are told that the total number of all people who have ever lived is perhaps somewhere around 115 billion (40% of whom have died before the age of one). Out of those 115 billion people, there is one, however, who has received more attention than any other—more praise, more criticism, and more opposition. I am referring, of course, to Jesus. Every recorded word Jesus ever said has been constantly studied and scrutinized and even memorized. Around the clock, somewhere on this earth, millions of people are reading the words of Jesus. There are very few (if any) men of whom we could say the same thing. He never wrote a single book, and yet the books written about Him number in the millions. He never wrote a song, and yet the songs written to praise Him must also number in the millions (including several of those that we sang together this morning). As far as we know, Jesus never painted a picture or chiseled a sculpture, and yet Jesus has probably inspired more works of art than just about anyone else who has ever lived. He had no formal education, and yet think of all of the prestigious schools and universities that have been established in His name. Harvard and Yale, for example, were founded as schools to train preachers. Jesus, therefore, has had a greater impact on the world than any other man or woman who ever lived.

It is important, therefore, for us to truly understand who Jesus really is. As we study Jesus, this morning, I'm going into it with the understanding that our subject is huge, our subject is beyond fully explaining or fully comprehending. However, I would like for us to seriously study one passage of Scripture that describes several aspects of the Lord's nature, who He really is. The passage is found in the book of Colossians, Colossians 1 (p. 1841). We are about to consider what it is that makes Jesus so great, what it is that makes Jesus worthy of being followed, what it is that makes Jesus worthy of being the center of our lives. If you will, let's look together at Colossians 1:13-20,

¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Again, there is no way we can cover this passage in depth in our limited time together this morning, but I would like for us to consider several very basic ideas...

I. **...starting with the fact (from verses 13-14) that JESUS IS OUR RESCUER AND REDEEMER.**

In verse 13, when Paul said that Jesus ***“rescued”*** us, he used a word that refers to being snatched out of danger, like a firefighter would run into a burning building to grab someone and drag them to safety, or like someone might reach over the side of a boat to pull somebody in, or like we might grab a child who is about to run out into the road—we just grab and snatch, sometimes right in the nick of time. A week or two ago, I hope some of you saw the video of the onlookers who saw a motorcyclist crash into and slide under the car out in Logan, Utah. As is often the case, the car just pulled out in front of the cyclist, and the guy laid his bike down in an attempt to avoid a collision, but the crash happened anyway. He slid under the car, and the bike and the whole front end of the car just burst into flames. Well, some onlookers saw what had happened (some of them students at the nearby university, some of them still wearing their backpacks), they gathered around, they lifted the burning car off of the man, and a nearby construction worker reached under the car, grabbed the man by the ankles, and dragged him to safety. Two weeks ago, from a conference room at the hospital, the cyclist, Brandon Wright, said, “I want to thank all the heroes that put their lives on the line to save mine, I am forever in their debt.” That is what Jesus has done for us! He is our rescuer. He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and we are forever in His debt.

By the way, this same word is also used 2 Peter 2:7, where Peter refers to God, who ***“rescued righteous Lot”*** from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you remember what happened there? God issued a warning, but the Bible says (in Genesis 19:16) that Lot ***“hesitated,”*** so the angels ***“seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.”*** And at that point, the city was destroyed by fire. Lot and his family had been ***“rescued,”*** they had been grabbed, they had been snatched and brought to safety. That is what God has done for us! And in the process of that rescue, Paul says that God ***“transferred us [in]to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”*** And this is where Jesus (specifically) gets involved. We have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Son. We have been moved from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

And just a side note here: For those who teach that God's kingdom has not been established yet, for those who teach that God's kingdom is still out there somewhere on the horizon, please notice: We have already been ***“transferred”*** into His kingdom—that is, the kingdom exists right now! Right now, those of us who are Christians are a part of God's kingdom. When we obeyed the gospel, we were snatched out of one kingdom, and we were placed into another. We were ***“redeemed,”*** that is, we were bought back, the ransom has been paid, our sins have been forgiven. We were rescued. So, first of all, then, Jesus is our rescuer and our Redeemer, and for that reason, He is worthy of our worship and praise.

II. **Secondly, we also notice from this passage (in verse 15) that JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, IN FACT, HE IS THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION.**

Today, when we hear about an *“image,”* we might be tempted to think in terms of an imperfect copy, or maybe something that is merely close to the original. However, the word Paul uses in verse 15 is the basis for our English word ICON, and it refers to an exact replica. So, we apply this to God—Jesus is the exact replica of the *“invisible God.”* That’s why, in John 1:14, we read that the *“Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* This is why, in Hebrews 1:3, we read about Jesus being the *“...exact radiance of [God’s] glory and the exact representation of His nature.”* If we want to see God, the Bible tells us to look at Jesus! This is why, when Thomas asked Jesus to show them God the Father, Jesus said (in John 14:9), *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”* The reason for this is given in the next chapter, in Colossians 2:9, where Paul says, *“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”* Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus is God in the flesh. His name Immanuel, means “God with us.”

Nowhere is this more clear than when Jesus went to the temple at the age of twelve, where we find that Jesus stayed behind to do His *“Father’s business.”* In a sense, Jesus was twelve on His mother’s side, but on His Father’s side he was older than His mother and just as old as His Father. In fact, not only is Jesus older than the earth itself, but there has never been a time when Jesus was not. On His mother’s side, He got thirsty; on His Father’s side, He created not only the oceans, but every lake, river, and stream. And, on His Father’s side, He said, *“I am the water of life. If you are thirsty, come to Me and drink”* (John 7:37). On His mother’s side, He got hungry; on His Father’s side, He fed 5,000 at one time. On His Father’s side, He said, *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:35). On His mother’s side, He lived in poverty and was literally homeless; on His Father’s side, He created the Universe and owns the cattle on a thousand hills. On His mother’s side, with a broken heart, He wept at the tomb of Lazarus; on His Father’s side, He said, *“Lazarus, come forth!”* (John 11:43), and Lazarus came out of that grave. [Adrian Rogers, *Jesus—The One and Only*; June 2010]

As Paul says, *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”* Some religious groups will stand on your front porch and will use this verse to try to prove that Jesus is nothing more than an angel, that Jesus is nothing more than a created being, that there was a point in time when Jesus was born. We need to understand, though, that the word *“firstborn,”* in this context, is more of a title than a description of something happening in time sequence. In the Old Testament, you might remember that the firstborn was the one who had a place of honor in the family, the one who received the inheritance, the one who took over as the patriarch after the father had died. However, the term does not always literally refer to one who was actually the first to be born. For example, we remember what happened with Jacob and Esau. Esau was literally the first to be born, but he gave up the birthright, he sold it, he traded it for a pot of soup. Later, we read about Jacob (or Israel) as a nation being referred to by God as His *“firstborn.”* God was telling Moses what to say to Pharaoh, and God said, *“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn.’”* Very interesting! Again, between Israel (or Judah) and Esau, Esau was actually the first to be born. God therefore, was not speaking in terms of birth order, but He was speaking in terms of honor, and privilege, and position. Israel (as a nation) was God’s *“firstborn.”*

And so as we go back to Colossians 1:15, the idea is that Jesus is preeminent, He is the foremost, He is the honored One. We believe what Jesus said to the Pharisees in John 8:58, *“...before Abraham was, I AM.”* We believe that prophecy about Bethlehem back in Micah 5:2, *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”* The child born in Bethlehem did not begin in Bethlehem, but He existed from the days of eternity—similar to the prophecy in Isaiah 9:6, *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”* The child born in Bethlehem

would be referred to as the ***“Eternal Father,”*** not a created being, but the ***“exact representation,”*** the ***“icon,”*** the ***“firstborn”*** of the Eternal God, God in the flesh, and as the image of God, He is worthy of our praise.

III. **As we continue looking at Colossians 1, we move along to verses 16-17, and we discover that JESUS IS ALSO THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF EVERYTHING WE SEE AROUND US.**

It is easy to assume that God the Father created everything, but that is not exactly true. Notice: Referring to Jesus, Paul says in verse 16 that ***“...by Him all things were created.”*** That is, Jesus is the creator of absolutely everything! We see something similar in Hebrews 1:2, where the author refers to Jesus, ***“...through whom also [God] made the world.”*** The world was created by and through Jesus. We have a similar statement in John 1:3, where we find that ***“All things came into being through Him [that is, Jesus], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”*** All of this certainly helps us to understand some of that plural language back in Genesis 1:26, where God said, ***“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...”*** We might almost say that God was talking among Himself.

This means that the little baby born in Matthew 1 is the mighty God of Genesis 1, the Eternal Father of Isaiah 9. This means that when the world nailed Jesus to a cross, we, in fact, tried to murder our own Creator. We tried to take the life of the One who gave us life. This means that the One who spoke the first trees into existence was nailed to His own creation. Jesus is the one who created the atoms and the molecules called them together to form the metals that were used in the nails. Jesus is the one who created those rocks on the hill where He was murdered. Jesus is the One who gave the breath of life to those who hurled those insults as they passed by.

And yet not only did Jesus create everything, we also find in verse 17 that He is the One who ***“holds all things together.”*** You know, sometimes we are rather easily impressed by something as simple as duct tape. Red Green refers to it as the “Handyman’s Secret Weapon.” Philosopher Carl Zwanzig says that it is like “the Force.” He says, “It has a dark side and a light side and it holds the Universe together.” I did not realize until this week that duct tape was developed by the US military during World War II as a way to seal ammo cases against moisture. You might remember that it was used when the Apollo astronauts drove on the moon—they had to create a fender out of maps and duct tape. It is used to keep windows from shattering during hurricanes. It is used to prevent frostbite during sled dog races in Alaska. A version of duct tape is used in racing for instant repairs. It is often said that half of the cars on the Freed-Hardeman campus are held together by duct tape. But when you think about it, Jesus is like that, only so much more so. Jesus (according to Paul here in Colossians) ***“holds all things together.”*** Jesus is the glue; Jesus is the duct tape that keeps the Universe from just flying apart into total chaos. He is the Creator and Sustainer. He is worthy of praise.

IV. **There is something else we learn about the Lord—in verse 18 we find that JESUS IS THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH.**

Sometimes the church is described as a family, or a building, or a temple, or a bride, but here it is pictured as a body, and we find here that Jesus is the head of the body; Jesus is the head of His church. The sign out in front of this building says that we are a “church of Christ.” In other words, we are a church belonging to Christ. We are the body of Christ, and as long as we are His body, that means that He is in charge; that means that He is our authority. And He came to have that position of authority because (as Paul says in verse 18), ***“...He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.”*** And so we are back to the term ***“firstborn.”*** And, once again, we are not talking about time sequence, but we are talking in terms of importance. Of all the people who have been or ever will be raised from the dead, Jesus is the foremost. The resurrection of Jesus conquered death. And

this makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be the head of the church, the head of His body. The resurrection means everything.

Jesus promised to build the church (Matthew 16:18), he purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), and He is now reigning as the head over it. He has every right to govern. It is His church, not ours. So, if we have some question over doctrine, it is not up to us to take a vote. It doesn't matter what we may think, but it is up to us to merely recognize what Jesus has already said in His word. It doesn't matter what I think about the kind of music we have or what the Bible teaches about elders or marriage or whatever. But rather, the Lord's opinion on any issue in the church is the only one that ever really matters. He is the head of His church. He is worthy of our praise!

V. Before we close, there is one more major concept in this short passage, and that is: JESUS IS GOD'S CHOICE TO RECONCILE THE WORLD TO HIMSELF.

And I know that may seem like a complicated concept, but really, it is not. If you were to break into my house and steal my TV right off the wall while I'm watching a movie, you and I would have a problem with each other. More specifically, I would have a problem with you. In fact, any decent relationship that we had with each other would probably come to a very quick end. And so if you were to come to church next Sunday and say, "Hey, Baxter, how's it going?" I would probably say, "Not well!" Because, you see, things would not be right between us. We would be alienated from each other. There would be some level of hostility between us. We would be in need of reconciliation. And so the concept is not really complicated, is it? When we sin, God has a problem. And actually, the problem is ours. However, God has taken the first step to make things right, and He did that by sending Jesus. In verses 19-20, ***"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross."***

Through the cross, the relationship has been reestablished. Through the cross, God is saying: I know we have a problem, but this is how far I am willing to go to make things right between us. And at that point, the ball is now in our court. What are we now going to do with that offer? We have offended God, but He has provided a way to work it out. Jesus, then, is God's choice to reconcile the world to Himself. He is worthy of our praise!

Conclusion:

Of all of the people who have ever lived on the face of this earth, very few have had any kind of a real, lasting impact. And even in that very exclusive category, Jesus is far beyond even any of them. I don't know what it says in your Bible, but the heading for this section in my Bible says, "The Incomparable Christ." And that is so true! There is no one in all of history who can even come close to comparing to Jesus. And this morning we have studied why. He is our Savior. He is the image of God, the firstborn of all creation. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire Universe. As the Firstborn from the Dead, He is the head of His church. And certainly He also serves as God's choice to reconcile the world to Himself. In other words, if we want any chance of making things right with God, we absolutely need to do it through Jesus.

And so the question for us today is this: Does Jesus have the preeminence in our lives? Does Jesus rule in our hearts? Is Jesus really our Lord and Master? And do our lives reflect that Jesus is in control of our lives in the way that we think, and talk, and act? Is Jesus in charge of how we do our business? Is Jesus in charge of how we do our schoolwork? Is Jesus in charge of how we behave when we go out on a date? Is Jesus in charge of how we treat our spouse at home? Is Jesus in charge of how we treat our children? And for a challenge: What

will we be doing this week to prove to our friends and families that Jesus really is the Incomparable Christ? How will our lives show that Jesus really is worthy of our praise? After studying these words from Paul, I hope that all of us have a deeper understanding of why we worship Jesus as we do.

In response to what He did, the Bible tells us to repent and be baptized. That is, we die to sin, we are buried with Christ in baptism, and we come up out of the water as newborns into the family of God. If you have obeyed the gospel in the past but have turned away from it, God is always willing to welcome people back into the family. In fact, the Bible describes Jesus as a Father standing out on the front porch eagerly watching for a lost child to come back home. If that's you, please let us know, and we would be glad to go to God in prayer on your behalf as a congregation. If you have something you'd like for us to pray about, let us know. And if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can certainly let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

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