

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Person of Christ Colossians 1:13-18

We will be looking at Colossians, chapter one verses thirteen to eighteen.

If you are like me you grew up in a church where today was considered Palm Sunday. If you are like me on Palm Sunday you got this palm, if I recall (although it's been along time ago now) it was in the shape of a cross when you were given it. I was a little clueless as to exactly why I was given it but I put it on my wall.

Now that I have read the Scripture some, I recognize why. This is happening because the Sunday before Christ was crucified He entered Jerusalem. This story is actually told in all four of the Gospels, it is one of those stories that gets told in each one of the Gospels. The day He entered Jerusalem, there was a multitude of people that were honoring Jesus. I will read for you John, chapter 12, the part that speaks of this, because this is the chapter in the Bible that speaks of the palms that Jesus was honored with. Palms were something that showed honoring for a victory or a royal person, a king, so this is why they used palm branches.

John 12:12, “On the next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna (Hosanna meaning pray save us, here it is some sense of a welcome, like a welcome to the person who is coming to deliver us) Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. (They called him the King of Israel, a messianic term) 14 And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkeys colt. 16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. 17 The multitude who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness. 18 For this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that he had performed this sign.”

So there it tells us why this multitude of people had come out to greet Jesus. Because they had heard of the raising of Lazarus, which occurred in the chapter before. That was where Lazarus was raised from the dead in Bethany, just a couple miles away from Jerusalem. So they heard of this great feat and He performed this sign so it attracted a great crowd who saw Him as someone who was to deliver them. You may wonder, as you read the Scripture, “well there's this great multitude, what happened to all these people?” You now that in just a few days Jesus would be crucified, where did they all go? Well it gives us a clue here later in the chapter because Jesus tells about His impending death, that He would be put to death. And it says about these people in verse 37, just before that it says He had departed and hid himself, verse 37 says, **But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they weren't believing him.”**

So we have a lot of people who some of them saw the signs He had done and were convinced that He was someone who was great, who could do these great things, yet they were not believing in Him. They did not see Him for who he really was. They saw Him for something that they wanted Him to be. They saw Him as someone that they could be delivered from the oppression of the

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Romans that they were under. So they were not really believing, so that when He was put to death, this wasn't their idea of a Messiah, so they disappeared.

And I think there are many people today that are holding palm branches just like people back then held palm branches. They are doing so without a lot of understanding about the Person they intend to be honoring. They don't really know who He is. For if they knew who He was, then they would be believing in Him and they would not be disappearing when He doesn't fulfill their agenda.

Well today we are going to look at Colossians chapter 1 and see that Jesus is indeed someone who deserves our honor, our complete devotion, because of who He is, not simply because of what He did. We are going to read verses 13 to 18 as we continue on in our study of Colossians.

Verse 13 of chapter 1 says, **13 "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son; 14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins: 15 and 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 by Him, and for Him; 17 and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 And He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything."**

So here we see several things spoken of about Jesus. There is a lot more things, but here are things that Paul believed that were important for us to know, to understand who He is.

If you remember from last week, Paul prayed for these people. He didn't just pray that they would have a nice life, he prayed for their spiritual growth, that they would understand and know God. The first place to understanding and knowing God is to know who Jesus is. That is the first step. So as we seek to know God, as we seek to help others to know God, the very first step is to know who Jesus is.

So let's do that this morning, verses 13 and 14 are the first part of this and this shows Christ's relation to us. Christ's revelation in His relationship to us. Who He is to us. Verse 13, He is our King. Verse 13 says **13 "For He, (God the Father), delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son;"**

So we have been transferred from darkness, evil, ignorance, we've been transferred from sin, to a kingdom led by His Son, Jesus Christ. Isn't it wonderful, we are not just delivered from darkness but we are delivered from darkness to a great place of being in Christ's kingdom. This thing of the kingdom can get a little confused. Not just the confusion that the people of Jesus' day had, that the kingdom would come to conquer the Romans and give them this wonderful life in this land that they longed for, but more significantly, as Paul notes here, this kingdom is a spiritual kingdom not just an earthly kingdom. Oh, it is an earthly kingdom, He will return to earth. We see ample evidence of that in the Old Testament, in the Gospels, in the book of Revelation. Jesus is coming to reign on earth but this reign is most significantly in a spiritual sense of transferring us from evil and sin to holiness and righteousness. Christ is coming to reign in righteousness, not just to reign to get rid of the Romans.

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So His relationship to us is a King, and as a King He has the authority and the rule over those in His kingdom, and we've been transferred to this kingdom and He is the King. He is the authority, He is the power. This is the ultimate of "regime change" that we've heard so much about lately. This is the regime change that everyone should want, to be delivered from sin and transferred to the kingdom of God.

Jesus is not just our King, He is our Redeemer, verse 14, **"in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins."** Redemption is this: it's buying something back. And we have been bought from sin by the blood of Christ. Redemption and forgiveness are intricately connected with one another. You cannot have forgiveness without redemption. You may wonder, "well why didn't Jesus just forgive sin?" Why can't God just say "oh there is no more guilt, sins forgiven?" Why go through the process of sacrificing His only begotten Son?

Well, as Hebrews 9:22 puts it, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. There needs to be a penalty paid for the sin that was performed. You know it's like if I wreck your car. I can't just say "oh I'm sorry" and you can't say "oh I forgive you" and the car be back to normal. You know somebody needs to fix the car. And the sin that we have caused, we have done in our heart, in our deeds, there is a penalty for that sin and God can't just say "oh well it never happened," but there is a penalty that needs to be paid for that sin and Jesus is the sacrifice for our sin, He is the one that redeemed us. It was His blood that bought us from bondage to sin to now being as Romans 6-8 puts it, be a slave to Christ. We have been delivered from sin and its bondage and we have been redeemed, we have been bought back and we have then been forgiven, which is part and parcel of redemption. Without redemption there is no forgiveness. Without the redeemer Jesus Christ there is no forgiveness. Jesus is our redeemer. So that should clarify for us who Jesus is to us. He is our King, our authority, our Redeemer, our Savior, the One who forgives us of sin.

Now, Christ's relationship to God is next. Verse 15, who Christ is in relation to God and there is actually a little bit of this information in verse 13 as well. He transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son and in verse 15 He is the image of the invisible God. Note the present tense here. Verse 15, He is the image of the invisible God. This is who He is. This harkens us back to John 8:58 where Jesus said before "Abraham was I am," in the present tense. He is. He existed forever, from before, to the present, to people who will read this in the future, He is. The reference to His eternity.

But He is two specific things. First, Jesus is the beloved Son of God in verse 13. The beloved Son. He transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Recollecting Matthew 3:17, where in the baptism of Jesus the voice of God spoke out, "Behold, my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." That special title of being His beloved Son is unique to Christ. Christ is the only begotten Son of God, who we need to recognize in His relationship to God, He is the beloved Son, the special one. He has a special place.

But He is also in the perfect likeness of God. Verse 15, **"and he is the image of the invisible God."** Jesus is the perfect likeness of God. That comes from this word "image." Image doesn't mean a resemblance. Like a brother may resemble another brother, gee they sure look alike. That is not an image here. It is an exact representation. It was used for the imprint of an emperor or a coin, as an exact representation of the emperor. Like we have on a quarter, that is George Washington, that is his image on the coin.

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Well Jesus is that exact representation. The words in Hebrews 1:3 that says He is the exact representation of God. Or in the words of Jesus, here is how He put it, He who has seen the Son has seen the Father.” So when we look at Jesus we see the Father. He is the representation. And not just a close facsimile but He is the exact representation. We see His image perfectly, of the invisible God in Jesus Christ.

You know this is a reference to His deity because that sets Him apart from the creation. We do not have the exact likeness to God. Jesus in being from God and being God is His exact likeness. And this belief about the deity of Christ, Jesus being the exact image of God, being God himself is not a doctrine that doesn't get assailed from various places. Some people will look at verse 15 and see verse 15 as evidence that Jesus isn't God. Even though being the image of the invisible God is a strong statement. They will look at the rest of the verse and say He is the “first born of all creation.”

I have had people come to my door and tell me to look at Colossians 1:15, that He's the first born of all creation. Then we look at what “first born” means and we read the verses after verse 15 **“and 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 by him, and for him; 17 and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”**

And what does that mean? Is this support for the denial of the deity of Christ? I don't think so. I think this is great support for Christ's deity. I don't mind when they go to this passage, I think this is a great passage to go to if we understand it properly. So this passage, Colossians 1:15-17, speaks of Christ relation to His creation.

The first thing about Christ relation to his creation is Jesus is preeminent over all things. “First born” can mean the first of a series, or it can mean preeminent in rank, in first place. And there are many places that it means preeminent in rank. I've listed them out for you in your notes. So the question here is “which does it mean?”

Normally it means both, like being the first born and the eldest son. He is not only the first person born but has preeminent rank and gets a double inheritance, so often it means both. But it can mean either of the others as well, so what does it mean here?

Well if you are a Jehovah Witness and you have the New World Translation you will read something very interesting. They are unfortunately rather clever at rewriting their translation to fit a preconceived doctrine and their doctrine is that Jesus isn't the One God, the begotten Son of God. Their doctrine is that Jesus is a God. He's not the deity.

So here is how they render this passage. Colossians 1:16-17 in the New World Translation ”because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon earth, and all [other] things have been created through him and for him, also he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist.”

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So they stick the word “other” in there, because they believe He couldn’t have created all things, He is the first created thing of other created things. So they put the word other in there. Well at least they put the word other in brackets since it’s not there. At least they tell you that much.

But it’s not there, and if you were reading the New World Translation you would be led to believe that He was the first created thing of a series of things by the way they translate it. And they didn’t just mar this verse, they marred many verses and changed things to fit a preconceived idea. That’s not the way we want to be coming to the Scripture, to say what we want it to say and make changes in it accordingly.

Fortunately I have an older version of the New World Translation. I think mine comes for 1961 where some of the things hadn’t even been change yet, they changed some other things later on. It’s pretty funny sometimes when we get to compare an older version to a newer version.

So what does “first born” mean here? In this case “first born” must mean preeminent. It has to mean preeminent. And I will give you reasons why it means preeminent. The “first born” of all creation means Jesus is preeminent over all creation, and there are several reasons why this must be and I’ll give you five of them.

The first is the context teaches Christ exalted place. If ever you are going to look at a passage and come up with understanding what it means, the first thing you do is look at the context. What does the context say? Well the context really isn’t trying to give you a chronology to say, “well first this happened, then this happened. Jesus was the first thing that happened, and then there is a series of other things.” It’s not speaking of a series, it’s speaking of a preeminent Christ, that He is in a high and lofty position. The context teaches Christ’s exalted place. So that helps you to see that when it speaks of the first born of all creation, it is speaking of things in a preeminent sense, not in a chronological sense, the first of a series of created things.

The second thing is He is the first born of all creation not in all creation. There could have been a statement, He is the first born in all creation, meaning He is a part of the creation, He’s in creation and He’s a part of creation. But it doesn’t say that. It says He is the first born of all creation, so in comparison to creation He has a preeminent place.

Another thing is Psalm 89:27, which was one of the verses that shows that first born can be used in term of rank not in terms of chronology. And as you turn to Psalm 89:27 this is a statement saying “I shall make him my first born, the highest of the kings on the earth.” Now this is speaking of David and the lineage of David being in a unique position and it being the line of David it has a Messianic sense to it. So certainly David wasn’t the first of all the kings, he was in a preeminent sense the highest of all the kings. Psalm 89:27 has first born in the sense of preeminence. But here in a sense of preeminent it refers to the Messiah in the lineage of David. It’s speaking first to David, but because of the Messiah coming in the line of David, it’s speaking also of the Messiah. So we see the term first born in Psalms speaking actually in reference to the Messiah, preeminent, firstborn, that sense.

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Next, Christ cannot be both created and the creator of everything. He can't be both. Nothing can create itself. Remember the words of Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*? "Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever will." And that's true. Nothing can create something. What you get out of nothing is nothing.

If Jesus was the first created thing then there would be other things that could be created. But He was the Creator of all things, not all other things. But if He is the Creator of all things then He could not create Himself. Nothing comes from nothing. It is nonsensical to believe the Jesus created Himself and is the Creator of all things. That's why they have to stick words in Colossians 1:16-17. Otherwise it makes no sense.

Christ cannot be the only begotten Son if He were the first begotten of many. In John 3:16 it speaks of Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. But if He is the only begotten, how can He be the first-born in a series of others? Christ is uniquely born of God, unlike anyone else, and when in comparison to creation, this first born does not speak of His creation it speaks of His preeminence.

Now as we look at verse 16 we see some other things. Verse 16 **"for by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible."** He created all things. He produced all things. He not only is preeminent over all things, He produced all things, by Him all things were created, the things you see and the things that you can't see, the things that are in heaven, the things that are on earth. A probable reference to angels, thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, the things we can't see. All things have been created by Him. He produced it all. It's been created by Him, it's been created for Him. He created it, the reason He created it was for Him. So it tells you He is the creator.

Now you might think of this and say, "Okay, Jesus is the Creator, how can He create all things, I think that things are created by people. He created the Grand Canyon. Okay, he created the Grand Canyon but did he create this cart, I thought Bob Belander created the cart." Well here's how Jesus created the cart. Jesus is the creator of everything either directly or indirectly, even the thing in front of me. He created it indirectly. Yes, Bob built it but who built Bob? Jesus created Bob. And though Georgia Pacific or somebody put the wood together to sell at the store, Jesus made the trees, He made the stuff. He made the person who put the stuff together in order to have the thing here. Indirectly, Jesus is the creator of the cart. And He is directly the creator of so many other things.

So He is the Creator of all things. He produced all things. If He is preeminent in all things and He produced all things He is worthy of recognition and honor as the Creator of everything.

He didn't just create all things, He preceded all things, that's from verse 17. He is before all things, He got there first. He existed prior to all things, this is part of being a Creator, You were there first. And that is in a sense a preeminence because who ever gets on the job first, you know, you're an employee and some other employee came before you there's a sense that they got there first. Well, Jesus got here first.

And He is underlined here, it is emphatic. In English, you make things emphasized by underlining. In Greek, you make things emphasized by underlining, by the word order of things. If we change the word order in English it doesn't make any sense.

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Well in Greek the word “He” is emphatic here. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. So don’t miss He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

Now our fourth thing. Jesus preserves all things. It’s the last thing in His relation to creation, He is the preserver of all things. Don’t just think of Him as the Creator, though He is the Creator. Think of Him as the Preserver. He keeps all things together. All those molecules that need to be kept together so that something exists, is kept together because of the power of Jesus Christ. We exist five minutes from now only because Jesus sustains us and preserves us. He keeps all things together. In Him all things are kept together. So His creative power didn’t just start everything, it continues to keep all things together and we should recognize that He is the Creator, and He is the Sustainer as well. He preserves all things. And to recognize Him as well.

So that’s His relation to creation. He’s preeminent, He’s the producer, He’s the preceding one and He is the preserver of all creation.

Then we get to this last part. Verse 18, **“And He is also the head of the body, the church: and He is the beginning, the first born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”**

This last verse, verse 18, speaks of Christ relation to the church. He is also the head of the body, the church. So we see this phrase, the body of Christ, being referred to the church here, and other places. And He is the head.

Now you can cut parts off of me and I may still survive, you can even give me a heart transplant and I will still continue to live, but you can’t cut my head off or I will die. The head is essential to the body and Jesus is essential to the church.

He is the head of the body and saying that Jesus is our leader. Just like the body, the head is guiding the body. The head tells my body what to do, my head is telling my arm to lift itself up and it tells the blood to flow through my arm even though I am not realizing that is happening. Well, Christ is the head of the body. He is leading the church.

You might wonder, well who is the leader of the church. Well, Jesus is the leader of the church. He is the head of the church. And He has the role of that whether we recognize that or not. We can recognize that in faith even when it seems like the church has gone amuck, when things aren’t going very well. We can see in faith that Christ is the head of the church, He has the power, and the ability and the place to accomplish His desires in a church. Christ built the church, He established the church, He is the head of the church and He will accomplish what He desires in the church in spite of a bunch of flawed people. He is the head of the body. So we recognize Him for that, as being our leader of the church.

He is not just the head of the body, our leader, He is our life, He is the beginning, the first born of the dead. He was the first one to be resurrected from the dead. Yes Lazarus was resurrected but just in mortality, just to die again. Jesus is the One that is the first born from the dead. Preeminent over all the dead, resurrected first to life. So when He is resurrected, our resurrection is secure. He opened the door.

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His resurrection opened the door for our resurrection, so that we can be immortal and be eternal to live forever in life because of Jesus in His resurrection from the dead. He is the beginning, He is the first to open the door for all of us. He is our life and as our life we should honor Him so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

And this is the point of it all. The point of it all speaking about who Jesus is, He is our Lord. The reason we have learned why He is preeminent over all creation. The reason why we have learned He is in the image of the invisible God. And the reason why He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. It's for the reason for Him having first place in everything. If it wasn't for who He is then why not let someone else have first place? But because of who Jesus is, He deserves first place.

So hopefully we're not like the multitudes with palm branches wondering what exactly they are doing, thinking they are doing something, honoring somebody but not really getting it. Hopefully we will see Jesus as being who He is as revealed to us. The Creator, the image of the invisible God, the Deliver, the Redeemer, the head of the church having first place in everything. So that we can recognize Him having first place in our lives. He has that rightful place as well. We cannot take it away from Him. He is that. It's a matter for us to recognize it.

So this is why we can say it is imperative that we realize who Christ is so that we may respond to Him accordingly. We have to respond to Him according to who He is. And that is the first step of spiritual growth. That we can see who Christ is and then through the rest of this book we will be developing how to respond to Him.

Lets pray. Lord, we thank You for coming to us, for giving us the revelation of Yourself, that we can embrace You, know You and respond to You as the only begotten Son of God. Having that rightful place, the first place in everything. We thank You for the knowledge of this and we pray for each one here that You would be having first place in everything. In Jesus name Amen.