

## Lesson Fifty-one

# Colossians

	Christ Is Our Lord		... Our Life	... Our Love
	Lord of creation	Lord of our walk	Our mind	Love for "outsiders"
	Lord of the church	Lord of our salvation	Our body	Love for believers
	Lord of ministry	Lord of our growth	Our attitude	
			Our actions	
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
<b>Subject</b>	Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
<b>Christ</b>	His person and work		His peace and presence	
<b>Emphasis</b>	Doctrinal and corrective		Practical and reassuring	
<b>Theme</b>	Christ is our supreme Lord and sufficient Savior.			
<b>Key Verses</b>	2:9-10			
<b>Christ in Colossians</b>	Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and the world, the all-sufficient Savior in whom the fullness of Deity dwells (1:13-20; 2:9).			

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**Author:** There are three personal first-person references in this letter that identify Paul as its author (1:1, 1:23, and 4:18). There are several references to known associates of Paul as well. The language and content are very similar to that of Ephesians and, in fact, many scholars believe Tychicus delivered them both (see Eph. 6:21 and Col. 4:7). Therefore, it is generally accepted that the apostle Paul wrote this letter from his prison cell in Rome, making it another of the "prison epistles" we find in the New Testament.

**Audience:** The city of Colossae was not really that important in the Roman empire. It was in the Lycus valley, about 100 miles east of the city of Ephesus and was overshadowed by the nearby cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea.

A man by the name of Epaphras preached the Gospel there while Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (see 1:7). At the time of this writing, Paul apparently had never visited Colossae, but had only heard of them (1:4,9). Epaphras came to Paul while he was in Rome and told him of the presence of false teachers who had infiltrated the church and were about to destroy it. Paul wrote a letter to them with the help of his administrative assistant, Timothy, who was there with him at the time.

**Occasion:** There was a false teaching in Colossae that later developed into what is known as Gnosticism. There were four primary issues which the false teachers were promoting in Colossae that Paul addressed:

- (1) The necessity of observing all Old Testament laws and ceremonies.
- (2) The emphasis on a "deeper," special knowledge that wasn't available to everyone. The perfection of the special few who had this deeper understanding.
- (3) The worship of angels as mediators to God.
- (4) Denial of the deity of Christ.

**Key Text:** *"And He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy." Colossians 1:18*

Paul reiterates throughout this book the absolute supremacy of Christ over everything else.

## *The True Jesus* *Colossians 1:15-20*

Likely we are all familiar with the word “theology.” It is a combination of two Greek words: *theos* which means God and *logos* which means “word.” Theology consists of words about God, or the study of God. Under the umbrella of theology, however, there are many other “ologies.” *Eschatology* is the study of end times. *Ecclesiology* is the study of the church. *Christology* is just what it sounds like – the study of Christ. This is the most important topic in Christianity because it is the foundation of all we believe.

False teachers were teaching the Colossians that Jesus was not really the Son of God. This debated rages even to today. Paul wrote to address this heresy and gave us a clear picture of the true Jesus. Who is Jesus?

### I. JESUS IS THE PICTURE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (v. 15)

A. The Greek word for “image” here is the word *eikon*. We’ve changed the spelling to “icon” but we all know what that is. We all have icons on our cell phones and our computers: they are little pictures that represent something else.

B. No one knows exactly what God looks like because no one has seen God. However, God wanted to reveal Himself to us in a tangible way, so He did that by putting on flesh and coming to earth to be one of us. Nobody has ever seen God, but lots of people saw Jesus – and when they saw Jesus, they saw God in human form. That is what Jesus said in John 14:9 when He said “anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

### II. JESUS IS PREEMINENT IN CREATION (v. 15b-17)

A. Paul declares that He is “firstborn over all creation.” Some take this as a proof-text to say that Jesus isn’t God – that He was the first thing God created. But that is contrary to the actual point Paul makes in this passage. There are two understandings of “firstborn.”

1. One way is first in chronological order.
2. The other is first in rank, first in authority. Paul isn’t saying that Jesus was the first thing God created; He is saying that Jesus is first in authority over all that has been created.

B. After establishing that Jesus is first in authority over all creation, the Scripture elaborates as to why this is true:

1. He created all things (v. 16) – in the Genesis account of creation, the Bible says “Let us make man in our image.” Jesus was present at creation. John 1:3 says of Jesus, “Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”

2. He is before all things (v. 17) - don’t make the mistake of believing Jesus came into existence when He was born in Bethlehem. The Bible teaches us that Jesus is eternally existent. He only took the form of man at Bethlehem, but when challenged by the Pharisees, Jesus said “Before Abraham, I AM!”

3. He sustains all things (v. 18) - The second law of thermodynamics states that any closed system, left to itself, will tend toward greater randomness. If everything were created in a big bang, and then left to itself, what sustains this universe? Scientists tell us that the nucleus of an atom contains eight positively charged protons and eight negatively charged neutrons. Like opposite poles of a magnet, they should be repelling away from each other. Yet scientists have noted there is an “unknown strong force” which holds everything together. It may be unknown to scientists, but it is not unknown to us as believers – Jesus is the strong force holding the universe together. He sustains all things.

### III. JESUS IS POSITIONED AS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (v. 18-20)

A. Each week as we recite the Apostle’s Creed, we acknowledge our belief in the “universal” or “catholic” church. Think of all the millions of believers over all the earth. Who is the head of these? It is Jesus Christ. It is upon this rock that the entire church is built.

B. What is His role as head of the church? To reconcile others to Himself through His blood shed on the cross. Without Jesus, there would be no hope of being reconciled to God. There is no other name under heaven whereby we are saved than the name of Jesus.