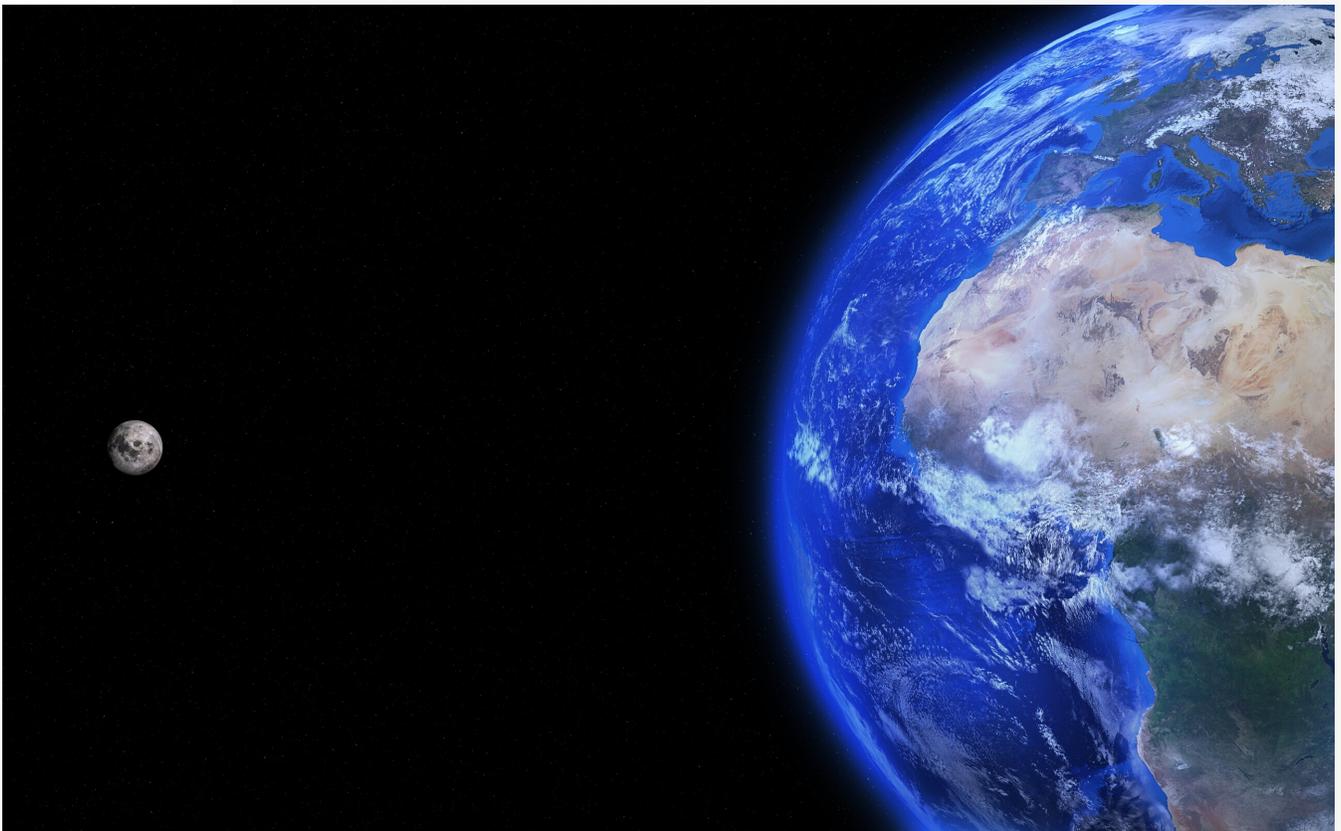


COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

RESTORING THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST TO OUR WORLDVIEW



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

How do you view the world? What do you see first and most when you view the world? Is it President Trump? Is it the USA as the world's only superpower? Is it yourself? Or is it the Lord Jesus first and most?

How do you view the church? What do you think of first and most when you think of the church? A pastor? Or is it an organization? Or is it your role and place in the church? Or do you see the Lord Jesus first and most?

How do you view heaven? What do you think of first and most when you think of heaven? Is it loved ones? Is it yourself? Or is it the Lord Jesus first and most?

These three questions about how we view the world, the church, and heaven reveal something don't they? They reveal that Christ is not always supreme in our world view. He's not what we see first and most when we view the world.

Effects

What happens when Christ is not supreme in our worldview?

- Christ-consciousness shrinks when we don't see Christ in the first creation (the world)
- Christ-worship shrinks when we don't see Christ in the re-creation (the church)
- Christ-hope shrinks when we don't see Christ in the new creation (heaven)

Solution?

There is a way to restore the supremacy of Christ and so rebuild Christ-consciousness, Christ-worship, and Christ-hope. Let's look at three areas in which Paul helped the Colossians recover the supremacy of Christ, so that we can get help too.

CONTEXT

Background

The Know-it-alls (Gnostics) demoted Christ and promoted other ways to get to God. They said Christ was not enough. As a result, Christ was not supreme in the Colossians' worldview. Christ was squeezed out of (or down in) their world view and others were taking his place. This damaged their view of creation, the church, and the consummation (heaven).

Chapter

Paul's prayer, starting in verse 9, began to address this by describing what Christ had done. Verses 13 and 14 introduced us to God's salvation and to the kingdom of the Son of his love. In verses 15-20, we learn about this King, about who Christ is. The Apostle offers further descriptions of Christ to restore him to the place of supremacy in the Colossians' worldview (18).



**Where then do we see Christ's supremacy?
We begin with Christ's place in and relationship to this world.**



1. CHRIST IS SUPREME IN THE FIRST CREATION (15-17)

Christ is the beginning of all things

(15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (16) For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him.

Christ is the image of the invisible God: God made humanity in his own image (Gen. 1:27). But before there was a human being with his image, there was a divine being with his image (John 1:14; 14:9). Humanity made in the image of God was the high point of creation. But there was an even higher point before creation. As the image of God, Christ is the one who makes the invisible visible, who makes the unknowable knowable.

Christ is the firstborn over all creation: If "image of the invisible God" describes the Son's relation to God the Father, "firstborn over all creation" describes his relation to the world. In the Old Testament, the word "firstborn" is used for first in status or love (Ex. 4:22) and first in power (Ps. 89:27). In New Testament Greek, the word for "firstborn" indicates priority and sovereignty. This phrase therefore means Christ is before all creation and over all creation. He has primacy and authority. The Know-it-alls viewed Christ as one of many created powers that could be used to get to God. No, says Paul, Christ is not a mere creature. As Creator, he has primacy and authority.

Christ is the Creator of all things: Why is Christ "the firstborn of every creature"? Why does he have primacy and authority over all creatures? Because he is the Creator of them all. Because "by him were all things created" (16). He created all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible (John 1:3). Paul then lists some of the alleged intermediaries the Know-it-alls promoted – thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. If Christ made all these things, he cannot be part of the all things he made. If Christ made them all, he is above them all.

Christ is the end of all things

(16) All things were created...for him.

All things were not only created by him, but for him. He is the destination of all things. The end of all things is his supreme glory. He is related to everything and everything is related to him. He is connected to everything and everything is connected to him. Just as all creation went out from him, so all creation will return to him. He is Lord of everything and everything will serve him.

Christ holds together all things

(17) He is before all things and in him all things consist.

“Consist” means “held together.” Christ did not make everything and then walk away from it. He continues to hold it all together (Heb. 1:3). Without him, things would utterly fall apart. He sustains everything. He is not only God’s agent of creation but also of providence.

Notice these key prepositions: **by** him, **for** him, and **in** him. Christ is not just an emanation from God, or a creature of God, as the Know-it-alls said. He really is God.

APPLICATION

♥ As a creature of Christ, you were created by him, and for him, and you and your world are held together by him. Does he have priority and supremacy in your life? He is a great and glorious God who made you to end in him and who holds all of you together. He sustains you and supports you in order that you end in him. Will you fulfill the reason for your existence? From him, for him, in him.

♥ “My Creator, help me to see you first and most. Fill my worldview with yourself. I worship you as the great and glorious Christ who is the beginning of all things, the end of all things, and who holds all things together.

♥ Try to see more of Christ in the big things (e.g. Presidential politics, coronavirus, etc.) and the small things (e.g. personal sanity, daily safety, etc. Why not keep a log for a week and note every time you manage to think of Christ in the big things and small things. This will increase your Christ-awareness.

IF CHRIST IS NOT FIRST AND MOST IN YOUR WORLD,
THEN YOU ARE LAST AND LOST IN THE WORLD.

📍 **But the first creation is broken and dysfunctional. Can Christ do anything about that?**
Yes, Christ is re-creating this broken world in and through his church. ➔

2. CHRIST IS SUPREME IN THE RE-CREATION (18)

(18) He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence.

Christ is the head of the church

This move from the creation to the church is not a let-down; it's not a move from the greater to the lesser, the bigger to the smaller. No, the creation exists for the sake of the church. The church is more important and more lasting than the creation.

Christ, as head of creation, created humanity in the world. So Christ, as head of the church is recreating humanity in the church. He is re-making humanity and human society in the church. He is therefore not only supreme in the old creation but also in this re-creation.

Isn't that an amazing view of the church. Here's a new perspective for you. Christ is re-making humanity and human society here. But think also what an encouragement to the little house-church in Colossae. They were at the center of Christ's re-creation. They were connected to him, not just as Creator, but as Re-creator.

Christ is the life of the church

What does "firstborn from the dead" mean? Christ was not the first chronologically to rise from the dead. However, these previous resurrections were more like resuscitations, because they did not rise free of death, but rather rose to die again. They regained life, but it was the same life, a life that would eventually die again. Christ's resurrection was the first real resurrection in that he rose never to die again. He rose with the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:16; 1:18).

This is the second occurrence of "firstborn" in this passage. Christ is the life of the old creation and of the re-creation. The power of his creation and resurrection flows into the church.

The aim is that Christ will "have the preeminence in **all** things." The all-ness and the enough-ness of Christ is underlined with repeated "all" (15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20).

APPLICATION

♥ If Christ made you, he can re-make you. Pray for that. And be in the place where he does that re-creating—his church. How much do you really want a new life? How often are you in the place where new life is given?

♥ God's purpose in the creation and the re-creation is "...that in all things Christ may have the preeminence" (18). Does he? Is that what this church is all about.

♥ Instead of listening to talk-radio why not listen to praise songs when you travel. That will increase Christ-worship in your life and in the church

**CHRIST WILL NOT BE SUPREME IN YOUR HEART,
IF THE CHURCH IS NOT SUPREME IN YOUR LIFE**



**But the church is also broken and dysfunctional. Can Christ do anything about that?
For that we must look to the new creation.**



3. CHRIST IS SUPREME IN THE NEW CREATION (19-20)

However supreme Christ has been in the first creation and the re-creation, his supremacy will be seen most clearly in the new creation – heaven. Some take these verses to refer to Christ's person and work in the past. However, the description of the reconciliation of all things in verse 20 points towards the new heaven and the new earth when this old world is all packed up and finished.

Christ is the fulness of God

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell (19).

"Fullness" could refer to Christ's incarnation and how the totality of God was united with the totality of humanity (Col. 2:9). But this full humanity and deity continues for all eternity and, in contrast to his earthly existence, it is fully manifested and fully recognized by all the inhabitants of heaven.

The Know-it-alls used this word "fulness" to denote the totality of the many thousands of emanations from God and intermediaries with God. Paul says, "No. Christ is not a part of such a fulness. All the fulness is in Christ." The complete and total Godhead is in him and will be in him forever. The plenitude, the totality of all divine powers and attributes is his. "Dwell" refers to permanent location and residence. There is no jealousy in the Godhead. The Father was pleased that his fulness is also fully in Christ and ever will be.

Christ is the reconciler to God

...and by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross (20).

The first creation was ruptured and divided from God by sin. But it is being repaired and re-created through the blood of Christ's cross (Rom. 8:19-22). He is healing and reuniting the world to God (Eph. 1:9-10).

How does he do this? His past reconciliation at the cross is the basis for all future reconciliation. We can look ahead to a world characterized by reconciliation to and peace with God because his cross reconciled and made peace with God.

Does this mean that all people will eventually be reconciled to God. No, those who remain unreconciled in this world will remain unreconciled in hell. They will not be part of the new heavens and the new earth, the new creation. Not one part of Christ's new creation will be opposed to him.

Christ's death has cosmic consequences. His death in history transforms eternity. His death in the world creates a new world of life. The fulness of God dwelt in him so that the fulness of God would fill the world (Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3).

The Know-it-alls offered partial reconciliation through various mediators via various other-worldly dramas. Christ secures world-reconciliation through himself via his historical death on the cross.

This is why believers have been writing songs like these for centuries:

Psalm 98

Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth;
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.
Sing to the Lord with the harp,
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,
With trumpets and the sound of a horn;
Shout joyfully before the Lord, the King.

Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell in it;
Let the rivers clap their hands;
Let the hills be joyful together
before the Lord,
For He is coming to judge the earth.
With righteousness
He shall judge the world,
And the peoples with equity.

Joy to the World

No more let sins and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

King of Kings

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in Your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake You died.

So Will I

If the stars were made to worship
so will I.
If the mountains bow in reverence
so will I.
If the oceans roar Your greatness
so will I.
For if everything exists to lift You high
so will I.
If the wind goes where You send it
so will I.
If the rocks cry out in silence
so will I.
If the sum of all our praises still
falls shy,
Then we'll sing again a hundred
billion times.

APPLICATION

♥ God is pleased with Christ's fullness and friendliness. Are you?
"Great God, I am your foe not your friend. I am full of myself rather than being full of Christ. Make me a friend of Christ and full of Christ so that I may have a future with Christ in the new creation."

♥ You already enjoy Christ's fullness and friendliness through the cross. But you can look forward to fuller fullness and fuller friendliness in the future new creation.

♥ Increase your Christ-hope by looking forward to being "face to face" with Christ (1 Cor. 13:12)

THE BEST ON THIS EARTH IS
EMPTINESS AND NOTHINGNESS,
BUT CHRIST IN HEAVEN IS
FULLNESS AND ENOUGHNESS



Do you see how Christ will be first and most in heaven
Let's sum up Christ's firstness and mostness in every dimension.



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [Take a Hike: Rediscovering God's Grandeur in Nature](#) by Chad Ashby
- [Clyde Kilby's Resolutions for Mental Health and for Staying Alive to God in Nature](#) by John Piper
- [Creation and the Trinity Stand Together](#) by Aaron Armstrong

Book

- [Eyes Wide Open: Enjoying God in Everything](#) by Steve DeWitt
- [God's Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation](#) by Jonathan Wilson
- [Why God Created the World: A Jonathan Edwards Adaptation](#) by Ben Stevens
- [The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World](#) by John Piper and others

Discussion Questions

- What do you see first and most when you view the world/the church/heaven?
- How can you restore and increase Christ's supremacy in your life?
- How would you use Colossians 1:15-16 to prove the deity of Christ against cults who use it to say Christ is just a creature?
- What would daily life look like if Christ stopped holding all things together?
- How can we make Christ pre-eminent in the church?
- Describe Christ's role in the new creation and what that will look like.
- How can you use this sermon to increase your worship of Christ?

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