

The Preeminent Christ

Colossians 1:13-20

Introduction

St. Paul says at the end of **verse 18** that Christ is preeminent, which means, “surpassing all others; very distinguished in some way.” In **verses 15-18**, he tells us how Christ surpasses everything. In **verse 19**, he tells us what distinguishes Him or sets Him apart. And in **verses 13-14** and **20**, he tells us what this means for us.

How Christ Surpasses All Things (v. 15-18)

St. Paul tells us seven things about Christ that show how He surpasses all things.

The Image of God

Man was created in the image of God, but Christ *is* the image of God. *Jesus said “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9)*. Since the Father is invisible, the church fathers taught that we can only see the Father in the works and words of Jesus. Through the Incarnation, He was the manifestation of God upon the earth.

Firstborn of All Creation

To say He is the *firstborn of all creation* (v. 15) doesn’t mean He is part of creation. The firstborn Son is the heir. As Paul says a little later, *all things were created for Him* (v. 16). All creation belongs to Him.

Creator of All Things

All things were created by Him. Things in the heavens and things on earth, things visible and things invisible. Of course, He didn’t create evil. Evil is the absence of God. God did not create anything opposed to His character. Lucifer was an angel who wanted to be God. When his coup failed, he was kicked out of heaven along with all the angels that had followed him. When Adam and Eve yielded to his temptation, this brought sin into the world and corrupted everything that God had made.

Before All Things

According to Theodoret of Cyr, *when Paul says, He is before all things* (v. 17), *this means that He is not only the Maker of all, but also He manages the care of what He has made and governs the creature, which exists by His wisdom and power*. God didn’t create the world and then let it go on its own. He still watches over it and governs it.

Holds All Things Together

Ambrosiaster says: *Everything holds together in Him because without Him they are nothing*. All of creation is dependent upon God because God made it all out of nothing, by the power of His Word, through the working of His will.

The Head of the Church

Christ is *the Head of the body, the church (v. 18)*. This is good to remember at our congregational voters' meeting and at all Board meetings. When we make decisions regarding His church, we must remember He is in charge. It is, after all, His church.

The Firstborn of the Dead

It is obvious that the *firstborn from the dead (v. 18)* is referring to the resurrection. But it means more than Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead to eternal life. He is the Author of life and gives new life in the Spirit.

Christ is the image of the Father. Through the Incarnation, He was the earthly manifestation of the Father. He is the Creator of all things. So, all things belong to Him, He continues to care for creation, and all creation is dependent upon Him. He is the Head of the Church and the Author and Giver of life. All this is how Christ surpasses all things.

What Distinguishes Christ (v. 19)

The Fullness of God Dwells in Him – *For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (v. 19)*. This is what we affirm in the Nicene Creed: Jesus is *God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1)*. What distinguishes Christ, what sets Him apart from all else is that He is the Second Person of the Trinity. He is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is God!

What This Means for Us (v. 13-14, 20)

Redemption – According to **verses 13-14**, God the Father has forgiven our sins, redeemed us, and transferred us from darkness to light through His Son. Through God's Son we have redemption.

Reconciliation – **Verse 20** says that the Father has reconciled us to Himself through His Son by the blood of His cross. This is the heart of the matter. Jesus is great; He is the Son of God; He is preeminent; He is all this and more. But what makes all this worth talking about is what He did. He went to the cross and died in our place. He paid the price for our sins, so we can be redeemed. He took our place and made satisfaction for our sins, so we can be reconciled to the Father and at peace with Him. Sin causes discord and strife. But the greatest discord is between us and God. By Jesus blood, that discord is done away with as our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled to the Father.

Means of Grace

This is all available to us through the means of grace. He comes to us in His Word, giving us faith and forgiveness. In Holy Baptism, He gives us faith and washes away our sins. As we receive His body and blood in Holy Communion, He gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation. This is what the **PREEMINENT CHRIST** has done for us.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
