

THE MANY ROLES OF CHRIST.

Text: Colossians 1:15-20.

Delivered on: November 25, 2012. Streetsboro.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The book of Colossians was written by the apostle Paul to confront a series of errors that were being taught in the churches of Colossae.
2. Among other things, false teachers were evidently teaching that salvation was not through Christ alone but that it was also the work of angels and other spiritual beings.
3. In other words, they believed that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was not sufficient in and of itself.
4. Paul sets out to prove this teaching false.
5. He points out that it is through Christ that we all can receive forgiveness. *Colossians 1:13-14*. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, **14** in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.
6. He then goes on to firmly establish the superiority of Christ.
7. Today, let us note some of the phrases he uses to describe Jesus.

BODY.

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. Verse 15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

On the one hand, we know that no man has seen God at any time.

1. *Exodus 13:18-23*. And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." **19** Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." **20** But He said, "**You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.**" **21** And the Lord said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. **22** So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. **23** Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; **but My face shall not be seen.**"
2. *1 Timothy 6:16*. Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.
3. *John 1:18*. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Yet, Jesus is described as the image (icon) of the invisible God.

1. An interesting play on words.
2. God, the Father, has appeared to us in the Person of His Son, Jesus.
3. Hence, He is called, "The Word." *John 1:1-2*. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God.
4. *John 14:8-11*. Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." **9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. **11** Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.
5. *Hebrews 1:1-3*. God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, **2** has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; **3** who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high
6. The Devil does all that he can to blind the world to this fact. *2 Corinthians 4:4-5*. Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of

- Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. **5** For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.
7. If we desire to know about the Father, we simply must look to Christ. **John 1:18**. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has declared Him**.

THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION. Verse 15-16. 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.

Many false doctrines have arisen from the phrase "Firstborn over all creation..."

1. This has led some to (incorrectly) believe that Jesus was the first thing that God created.
2. Verse 16 shows us that Jesus is the Creator of all things.
3. Everything that was created, was created by Him.
4. **John 1:3**. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
5. He could not have created Himself!
6. Therefore, Jesus is not a created Being.
7. **John 8:58**. Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

The difficulty is resolved when we realize that the word "firstborn" is not always talking about chronological order of birth.

1. A more common uses was to emphasize someone's supremacy.
2. We see this usage in regard to David in **Psalms 89:27**. Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.
3. So, calling Jesus the firstborn over all creation is referring to His supremacy over all creation.
4. Additionally, this is also the meaning of the word...
 - a) "Beginning" in verse 18. *Arche* - chief.
 - b) "Preeminence" in verse 18. *Proteuo* - first in rank.
5. His supremacy over all creation is established by the fact that He is the Creator. **Verse 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.
6. **Hebrews 3:3-4**. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. **4** For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.

His authority and supremacy extends to both heaven and earth.

1. **Matthew 28:18**. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
2. **Hebrews 1:3-4**. Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

THE SUSTAINER. Verse 17. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Not only is Jesus the Creator of all things, He is also the Sustainer of all things.

1. Literally, Verse 17 says that "all things stand together."
2. Creation continues to exist because Jesus upholds it.

Hebrews 1:3. Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

He will continue to uphold all things until He returns. **2 Peter 3:7**. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

THE HEAD OF THE BODY. Verse 18. And 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.

The body is the church. *Colossians 1:24.* I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church

Not only is He supreme over all physical creation; He also is head over His spiritual kingdom.

1. **John 18:36.** Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”
2. **Daniel 7:13-14.** “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. **14** Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

There is only one...

1. Body. *Ephesians 4:4.* There is one **body** and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
2. Head. *Ephesians 4:5.* One **Lord**, one faith, one baptism;
3. Standard by which we are judged. *Ephesians 4:5.* One Lord, one **faith**, one baptism;

THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD. Verse 18. And 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.

Here, the term “firstborn” is used in both of the ways discussed earlier.

1. He was chronologically the first to be raised never to die again.
2. His resurrection was also the first in order of importance as well.

Why is Jesus’ resurrection so important?

1. By it He was declared to be the Son of God. *Romans 1:4.* And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.
2. **1 Corinthians 15:17-19.** And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! **18** Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.
 - a) If Jesus is not raised, then we are still in our sins.
 - b) If Jesus is not raised, then all those who have already died, are lost for all eternity.
 - c) We are indeed in a pitiable state.
3. His resurrection foreshadows our own. **1 Corinthians 15:51-54.** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54** So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

CONCLUSION.

1. He is the Image of the invisible God.
2. He is the Firstborn over all creation.
3. He is the Sustainer of all creation.
4. He is the Head of the Body.
5. He is the Firstborn from the dead.
6. He is our Savior!
7. Obey Him!