

The Heart and Soul of Christianity

Colossians 1:15-20

In my very limited introduction to piano lessons back in 1959 I attempted to play this song “Heart & Soul.”

My attempts at “Heart and Soul” never sounded like that.

These short 6 verses in **Colossians 1:15-20** are the heart and soul, the life-blood, the uncompromising foundation of Christianity!

The Preeminence of Christ

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

These six verses 15 through 20, spell out in clear language who and what Jesus really is.

If you have any questions about what Jesus is, this passage ought to clear it up.

These six verses are really the core of what Christianity is: it’s what sets us apart from every other religion they are like a line drawn in the sand between those who are saved and those who are not.

These words paint a picture of Jesus that is higher and loftier than most of us ever consider, they make claims that go beyond any easy

understanding of Christ, and they challenge us to make a stand for Jesus that goes beyond any easy decision.

If the world is right about Jesus then he's just another religious choice on the **buffet line of world religion: you can take a little scoop of Jesus or a little slice of Buddha.**

If the world is right about Jesus then he is merely the best man who ever lived and a pretty good guy to identify with.

If the world is right then Jesus is just like us humans and no more: just another prophet offering one of many ways to get to God

However this passage is right about Jesus.

He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life: there is no other name under heaven by which to be saved.

This passage is right when it states that Jesus is like no other human who walked this earth.

This passage is right so we should not just respect and admire Jesus as a great teacher, philosopher, and guide; no, we should get on our face before him in utmost worship and adoration.

In this passage we see that he is not our buddy, our homeboy, or our friend:

- instead we will see that he is the one who created us,**
- who gives us each breath,**
- who saved us on the cross,**
- who guides us today,**
- and who will one day return to judge every soul.**

In fact, these verses explain what might be the most important aspect of Christianity:

Colossians 1:15-20 is what makes **Christianity the one true religion, the only way to be saved**, instead of just a philosophy or a way of life.

Was Jesus a great example to follow? Sure he was.

Was he a great teacher? You bet.

Could you turn his teachings into a philosophy to follow? Yup.

Is he our friend? Better than any friend you could ever ask for, who not only lived for you but died for you.

Did he do incredible, even miraculous things in his life? He sure did!

But all those things fall short of who he really is!

Why is it so important that we really understand who Jesus is?

I saw a great example of this in the paper.

They were interviewing a Muslim man and asked him what the difference was **between Islam and Christianity**.

He declared that there really was no difference, just that one group worshiped God and the other worshiped Allah.

In fact, he pointed out that the Muslims consider Jesus to be a prophet and hold him with great respect.

I'm sure that a lot of people read that and breathed a sigh of relief, glad to know that there was not that much difference between us and the Muslims.

But, that man could not have been more wrong about Jesus.

And that makes all the difference.

There is a HUGE difference between Christianity and Islam, and it all centers on WHO Jesus is.

Sure, Jesus is a prophet, but he's that and so much more, and that's what separates us from the Muslims, and every other religion as well.

A Muslim would agree with us that he is a prophet, but they would never agree that he is also God, the one and only Savior, and the soon to return judge.

Jesus is not just the poster-boy for a world religion, he is the Creator of the world and the only way that a person can be saved.

The Muslim man thought highly of Jesus, but he did not worship him as God, and that makes all the difference.

But the Muslims are not the only ones who fall short on this point.

Every other world religion falls short of declaring that Jesus is God and the only way to eternal life has fallen short of understanding who Jesus is.

Everyone who claims to be a Christian but who fails to understand that Jesus is more than our example or guide has fallen short of understanding who Jesus is.

Every liberal denomination that teaches that Jesus is just one of many ways to be saved has fallen short of understanding who Jesus is.

Every person who claims that Jesus is their Lord yet fails to let Jesus truly rule in their life has fallen short of understanding who Jesus is.

Every cult that declares that Jesus is less than God has fallen short of understanding who Jesus is; even if they make him the best human that ever lived, they have fallen short.

And since Jesus is God, making Jesus less than God is blaspheming the name of God; making Jesus something other than God.

It is to create a false idol; failing to worship Jesus is failing to make God first in your life.

It is so important that we get our view of Jesus right, because everything else hinges on who Jesus is.

If he was anything less than the Creator God then his death on the cross would not be sufficient to save us and we would remain in our sins.

Paul writes these words in Colossians to make it very clear exactly who and what Jesus is.

So, what DOES the bible say that Jesus is?

First, he is God: 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Verse 15 begins by telling us that Jesus is the very image of the invisible God. The Greek word for image is *eikon* which is where we get the English word “**icon**” which is a symbol that represents a reality.

Jesus, then, is God in the flesh: he is the very image of God in all of God’s fullness.

He is not just a prophet of God,
a teacher of God,

or a way to God,
he is the very fullness of God.

Paul goes on to say in verse **19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.**

When we see Jesus, we do not just see a Godly person, we see God himself.

There is one God, yet God is comprised of three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All three persons are equally God and they are all God.

Yes, that's hard to understand, but it's crucial to our faith.

One way that may make it easier to understand is to think of a man with a son: he is one person, yet at the same time he is a son of his father, a father to his son, and a husband to his wife.

All three roles are different, yet he is still one person

Jesus was not just SENT from God, he IS God in human form.

Jesus made it very clear that when you saw Jesus you were looking at God the Father, for they are the same.

Philippians 2:6-7 says that Jesus, 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Jesus is God: when he was on earth he was not just a human, he was God in human form. The Gospel of John says this poetically in **John 1:14: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

This is so crucial to our understanding for a number of reasons.

Peter said in **Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**”

A lot of New Age people today will tell you that it doesn't matter whether you worship Jesus or Buddha or Allah just so you seek God.

Yet by Jesus' claims it DOES matter, for he is the only way that we can be saved. **Jesus himself said that he is THE way, THE truth, and THE life.**

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Verse 16 makes it very clear: Jesus was not created.

Since Jesus is God, he has always existed.

He was not created by God one millisecond after Creation, he always was, since he is God.

So, how do we understand verse 15 that says that Jesus is **“the firstborn over all creation”**?

To be the “firstborn over all creation” does not mean, like some cults will tell you, that Jesus is the first person born in creation.

Instead, it is referring to the custom in ancient times that declared the most honored son to be the firstborn with the most honor given to him.

Abraham blessed Isaac.

Now, normally the son who was given the most honor and the right of inheritance was the first one who was born.

To say that Jesus is the “firstborn” just means that he is the one who will inherit all creation and who is the exalted one over all that there is.

Verse 17 points out the folly of worshipping anything other than Jesus:

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

You see, Jesus is not just another God among many, he is the one and only true God.

After all the false gods go by the wayside and are destroyed in fire Jesus will remain.

What does this mean for us?

Well, think about how many times you have had people ask you why we Christians think that of all the world religions that ours is the right one?

How often have you had people smugly tell you that while they respect our religion they think that theirs is just as good?

Have you ever had anyone get mad at you for insisting that Christianity is the only way?

In the end, everyone will have to decide whether Jesus really is God or not, but according to what the bible says, **Jesus is THE ONLY GOD.**

He is not one choice among many, he is the creator God.

I want this to be clear.

The claims that the bible makes about Jesus are bigger than **the universe**.

You don't have to believe them, but if you claim to believe the bible you must acknowledge that the bible claims that Jesus is God, the creator God, the one and only God.

Disbelieve him if you must, but don't cheapen him by claiming that we can choose God like people choose a political party or a favorite brand of laundry detergent.

He is either the Creator God or the bible is false: we can't have it both ways.

And that brings us to our final aspect of Christ.

Not only is he the image of God in all its fullness, not only is he the creator of the universe, he is also:

18 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.

The rest of the book of Colossians will hinge on this truth: **Jesus is the head of the church.**

Not only did he begin the church, he is also the living head of the church who we seek to listen to, worship, honor and obey.

Therefore, for the Christian he is our beginning, since he created us, he is our end, since he will resurrect us, and he is our middle, since he reigns over us now.

He is not a martyr who left us an example in his death, he is a living God who reigns on high to this day, guiding and leading those who are truly his church.

There are many Christians who claim that Jesus is the one and only God who created the universe, but they fail to let Jesus be their Lord by obeying him in their life.

It does us little good if we have all of our theology and doctrine about Jesus right if we do not let him be the Lord in our life.

Since Jesus is the head of the church then that means that we should be guided by Jesus in everything that we do.

A church that does not believe in the bible is not guided by Jesus, the author of the bible.

A church that does not teach and preach the bible is not being the mouth of Jesus.

A church that does not witness to the lost and the hurting is not letting the head guide it.

A church that promotes sin and rebellion by calling sinful things permissible is not under the headship of Christ.

How sad that we might have all of our theology about Jesus right but then be found lacking because we were not guided by our head: Jesus Christ.

From this moment forward you and I are without excuse claiming that we never knew or heard this truth about Jesus.

We have seen the picture of Jesus and I hope you realize that it is a picture bigger than anything we can imagine.

We like to put Jesus in a little box, thinking that we have him all figured out.

Yet Jesus is bigger than our thoughts, bigger than our imagination, bigger than our conceptions.

I'm afraid that in our desire to make Jesus understandable we have made him smaller than he really is.

He is not just a prophet.

He is not just our buddy in heaven.

He is not just a good example for us to follow.

He is not just one path to God among many.

No, he is the very image of God.

The fullness of God dwells in him.

He is the Creator of the universe.

He is the head of the church.

He is the Lord of the Christian.

He is the ONLY way by which we can be saved.

He is the way, the truth, and the life.

He created us in the beginning.

He guides us in the present.

He will resurrect us in the future.

Listen to the last two verses of our passage,

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on

earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

It was in Jesus that God came to earth to reconcile to himself every sinner who would believe in him, so that through him we could have peace with God through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross.

No mere man could do that.

There could be no other way that this could have been done.

It took God coming to earth, paying our penalty with his own life.

Here is the only question worth asking?

Who is Jesus to you?

I hope he's not just a historical figure, a guy that you look up to, or just a name that you sing about on Sundays.

He is the one we are to live for. He is the one we serve. He is the only one we worship.

Yellow Card

I will print Colossians 1:15-20 on paper, hang it and work to memorize it by the end of this month.

I will pray these verses back to Jesus every day this week acknowledging that he is the image of the invisible God, he is the creator of all things, he holds all things together, he is the head of the church, he is the beginning and the end, he is the reconciler.

I pledge before the Triune God that Jesus is the one and only Savior and that I will acknowledge him as Lord everyday of my life.

