

Jesus Is Lord

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[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians 1, verses 15 through 23.

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But despite their differences, they both shared the same core belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that person is saved by faith in Him and in Him alone.

[2 : 14] I remember after my first semester at Midwestern, I needed a job. And so I applied for a bunch of youth pastor positions at a bunch of different churches that belong to many different denominations.

And I did so with the belief that they all shared the same core beliefs that my upbringing in the Nazarene Church and in my seminary training shared.

And I was wrong. I remember in one of those John interviews, I was asked by the senior pastor of the church to tell me, tell him who I believed that Jesus was.

And that to me seemed like a softball question. You know, you can't mess that one up. And so I quoted Jesus' own words from John chapter 14, verse 6.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Remember, the pastor, you know, you heard that. He kind of sat back and pulled his arms.

[3 : 24] And he had a smirk on his face. And he asked me, what if you die and instead of being met by Jesus, you are met by Shiva or Vishnu or Buddha?

And looking back on it now, I guess I could have said, well, that would mean that I would be in hell and not in heaven. And that wasn't my answer, but I knew that he was saying what he meant to say is that he believed that all roads led to heaven, that there was no such thing as hell.

And his question shocked me. But I didn't say that I knew that wasn't possible. If all roads lead to heaven, then that would mean that Jesus was a liar and that the Bible can't be trusted.

And when I said that, he did shrug his shoulders and proceeded to explain to me that he did not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.

And I walked away from that interview with the realization that not everyone who claims to follow Christ is following the same Christ.

[4 : 42] So Nick did a great job for us last week explaining the context and the occasion which prompted Paul to write this letter to the church in Colossae. Paul did not plant this church.

In fact, he had never even been to this church. It's most likely that Epaphras, who was likely saved by Paul while he was ministering in Ephesus, was the one who started this church in Colossae.

And at some point, a dangerous heresy arose in the church that was threatening and was harmful. And it prompted Epaphras to visit Paul, who was a prisoner in Rome, and to explain to him the situation that this is what's going on in Colossae.

Paul, prompted and inspired by the Holy Spirit, offered this letter, which Epaphras then took back with him and was used to combat the false teachers and the heretical teachings that they were espousing in the church.

What was the heresy that these false teachers were proclaiming? Well, as Nick made abundantly clear last week, it was not Gnosticism, though it did contain beliefs that Gnosticism would later adopt.

[6 : 02] But we can piece together and reconstruct what the false doctrines were based upon how Paul repudiated each of those teachings in his letter.

One of the false doctrines was the belief that God is good, or spirit is good, but matter, flesh, is evil. And they were endorsing the belief that Jesus was one of a series of emanations of God.

And so, hence, a good emanation of God like Christ could never possess a physical body which they said was composed of evil matter.

And the idea that they thought it was absurd that God could become a man, and so thus they were denying the true humanity and the true deity of Jesus.

They also believed that there was this kind of secret higher knowledge that was above Scripture and was necessary to be enlightened and to have salvation.

[7 : 10] And then sprinkled in amongst these false beliefs were elements of Jewish legalism, the belief that circumcision was likewise necessary for salvation, as well as observance of the Old Testament ceremonies and rituals and dietary restrictions.

Then, to top it all off, they promoted the worship of elemental spirits or angels and mystical things. The heresy that was being promoted in the Colossian church, which was leading some who proclaimed to be followers of Christ astray, and was confusing and threatening those who were truly born again disciples of Jesus Christ, reminds me of a restaurant that I once visited in Kansas City. It was a buffet-style restaurant, but instead of serving one kind of food, they served all kinds of food. So there was Mexican, there was Chinese, there was fried chicken, and, you know, homestyle cooking, they served it all.

Fried chicken, kum kaw chicken, chicken enchiladas, whatever you wanted. Mashed potatoes and gravy, jow mi, Spanish rice, you could have it. Whatever combination you wanted.

Whatever satisfied your appetite. And that's how I think people like their religion. How they like it then, how they continue to like it to this day.

[8 : 42] That's how they desire to choose their beliefs. Just a combination of things that satisfy whatever sinful flesh desires. And so this letter in this passage is just as timely for Christians today as it was for Paul's original audience back then.

There are people like the pastor who interviewed me who have allowed false beliefs to corrupt the clear testimony of God's word, diminishing the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

And they are preaching a gospel that is not the gospel. A gospel which does not save. And so I'm sure that you, like me, have encountered people or churches like this who have had these heretical teachings infiltrate their church.

And like Paul, we, as Christians, are called to be ambassadors for Christ. It's our job to correct error, to clear up confusion by pointing to the truth of what God's inerrant word correctly and clearly declares.

And so the main idea for this evening sermon is that the Bible declares that Jesus is God and Lord of all. The Bible declares that Jesus is God and Lord of all.

[10 : 11] The Apostle Paul makes that point by proclaiming three facts about Jesus. In verses 15 through 20, they are constructed in the form of a hymn.

And now biblical scholars argue over the origin and the structure of this hymn. Some say that it was Paul who originally wrote it. Some say that Paul was quoting a pre-existing piece of literature that was already well known and sung or read in the church.

Whatever the case, it's in our Bibles. And we can trust the Holy Spirit for its inspiration. And so first we see that Jesus is the Lord of creation.

Jesus is the Lord of creation in verses 15 through 17. Paul explains that Jesus is the Lord of creation by first describing who Jesus is.

And he begins in verse 15 saying, He is the image of the invisible God. The Greek word for image is icon. Now, it's the same word used in Matthew chapter 22, verse 20 of Caesar's likeness on the Roman coin.

[11 : 24] In Genesis, we read about God creating human beings in his image. Like God, humans, we possess an intellect and emotion and a will by which we think and we feel and we make choices.

However, humans are not perfect images of God. Adam and Eve were capable of sinning and they did sin.

Though they were created in God's image, they did not share his image morally. God is incapable of sinning. They also did not possess God's incommunicable attributes like his omniscience and his omnipresence and his omnipotence and his immutability.

We are human, not divine. We are not exact images of God. God is not exact. It's kind of like this image of me that's been circulating around our building.

And maybe you've seen it. Tyler is hiding it in strange places. It might frighten you at some point in time. Be careful what door you open because you might be staring at this giant picture of my face attached to a pole with big googly eyes on it.

[12:49] And while it bears my image, I and it are not the same thing. So whoever is holding it in you, speaking in my voice, it's not me, right?

And so humanity, though made in God's image, humanity is not God. And the false further marred that image.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited their innocence and their freedom from sin and their immortality. However, in Christ, God promises that that image will be restored.

A restoration process that begins the moment he saves someone. So we'll read in Colossians 3.10. And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. But unlike us, Jesus is the perfect icon of God. And that is Paul's point. That's what he's trying to emphasize here in these verses. He, Jesus, is the representation, a manifestation of God.

[14:01] This was Jesus' testimony about himself. In John 14.9, Jesus said, Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. This was also the testimony of Jesus' disciples.

We read in John 1.14. That the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory. Glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is the full, final, and complete revelation of God. He is God in human flesh. That was his claim.

That is the testimony of the Bible. And so the rest of verse 15, Paul says that Jesus is also the firstborn of all creation.

And so now, without consulting the rest of the Bible and trying to understand what firstborn implied in this context instead of our present context, you could read this, and you could come away with the thought that Jesus was created.

[15:04] And that's what many have done. The early church had to fight this battle with Arius, a priest and a false teacher in the early 4th century, who taught that Jesus was a created being.

And the church must continue to refute that same error today that is being espoused by those who belong to Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, who deny Jesus' eternal existence as God, believing and teaching that Jesus was a created being, a lesser God.

I don't know that anyone here tonight belongs to either of those two groups, but I'm sure that you know someone who is.

Maybe it's a family member, maybe it's a friend or a co-worker, and they might be using this verse as support of their wrong beliefs about Jesus.

And so I hope you'll understand this verse in the right context so that you can share it with them in the hopes that they will be saved as well. The Greek word for firstborn is *prototokos*, and it can mean firstborn chronologically, but it was used primarily to describe position or rank.

[16:25] For example, Israel was God's firstborn in Exodus 4.22. That's what he said of them. He also said it again in Jeremiah 31.9. But Israel was not chronologically the first nation mentioned in the Bible.

But when it comes to God, they were the first in his heart, the first in his mind among all of the nations. In Revelation 1.5, Jesus is described as the firstborn of the dead, even though chronologically speaking, he was not the firstborn, the first person that the Bible records as being dead and coming back to life.

Remember, Elijah raised the widow of Zarephath's son in 1 Kings. Chapter 17, Elisha raised the Shehemiah woman's son in 2 Kings.

Chapter 4, Jesus raised the widow of Nain's son in Luke chapter 7, and Jairus' daughter in Luke chapter 8, and then Lazarus in John chapter 11.

All of those resurrections took place before his own, which all four Gospels record. But of all who were ever raised, his is the most important and the most preeminent.

[17:38] There are other reasons for rejecting the idea of firstborn meaning a created being. All we have to do is read the Bible. John 1, 1 through 14 explicitly states that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the life of men. And then verse 17 and 18, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. If you believe that Jesus was a created being, then how can you make sense of these verses? These verses that we're reading tonight, going through tonight, and many others. Let's also remember the reason that Paul wrote this letter to begin with.

If Paul were here teaching that Jesus is a created being, then he would be agreeing with the central point of the Colossian heretics, which he was refuting.

[18 : 47] This is why it's so important that we make the effort to understand the background and the setting and the original recipients and the purpose of the occasion for which the Holy Spirit prompted the writing.

And we know this wasn't how Paul intended firstborn to be understood, because all we have to do is just continue reading this passage in verse 16. Verse 16, For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Everything that we see, whether through a telescope or a microscope, reveals order and design. It is not merely tuned to allow for some kind of life to exist, but it is arranged in a way that allows for any kind of life to exist at all.

It's amazing. Jesus is the creator and designer of all things, including in verse 16, the rest of verse 16, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created for him and for him.

Now thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities, that refers to various ranks of angels. And Paul's point is that far from being an angel or being a lesser emanation of God.

[20 : 11] Jesus is the one who created them. He is far above them. They are under his authority. They serve him.

Hebrews 1, 1-4 makes that point clear. Long ago, and many times, in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he is spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

He is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

That name is Lord. Jesus, the Son of God, in his divine essence, has eternally existed.

And then he lowered himself by adding a human nature to his divine nature. He wasn't half man and half God like Hercules. He added a human nature to his divine nature in order to make purifications for sins.

[21 : 30] He lived sinlessly, he died sacrificially, and he rose victoriously, having defeated Satan, sin, and death. And he is seated at the right hand of God the Father as we meet and as I speak.

And there he continues to rule. He continues to reign as Lord of the creation that he created. And by his sacrifice and gracious salvation that he has given to us, we don't need to consult with mystical spirits or mediums or psychics or horoscopes or tarot cards or participate in any kind of pilgrimage to some distant place or land to be blessed by some sacred relic of the past.

In Christ, the Lord of creation, we are able to, as Hebrews 4.16 says, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

And isn't it wonderful to know that we can approach the Lord of creation, the master of the universe, and we can find help in our time of need.

Jesus is the Lord of creation. Verse 17 says, he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

[22 : 53] So Jesus is Lord of creation. Next, Paul says in verses 18 through 20 that Jesus is the Lord of his church. Jesus is the Lord of his church. Just as Jesus is Lord of creation, he is likewise Lord of his new creation.

And that is his church, whom God the Father has delivered through Jesus Christ his Son from the domain of darkness and transferred them into his kingdom.

Those who are redeemed and those who are forgiven of their sins. In the beginning of verse 18, Paul says that he is the head of the body, the church.

In the Bible, the church is described in some places as a family, in other places as a kingdom or a vineyard, a flock, a building, a bride.

But the most profound metaphor is that of a body. The church is a body and Jesus Christ is its head.

[23 : 54] The church is not accompanied with Jesus serving as its CEO. No, it's a body, a body, a living organism that is inseparably tied to Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ.

Just as the brain is located in the head and controls the body, so Jesus controls his church. He gives it life and he gives it direction. Paul continues. He says he is the beginning.

That's in Greek, arcane. Beginning is used here to refer to the church's origins in Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God who created the universe in Genesis 3.

And so also, it was Jesus, the Word of God, who created his church. And we read about that in Acts. It was through the preaching of the Word about the Word of God that the church was born. His sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf provided our new life. And so as head of the body, Jesus holds the chief position.

[25 : 05] So we determine our beliefs and our practices and our purpose based upon his Word, which is contained in our Bibles.

Chronologically speaking, he is the firstborn from the dead. As Paul continues in verse 18, he is the first who was raised never to die again. The first fruits of what all who are in Christ will one day experience.

John 5, 28 through 29, Jesus said, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

And since Jesus has attained so much for us, it is only right, as Paul continues in verse 18, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Because again, in case Paul wasn't clear enough, he says in verse 19 and 20, for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile in himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[26 : 18] Here Paul distinguished God the Father from Christ the Son while affirming the full deity of Jesus and maintaining the passage focus on him without dividing their oneness.

All of God's divine attributes were not divided amongst multiple emanations of lesser gods, but completely dwelt in his Son with whom he was constantly saying he was well pleased.

We're not saved by attaining some kind of secret knowledge or participating in some sort of religious ritual or ceremony, or by consulting with any other mystical source or force, but by the blood of our Lord that was shed on the cross to atone for sinners who could have never saved themselves.

Ephesians 2, 8-10 makes that point, for by grace we have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before him that we should walk in them.

Jesus is Lord of creation, both the seen and the unseen aspects of it and Jesus is the Lord of his church and having closed his hymn about the supremacy of Christ, Paul shifts from Jesus' lordship in regard to his person and his position and he gets more personal and so third, we see that Jesus is Lord of you.

[28 : 07] Jesus is your Lord, I don't know if my grammar is right there but anyhow, Jesus is Lord of you. Paul's made his point, now he transitions to application for the Colossians with the words and you.

These verses comprise one sentence that not only summarize and apply the truth that Paul has laid out but establishes his thesis for the rest of the letter that Jesus is supreme, that Jesus is better, that Jesus is Lord, Jesus is worthy of our undevoted worship and obedience in all aspects of our redeemed lives.

Paul begins his application in a familiar way using a before and after approach. This is who you were, this is what you were before Christ saved you and this is who you are, what you should be now that you are in Christ.

kind of think of those infomercials for beauty products. You know, you see the before picture of somebody, some poor lady, look how sad and ugly and miserable this person is and then they apply this product to their face and look happy, beautiful and blessed.

a lot of exaggeration is used in those commercials but not so with what Paul has to say as he leads them to examine if Jesus, the Lord of creation, the Lord of the church is truly the Lord of their lives. [29 : 50] Paul starts by reminding them of the relationship with God in the vast chasm that once existed between them and him prior to their salvation in Jesus Christ.

In verse 21 he says, and you who were once alienated and hostile to mine doing evil deeds. Unbelievers are not only separated from God, they are hostile towards him because they love their sin more than him.

they want a God who approves of their sin, who doesn't refer to sin as sin, a God who switches the definitions of good and evil, right and wrong, a God who calls what is evil good and what is good evil.

But those who are in Christ have received the mind of Christ. they humbly recognize who they once were apart from Christ and they know that apart from Christ saving them by his grace they would continue to be alienated and hostile in mind towards God their creator.

Paul continues his application reminding them of how Christ has overcome that vast chasm that once existed between them and God the Father. Verse 22 he says he has now reconciled his body and flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and a love reproach before him.

[31 : 34] Jesus the son of God in his incarnation again took on flesh and he substituted his life as an unblemished sacrifice dying in the place of sinners being crushed on the cross by the wrath of the Father for the iniquities of his people in order to make reconciliation possible that by faith in him those who were once alienated and hostile towards God have been saved and have been clothed in his righteousness they have been made holy and blameless and like him above reproach acceptable in his sight adopted as his children and given eternal life this is the only way for sinners to be reconciled to God those whom Jesus saves are born again they are new creations and they live differently they think differently and they produce fruit verse 23 begins with the phrase if indeed and I think that Paul's use of this phrase was not meant necessarily to cast doubt on the genuine nature of

Colossians faith and I don't think in any way he was suggesting that the eternal security of their salvation was based upon their obedient fruit he is assuming based on the realities that he has already presented that those who truly know Jesus know that he is Lord of creation know that he is Lord of the church know that he is also Lord of their lives and therefore they will in verse 23 continue in the faith stable and steadfast not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard and is now proclaimed in all creation under heaven and having said that Paul's hope is that like him they too who have been saved by the proclamation of the gospel will become ministers of it so he says in which I Paul who was once an enemy of the church who was once a man who stopped the end of the church arresting

Christians hauling them out of their homes in a way to be judged and to be tried and they killed he was not seeking Christ at all in any way but by God's grace this enemy of the Lord became a minister surrendering his life to the one who saved him as was the case for Paul so he hoped that for these believers in Colossae who though they may have been confused would understand the truth and know the truth and proclaim it but the facts about Jesus' lordship of creation and his church would encourage them to realize that Jesus is rightfully lord of their lives and that they would join him in sharing and proclaiming this good news that Christ would be first in their lives and that Christ would also be first in their witness so the main application that I have for you tonight comes in the form of a question is Jesus the lord of your life is Jesus the lord of your life he's the lord of creation he's the lord of his church is he the lord of your life do you trust in him the facts presented about him in his word are you being deceived maybe by your feelings reading the bible perhaps and reading something hard or maybe something you don't understand or you don't like and thinking or saying something like this that can't be what that means or thinking well that doesn't sound like god to me or thinking or saying I can't believe and god like that what does your life say about who you trust

Jesus to be is he a spiritual advisor that you turn to only when when times are hard and you have nowhere else to go and Jesus is there for that maybe you treat him like a team that you know you can just make your wish and your demands to expecting that he is to obey or is he your lord the one who gives commands to you that you obey and when he asks you say yes what does your testimony reveal about who you believe Jesus to be do you share your testimony this is who I was before the lord saved me this is who I am now in Christ or are you okay with people believing

whatever they want to believe just as long as they are sincere about it it doesn't matter they say they go to church they say that they follow Christ not really

[37 : 16] I'm sure they understand what that means but that's good enough or you try to understand or you try to give the hope so they will know the truth and if you do share your testimony and if you do share your witness who is the hero of that testimony is it you or is it Jesus or I be Jesus because without him you would continue like me to be alienated and hostile and bind towards the Lord Jesus wants and Jesus is worthy to occupy first place in every single aspect of your life your work your witness your home and your worship as Lord of creation as Lord of the church Jesus is worthy of being Lord of your life and so

I ask you in conclusion what things are causing you to forget that what is it maybe that is going on in your life or relationship or something you're involved in that is causing you to forget that you are not the captain of your own ship that Jesus is whatever he asks you to do as Lord of creation as Lord of the church as Lord of your life the only answer the right answer that you can give is yes yes Lord us pray Lord we thank you for your word that you've given us to study to understand to apply by your spirit's health because God we know there is a lot of confusion that has always been in your church people saying things about you presuming things about you or denying things about you that are in contradiction with what you said to be true about yourself and your word so we thank you that we have it

God I pray that we would study it more that it would abide in us more that Lord we would never forget that not only are you Lord of creation and Lord of your church but you're Lord of our lives that you ask if we say yes and we're real beings and we know that with that comes a blessing Lord I know that I'm sure that all of us here tonight know somebody who claims to follow you but the you that they claim to follow is not who you truly are whether that somebody is a part of the Jehovah's Witness or Mormon or so many other different belief systems that are out there even churches who claim to be in lockstep doctrinally and theologically with what we believe but in practice what they preach and proclaim is just not the same gospel Lord I pray that you would give us courage and boldness to graciously and compassion and go to them show these things to them in your word that Lord they would receive that correction in a way that results with them knowing and proclaiming and teaching the truth of who you really are and Lord in our witness

I pray that each one of us when we share the good news of Jesus Christ that it would not be we who are the heroes but you because apart from your doing Lord we would be alienated we would be hostile in mind towards you but because of your grace and your mercy you have saved us and you have adopted us as your children we have eternal life for Jesus Christ your son who is Lord whose name we pray amen amen to to!
to to Thank you.