

The Supreme Jesus

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[0 : 00] I had a colleague of mine at Christians in Sport who a few years ago was at a conference and he was in charge of delivering some of the stuff. But after one of his sessions, one of the delegates came up to him and just gave him this wristband.

And on the wristband, it just said these two words, I'm third. And you can imagine at Christians in Sport, we're all quite competitive people. So this didn't really sit too well with him.

And the thought of coming third in anything was not really a successful thing. And he was a little bit confused, but he managed to catch up with this person over a meal.

And he asked them, thanks for the wristband, but kind of what's it all about? And the chap explained to him that it was something that has helped him live out his Christian life in light of the two great commandments to love the Lord, your God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

And he says, so God is first in my life. Others are second and I'm third. And so he wears his wristband to remind him of that. And in our passage this morning, in light of what is going on in Colossae, we see the false teachers criticizing the true Christian church, the new believers, and trying to teach them that Jesus isn't number one.

[1 : 23] He's there, but he's certainly not number one. And so Paul is writing to them to try and help them keep Jesus as number one in their life. And in our passage this morning, we're going to look at these five verses that I hope will do that for us too, that we can keep Jesus as number one.

We've just had them read to us, which is brilliant. And as you'll know from last week, this flows off the back now of verses eight to 14, which was Paul's prayer for the church.

And he was praying that they would grow in all wisdom and knowledge of Christ so that they could then go and live a life worthy of him and a life that really pleased him in every way.

And so out of that prayer comes this incredible description of Jesus, arguably one of the greatest descriptions we've got of Jesus in the whole of the Bible.

It's amazing. It is rich and it is full. And so he goes, look, I'm praying this for you. So let me just tell you about this Jesus. Let me just remind you of who he is. And I pray that for ourselves.

[2 : 28] So let me just say a quick prayer again before we dive into these verses. Father God, thank you so much that we do have your word to be able to read, to consider and to understand.

But we need your Holy Spirit to help us and guide us through that. So please would you do that now, Father? Open our eyes wider as we've sung so that we might see you in the word, in your word now.

And would this impact our hearts and drive our actions so that we can live for you as number one of our lives here in Edinburgh? And we pray this in your name. Amen. So we've had it read to us and you will have seen as it was being read to you, there's quite a lot of repeated words and phrases.

So I'm going to read it one more time. And I just love for you to quickly know, if you can, just some of the repeated words and phrases within this. Who's the subject? What kind of things is Paul really trying to drive home within it?

So look down at it again and let's just read it. The sun is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. In him, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.

[3 : 39] All things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. 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. For God is pleased to have all his fullness dwell in to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

This is the supreme Jesus, the central figure of the Christian faith. And you'll see within these verses, it's pretty obvious, but who's the subject? Of course, it's the sun. Do you see that repeated over and over again? In him, through him, for him, by him. Paul is making it so obvious to us that these verses is all about Jesus. It's saturated with Jesus. And who or what has the sun got supremacy over? Well, everything. All things. Do you see that? I think it's six times you see that come through. [4 : 46] All things, all things, all things. He's leaving us in no doubt at all of Christ's supremacy. He is Lord of all things.

And the breadth of his magnitude and his glory and his majesty, well, we cannot fathom. But he's trying to help us do that inch by inch. And I pray that this supremacy will help us really appreciate Jesus for who he is as we understand it and keep him as number one in our lives. And I think it will, if we allow it to, make such a radical impact on our hearts and our lives that it will change the way we live and who we live it for and how we function around those that we live alongside. So let's split it into two parts. We'll go from verses 15 to 17, first of all, kind of Christ's supremacy in creation. And then we'll look at verses 18 to 20, Christ's supremacy in redemption. So Christ's supremacy in creation. Verse 15, the sun is the image of the invisible God. This word image, it's a significant word in the Bible. It props up lots of different times as we go. [5 : 57] We see it firstly in Genesis chapter one, verse 26, let us make man in our image. And we see it flowing through. It means an exact representation or a revelation.

And Paul is telling us here that Jesus is the image of God. Although God himself is invisible, we see in Jesus a true representation of who God is.

And you see it in verse 19, don't you? That God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. Please do not be in any doubt whatsoever that when you see Jesus, you see God for who he truly is.

And if you've not looked into this man, Jesus, and if you've not had a chance to investigate him, I'd urge you to. Because as you observe his life and you read through the pages of the New Testament and the gospels of his life, you come to see a man like no other.

One who has never walked the face of this earth before. Why? Well, because he wasn't just a man. He is God in human flesh.

[7 : 08] He is the image of God, Paul is saying. What's the second thing he talks about? Well, he says that he's the firstborn over all creation. This doesn't necessarily reference time, but rather it's a phrase used that talks about kind of status and place.

It can mean kind of of first importance or of first rank. Paul is saying that Jesus is of first importance when it comes to creation. And it can be sometimes read and confused with, oh, is Jesus created here?

What's this getting at? But you must read it, connect it to verse 16. Have a look at that. Do you see it? That crucial word for links us from the firstborn over all creation for in him all things have been created.

Or you could say because. Jesus is the firstborn over all creation because all things are created in him. Paul is saying here that Jesus is the creator of all things.

From the magnitude and the splendor of the mountain ranges to the vast galaxies that currently exist. Through to the beauty of the streams and the rivers that we see flow through our world.

[8 : 29] Right down to the intricacies and the wonder of a newborn baby. That is Christ's creation. Joe and I just came back up through from Dumfries last night because we were visiting our newborn little nephew.

Finley's little cousin. This is Freddie. He's five days old. And you can't help but when you hold the newborn baby just to be quite awestruck to be honest with you.

You see their little fingers and toes and the nose and the ears. And you think wow this is incredible. Absolutely incredible creation.

And as you understand more about the human body and a baby. You just can't help but be bowled over by it. They say that babies are born with about 300 bones that are still forming and fusing together after birth.

And then slowly but surely they go down to what is our 206 bones that we have with us now. Did you know that babies when they're breathing they can actually swallow and breathe at the same

time for about the first seven months.

[9 : 34] Don't try that now. You can have a go when you get home if you want to. The human body is remarkable. If we took all of our blood vessels out of the human body and lay them in one long line. All right. It would be so long that it could wrap around the world twice over.

And just take your finger for a second for me. Just have a look down at your finger. Go on. Don't be shy. It's all right. Just look at your fingerprint. No one else has got that.

Unless you're a twin. I don't know if that's true either. Everyone is born with a unique fingerprint. Especially to them. Every baby has its own fingerprint.

This is the wonder of God's creation. It was all created through him. All things, Paul says, were created by Jesus.

Through Jesus. And he covers pretty much every area of society in the universe, doesn't he? Look down at it. Verse 16. Things in heaven and on earth. Visible and invisible.

[10 : 35] Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. See, no wonder we see Jesus have an authority over the wind and the waves. Because he's the one who created the wind and the waves.

Jesus is the great master of all creation, Paul is saying here. And all things have been created through him. And he pushes it one stage further here.

And he says that not only was creation made through him, but actually creation is for him. Do you see that? Creation exists for Christ's pleasure. And for Christ's glory.

Hey, sometimes you get it where you walk past an amazing building. And some people who are interested in that kind of thing, they're quite taken aback by how amazing this building is.

And so a question that can often be asked, well, who is the architect of that building? Well, this is the same here. When people see the world, we should see the great architect, the great master.

[11 : 34] It's been made for him, for his name to be glorified. And Paul is saying here that creation itself declares his glory.

This is where the psalmist can say that the heavens declare the glory of the Lord. The skies proclaim his handiwork. All things were created by him.

All things were created for him. And lastly here, underneath the supremacy of Christ over all creation, is that all things hold together. He holds them together.

Do you see that verse 17? He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Things exist because of Jesus. Things last because of Jesus.

He sustains them right now as we sit and stand in this room. See, gluten is the thing in bread that holds the bread together.

[12 : 33] It's what makes the fluffy loaves of bread that we love to eat. Jesus is the thing that holds our world together. If he takes his hand from it, the thing will fall apart.

It's incredible if we stop and just ponder how awesome Jesus is in relation to the world around us and this universe that we function within.

Paul is saying that Christ is supreme over all creation. And Paul is telling them this because of the amount of pressure that they're coming into.

You'll see it as you work through Colossians now, particularly in chapter 2. The false teachers, they're devaluing Jesus. They're making him out not to be this Jesus, but another.

Essentially what they're doing is kind of dethroning Jesus. They're trying to make him second, third, or fourth, not number one. And that's why he's reminding them of his supremacy in creation.

[13 : 35] And I guess this is a challenge for us in our day and age, isn't it? We're not necessarily kind of being forced to tweak or change little bits of our understanding of Jesus much more now in our day and age.

We're kind of being forced and pressured just to forget Jesus completely, aren't we? And so we must look at this here and be reminded of Jesus so that we don't dethrone Jesus.

Just take 10 seconds, just to ponder for a moment. How could things unfold if we were to dethrone Jesus as the supreme Lord of all creation?

See, it's a scary thought if we take Jesus off that place.

It leaves us with all different explanations and ways in which we can describe how our universe has been brought about, which of course still exists now.

[14 : 41] But arguably, and I want to say more importantly, if we take Jesus off the throne of the supreme Christ who's created all things, I fear it will snatch away from us the real joy and the peace

that we can know in our hearts from knowing that he is Lord of all creation.

See, how often do you find yourself just waking up and cracking on with your day? And you get to lunchtime and you think, oh my goodness, I've not even thought about Jesus once. We do it so easily, don't we?

But what normally happens is we then just kind of walk through life and we don't really appreciate the things around us. How often can we get so obsessed with our own priorities or our problems and we look at ourselves all the time?

We can so, so easily do this. And so when things start to go against our plan, maybe when, I don't know, the rain starts coming down and it stops the great plan that you had for the day or things start to unfold in a direction in a way you didn't want to go, what starts to happen, we start to freak out, don't we?

And we start to panic and worry and fear. Why? Because we're not seeing Jesus as the great supreme Lord of all creation. Rather, we're seeing ourselves and our plans and our motivations as the most important thing.

[16:06] Now, I'm not saying that if we put Jesus as number one, our life is like all hunky-dory and we're all walking around Edinburgh with smiles on our faces every day. I'm not saying that.

There are going to be bad days. We know things don't all work out the way that we want. But that doesn't mean Jesus is any less supreme. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ this morning, you know the creator of the universe.

You know him for yourself. And so when you embrace that and you affiliate everything to him, do you know what? You start to see life through a completely different perspective.

You see his handiwork and creation so much more. You marvel at all that he's done. You enjoy his creation more and more. You don't look to try and find your safety and your security in the things of this world or hold on to those sort of empty promises of comfort.

They will not provide and they cannot provide. Rather, if you know Jesus, you know the person who's got authority over all things. Nothing's outside of his knowledge. Nothing's outside of his control.

[17:18] Why? Because we've seen it in his word. He's created the lot. It's for him. He sustains the lot. Does it not knock you back on your heels when you just stop and ponder who this man Jesus really is?

And Paul is urging, urging the guys here in Colossae just to not lose sight of him. Keep Jesus as number one. So there we are. That's verses 15 to 17.

Let's think about then Christ's supremacy in redemption. Look at verses 18 to 20 here. He is the head of the body, the church.

He's the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God is pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him 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.

Well, firstly, we see here that Jesus is the one in whom the church is totally and utterly dependent. Churches have leaders. Of course, they do. Who shepherd the flock, who disciple the people.

[18:29] But there is only one true head of every single church, and that is Jesus himself. The Greek translation of the word head here can kind of be put into a few different categories.

You've got kind of source and origin, but you've also got leader and ruler. And Paul is saying here that Jesus, he's the ultimate ruler of the church. The church finds his origin in him, and the church operates in him.

That's who Jesus is. He is the head of all the churches. And through the preaching of his word, through the work of his Holy Spirit, Jesus is building his church up.

And nothing's going to stop it. And through his church, he is glorifying himself. Now, I know instantly in your head you think, well, it doesn't feel like the church is really doing that. And without pointing fingers and being able to unpack all the stories, unfortunately, we have got many stories where the church hasn't done that.

Well, I put it to you. If we were to really look into it, has Jesus been dethroned from that church?

He's the head of the church. We must keep him as the head of the church.

[19:39] And if he is not the head of the church, then the church can go in any direction it wants to. But so long as he is the head of the church, the church will achieve its plans and purposes deemed

and given to them by Jesus Christ.

He is the head of the lot. And why is that? Well, because he reconciles all things to himself. See that Paul links us there then with verse 18.

He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead. This is the result of the great story of redemption. This new birth, this new beginning.

And verses 19 and 20 really unpacks how Christ really goes about reconciling all things. And these are amazing verses. Firstly, 19, we referenced it earlier.

God chose to have all his fullness dwell in Christ. Christ. This was a huge, huge area of contention with all the new philosophies and things going around in Colossae at the time.

[20 : 39] But Paul is making a massive statement here that when you see Christ, God in all his fullness is in him. But he's not just in him for being in him's sake. Christ is God in human flesh with a purpose.

And we see this in these verses, don't we? It's for the reconciliation of the universe back to himself. We must never forget what it must be like for God to see his creation unfold in the way it is.

Romans chapters 1 to 3, one of Paul's other letters, it gives probably the clearest explanation and some of the hardest verses to read about the reality of every human heart and the situation that we face.

Humanity has rejected God as its creator and its designer. And Romans 8 tells us that the world itself is groaning in its pains, desperately wanting restoration.

And look, we only have to turn on our BBC News app or read a paper or overhear a conversation at a coffee shop to realize things aren't quite functioning the way they're meant to, are they? And if we're really honest, if we look back on our week just gone, it doesn't take us long to think of ways in which we have pushed God out, rejected him, ignored him, and done things the way we wanted to.

[22 : 08] The Bible calls this sin. And sin is wreaking havoc right across our world. But you know what? Sin is serious, not just because of what it is.

But in relation to this, sin is really serious because of who it's against. That's what makes this such a great offense to God. This is why things need reconciling.

Because when people sin, it's not just what they're doing, it's who they're doing against. That is really, really serious. Let me just help you understand that a little bit more. So my sport's rugby, okay?

Think for a moment in a rugby game, I just lost my temper, all right? And I ended up punching an opponent. Now, you just can't do that in rugby.

It's just not right in any sphere of life and certainly not in rugby. And so the consequences for that in rugby would be I'd probably get one of those, a red card. Depending on how serious it is, I might get a ban.

[23 : 09] And that's fair, isn't it, in light of the act that I've performed on the pitch. Well, let's just take it one stage further. Imagine I'm walking down the street here in Edinburgh and I see two policemen.

And I just don't really like the look of them. And so I punch them in the face. You just can't do that, can you? Let's be honest. We were all in agreement here, punching's not good, let alone punching two police officers.

And so the consequences for that would be probably even greater, wouldn't they? I'd be arrested, I'd definitely have a night in a cell and potentially more. Let's push it all the way.

Imagine I get on the next train to London, jump on a tube, I get myself to Buckingham Palace, manage to slip through the fences, find the Queen and pop her on the nose. I mean, she's an old lady and she's the Queen.

I mean, you just don't do that, do you? Could you imagine the consequences in that moment? It's the Queen. You can't punch the Queen. That's so serious.

[24 : 10] Well, let's take the humor out of it for a second. What's the reality for us? The reality is that we've all punched God. We've all punched Jesus.

This is really serious. Through rejecting him as our maker and putting ourselves as number one in our lives, we have punched him in the face.

And the Bible does talk about a fair and a fearsome consequence that will come. But that's exactly why we get this incredible message of reconciliation in Christ.

The world is in desperate need of reconciliation. Our universe is in desperate need of reconciliation. Whether you know it or not, sat in this pew this morning and you do not know Jesus, you are in desperate need of reconciliation with God.

It is your greatest need. And see now in these verses how God has provided you the great solution. For God was pleased to have his fullness dwell in him and through him reconcile.

[25 : 16] How? Through making peace through Christ's blood shed on the cross. See, as the world sticks kind of two fingers up at God, what does God do? He stretches out his hands and he nails unto the cross.

Why? Because he loves you. Why? Because he knows that blood must be shed. A consequence must be paid. The price must be paid. But instead of us being hung on that cross for ourselves, Jesus is.

Willingly, dying on a cross, taking the full weight of God's fair, righteous anger. He puts it on himself, faces God's judgment so that we don't have to.

So that we can have peace with God. So that we can move from being God's enemies and suddenly become God's children. This is the great act of reconciliation.

No more does the anger exist, but only peace and joy and life and freedom can be found in this. Paul is saying that God has reconciled all things in this man, Jesus, through the great act of his sacrifice on a cross.

[26 : 23] And because he is God in human flesh, because God fully dwelt in him, then if you are to look at the Gospels, I'm sure many of you have, and we know this for ourselves. Well, Jesus did not remain in the grave.

He rose victorious. We've sung this morning. And he smashed death to pieces. And he began a new life. He brought about a new church. This is what verse 18 is all about.

That if we trust in Christ, then this church of young, Jesus-loving people emerge. And it's the beginning of a new way, of a new life.

Paul is determined to help the church here in Colossae remember Christ's supremacy over redemption. He's the head of the church.

He reconciles all things through Christ. And he's saying, do not let them devalue Jesus. Do not let them dethrone Jesus from this incredible truth and doctrine.

[27 : 26] And actually, it's exactly the same for us this morning. Again, take 10 seconds. What would the reality be like if we dethrone Jesus from the great story of redemption?

Take Jesus out. What are we left with? Take Jesus out.

And we're firstly stuck in this impossible cycle of trying to make peace with God ourselves. Through our efforts and our energy. And it's tiring.

And it doesn't work. More than that, then, we're left in a world that actually doesn't look too similar often to the world around us right now. Where people are seeking not to make reconciliation with God, but just try and make themselves the gods.

And so their life is all about making an identity for themselves. Self-glorification, self-worship. And so this is the rollercoaster of a life for them. So then when they get all these likes, they feel amazing.

[28 : 35] When people accept them, they feel amazing. But when it's rejected, the whole world falls out. It's what happens when we take Jesus out of the picture. And if we take Jesus out of the great story of redemption, what are we left with?

Well, we're left with having to face the consequences for ourselves, aren't we? Look how central Christ is to this great story of redemption. And that is what Paul is driving home here for us this morning.

You are loved by God. You are safe in his arms because of what Christ has done for you. You know the creator of the universe, who is the creator of all things, who sustains all things, who is lord of all things, who has made peace from his blood.

He is the head of this church. And he's got a place for you, waiting for you in heaven when you die. What peace this can bring to your heart. What joy this can bring you in all circumstances and situations.

And whatever you're going through this morning, nothing is too great for the supreme Jesus. He's supreme in all creation.

[29 : 43] He's supreme in redemption. And he sits on his throne right now as the lord of all things. There's a lovely new hymn written by a group called Sovereign Grace.

There's no one like you, it says. This is what the verses read. And it captures these two sections brilliantly. Verse 1, there is no song we could sing to honor the weight of your glory.

There are no words we could speak to capture the depths of your beauty. And then verse 2 says, there is no sinner beyond the infinite stretch of your mercy.

How can we thank you enough for how you've loved us completely? Let me ask you three closing questions as we finish off.

How big is your view of Jesus? I know Graham asked you this in the first talk in the book of Colossians. And it pops up right throughout Colossians.

[30 : 43] How big is your view of Jesus? Will you let these verses sink deep into your heart so that you might marvel at who he is? There is none like him.

Because he's God. And he has all power and authority. His love and his grace is sufficient. And if you do not know Jesus this morning, I urge you to trust him with your life.

Do not leave without making peace with God through this. He has done it all for you. There's nothing that you have to do except say, I'm sorry I've got it wrong and I trust you. Second question.

What difference will the supreme Jesus make to your week? If this is true, it's got to affect every area of life, hasn't it? Will you look and try and see him in creation more this week?

Will you remember more and more how far God went to bring you back to him? Will you let the knowledge that you have peace with God affect every area of your life and every inch of your being?

[31 : 54] Will you keep worrying about things or will you hand it to him? And lastly, who will you tell about the supreme Jesus this week? Because the reality is that as we saw in that video we saw, the gospel is the power of God for salvation for anyone who believes.

First for the Jew and then for the Gentile. This good news of Jesus, this supreme Jesus is for all. And if anyone humbles themselves before him and trusts him in their life, if you give them that good news, there is nothing stopping them from coming to know God for themselves.

Jesus is supreme over all things. Why would you hold that back from anyone? Who could you tell about Jesus this week? Let me pray.

Father God, we praise you for your son. He's supreme over all of creation. He's supreme in the story of redemption.

We are so, so unworthy to know him. But the fact that we can through what he has done for us on the cross is quite remarkable.

[33 : 08] We praise you, Lord. We exalt you, Jesus. Help us to live a life that is worthy of you. Help us to live a life that pleases you in every way.

Would you help us this week, Father, to grow in our knowledge and understanding of this. But would it move us to live as your people under your lordship and your headship. So that we might love each other more, serve each other more and reach more people in this city.

With the message of this supreme Jesus. And we pray all this in your name. Amen.