

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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CONFUSION SETTLED BY EXPLANATION

Colossians 1:15-23

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There are five points to my message today:

1. Christ has supremacy over all creation.
2. Christ is the hope of creation.
3. Christ is the head of the Church.
4. Christ is the hope of the Church.
5. Christ was Lord over the Colossians.

INTRODUCTION: Friday, I read a news article by a guy wondering who he should believe. He talked about all that is going on in our nation's capital and said if you listen to one person, that person is discredited by their own previous lies and other indiscretions. When you listen to the other side, you'll find the same thing. The news outlets don't agree. And if you listen to them, they link this with that in such a confusing way that you could never explain it to someone else because you can't even understand it yourself. It's all a big, huge, confusing mess.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Colossae which was experiencing confusion. It was a small church he probably never visited. It was started when one person heard the Gospel and took it back to his own town. What a wonderful thing. A close reading of this letter reviews 44 possible topics Paul wrote about.

The Church was facing doctrinal and practical problems. Their Christianity got confused with other teachings of the day. In Colossians, very early in the book, Paul writes to clarify who Jesus is.

First, [Paul told the people] **CHRIST HAS SUPREMACY OVER ALL CREATION.**

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:15-17 ¹⁵ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* ¹⁶ *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.* ¹⁷ *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

EXPLANATION: In this day, the Greeks believed that all matter was evil and only pure spirit was good. This was called Greek “dualism.” Paul clarified that Christ is over all creation, both natural and supernatural.

APPLICATION: Today we have a type of dualism about the Lord. We believe he belongs in one part of society but not in another part. We want him in one part of our lives but not in another part. Such thinking is contrary to the gospel of Christ. He must be Lord of all.

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of the world rather than Christ.

APPLICATION: Hollow and deceptive philosophies are around every corner. The only way we recognize them is by knowing the truth. If we don't know the truth, we are prone to be led astray. As a pastor, let me suggest that you spend more time learning about the scripture than learning about other religions. The more you know the scripture, the more apt you'll recognize counterfeit religion when you see it.

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:9

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...

Paul boldly declares Christ is God in bodily form or matter. This was the complete opposite of Greek philosophy. So, Paul's declaration is that matter is not evil. It was created by God, for God, and held together by Christ. Christ has supremacy of all creation.

Second, **CHRIST IS THE HOPE OF CREATION**

EXPLANATION: The earth is a beautiful place and constantly changing. Just when you thought you saw the world's most beautiful landscape, you'll see another, and another. But, did you know creation is stifled because of the curse? When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God cursed the earth. So, what we see in all its beauty, is actually not as beautiful as it was originally intended.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:19-22

For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

What will the liberation of creation look like? It's beautiful under the curse because we don't know it any other way.

In this fallen and decaying creation, something interesting happened. God entered his creation through the person of his son. And, when Jesus conquered death, a new order began.

So, in the middle of decay, there is hope because of Christ and the resurrection.

My question is to you: Do you have a fallen outlook or a resurrection outlook?

NEXT, [Paul told the people] CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:18-20

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. 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.

As head of the Church, Christ is King.

Verse 18: *He is the beginning.* We think of Jesus as having his beginning as a son of Mary, but he was around long before that. He wasn't around just before the

beginning. He IS the beginning. We are caught in time. It is a mystery we cannot understand because we are held captive on this side of the beginning. Jesus existed before time.

Verse 18: *"he is the firstborn from among the dead."*

When the first man died, no one beat Jesus to heaven. He was already there. Again, it is a mystery we cannot fully understand.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 1:4 *⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight...*

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:20 *²⁰He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

EXPLANATION: So, the work of Christ was already done before the world was formed. It only happened in human time later on.

Christ's death and resurrection started a whole new order of people to live in Christ, which is the main ingredient to abundant life and eternal life.

Notice the word "firstborn" is used in verses 15 and 18. Verse 15 talks about Christ as the firstborn of creation. Verse 18 talks about Christ as the firstborn from among the dead. Listen to this. These verses bring together God's creation and God's salvation under one Lordship.

The Church exists for no other reason than to honor Christ and spread the news of his salvation. What is my vision for this church? To nurture a congregation that loves people, to preach the Bible, and to tell people about Jesus.

With Christ as the head of the Church, we learn that the Church is not a business. It has business-like elements, but the goal of a business is to have product and make money. The goal of the Church is to give it all away.

APPLICATION: People always want to know where a church is going. If we love people, preach the Bible, and tell people about Jesus, then we will never doubt where the Church is going.

FURTHER EXPLANATION: Now, in this day, the mission of the Church became confused by other false teachings of the day. There was a group of people who believed salvation came through knowledge and only a special few would have a mystical experience that would provide this knowledge. This evolved into a false teaching called Gnosticism.

They were also dealing with the worship of angels and rituals that had nothing to do with Christ. Paul addresses old Jewish laws, phony humility, and asceticism, which is a way of life where a person does without, to the point of misery, in order to have physical and spiritual health.

The believers in this young and inexperienced church were dealing with a lot, weren't they?

Fourth, [Christ is not only the head of the Church], **HE IS THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.**

All the things that happened at Colossae were distractions from the mission of the Church. The Church can be the most powerful influence on the earth. At times, it has been. In parts of our world, it is today. But the Church can be a place of confusion. Why? Because people are prone to take their eyes off Jesus.

APPLICATION: If we are a people of hope, in a place of hope, with a Savior who gives hope, shouldn't we have a message of hope to everyone? The word Gospel means "Good News," the message of the Gospel is joyful, and therefore, we should be joyful as we share this hope with others.

We must avoid things that detract from the purpose of the church.

Last, [Paul told the people] **CHRIST WAS LORD OVER THE COLOSSIANS**

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:21-23

*Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—
²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the*

hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

EXPLANATION: Before they came to Christ, Paul says they were aliens and enemies because of their evil behavior. Well, what behavior made them such bad people? It doesn't matter because their sins were unforgiven. Once a person is forgiven, then that person is forgiven.

Now that they are in Christ, they are citizens and forgiven. Alien to citizen, unforgiven to forgiven. All because of Christ.

The Church was close to being caught in legalism, but Paul took them back to the basics.

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:13-15

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us: he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

CONCLUSION: The apostle Paul wrote to a group of people who were confused. He told them Christ is all that matters. It's possible someone hearing my message is confused about what we call the gospel – focus on Jesus Christ, focus on the biblical teachings of him and about him. If you do that, your confusion will subside.

Jesus paid the price for your sin on the cross. He died, was buried, and rose again. The Bible says that one day he'll return. People take this simple message and distort it a thousand ways.

You can receive forgiveness of your sin today.

SCRIPTURE: John 3:16 says, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:23-24 says, *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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