

## The Glories of Christ

Jesus asked, “Who do men say that I am?”

Matthew records their answers:

John the Baptist, Elijah; Jeremiah, one of the prophets.

Then Jesus pointedly asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”

In Paul’s letter to the Colossians he focuses on Christ’s identity.

He begins telling them about his prayer for them,

that they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will,

that they would have a walk worthy,

and that they would be strengthened with God’s power.

**Paul concludes** with thanksgiving for all that God has done for us:

<sup>12</sup>**giving thanks to the Father,**

who has **qualified us** to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

<sup>13</sup>**For He rescued us from the domain of darkness,  
and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,**

<sup>14</sup>in whom we have **redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

Operation Rescue:

Our Great Savior:

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God,

the **firstborn of all creation.**

<sup>16</sup>For by Him all things were **created,**

both in the heavens and on earth,

visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities

– all things have been **created** through Him and for Him.

<sup>17</sup>**He is before all things,**

**and in Him all things hold together.**

<sup>18</sup>He is also head of the body, the church;

and He is **the beginning,**

the **firstborn from the dead,**

so that He Himself will come to have **first place** in everything.

<sup>19</sup>For it was the Father’s good pleasure

for **all the fullness to dwell in Him,**

<sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,

having made **peace** through the blood of His cross;

through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven

Col. 1:15-22

In this ancient Hymn we see Christ  
     in His relationship to God,  
     His relationship to Creation  
     and His relationship to the church.

Christ's Identity observed:

- Visible image of God
- Firstborn of all creation
- Creator
- Sustainer
- Head of the church
- Fullness of Deity
- Reconciler

## I. Christ's Relationship to God

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God,

God is a Spirit and is therefore invisible.

    In the Person of Christ, God made Himself visible to mortal eyes.  
 In that sense Jesus is the image of the invisible God.  
 Jesus said, "Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father..." (John 14:9)

God was present wherever Jesus was.

    In Christ the invisible God became visible.

**"Image"** also carries with it the idea of "representative."

Adam the first man was also created in God's image, to represent Him but he failed. God sent His only begotten Son into the world as His representative, to care for His interests and reveal His heart of love for man.

The same word is used in 3:10 of Christians.

    The new nature is being created in the image of Christ.

The New Testament writers spoke of Christ's identity, relationship to God, and completed work of salvation

    "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in

His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Heb. 1:1-3)

John began his gospel by addressing Jesus' identity as the God-Man:

"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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-5, 14)

Paul, in writing to the Philippian believers also proclaim that Jesus who existed as God became a man in order to bring salvation to men. Afterwards Jesus returned to His place among the Godhead as the resurrected and glorified Christ.

"...although he [Christ Jesus] existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by become obedient to the point of death, even **death on a cross**. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:6-11)

These complex texts reveal many details accenting Jesus as God, the second member of the Trinity, who became a man (the incarnation) in order to die for the sins of mankind. After accomplishing the work of salvation, he rose from the dead and then ascended to the Father as a glorified Christ, where He awaits the time of His return to set up His earthly kingdom with all the saints.

## II. Christ's Relationship to Creation.

Christ is ...the **firstborn** of all **creation**.

Three senses of firstborn:

- Luke 2:7 (literal sense) “Mary brought forth her firstborn Son...”  
Jesus was the first child to whom she gave birth.
- Exodus 4:22 (figurative sense) “Israel is My son, even My firstborn.”

The Lord is using this word to describe the distinctive place which the nation of Israel had in His plans and purposes.

- Psalm 89:27 (first in Priority) the word, **firstborn** is used to designate a place of superiority, of supremacy, of uniqueness.

There God says that He will make David His firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

David was actually the last-born son of Jesse according to the flesh. But God determined to give him a place of unique supremacy, primacy and sovereignty.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Arius from Alexandria of Egypt taught that Jesus was a created being, greater than creation.

This concept was rejected and condemned by the Church in AD 325.

The thought in Colossians 1:15 is the firstborn over all creation.

He is God’s unique Son, unique to all other sons.

He existed before all creation and occupies a position of supremacy over it. His is the rank of eminence and dominion.

Since Jesus is God’s Son by eternal relationship,

His is a title of priority of position, and not simply one of time.

Jesus is the Creator.

As Creator, all things were created through Him and for Him.

1. All things were created by Him. He is the Architect: designer and builder.
2. All things were created through Him. The Agent of creation – the Person of the Godhead through the creative act was performed.
3. All things were created for Him- Christ is the goal of creation.

Paul leaves no loopholes for Christ as Creator:

<sup>16</sup>For by Him all things were **created**,  
both in the heavens and on earth,  
visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities

– all things have been **created** through Him and for Him.

The Creation extends from earth to heaven.

It also reaches from the visible to the invisible.

They are described as *thrones, dominions rulers and authorities* –

■ spiritual or angelic realm.

MacDonald writes,

“The Gnostics taught that there were various ranks and classes of spirit beings between God and matter, and that Christ belonged to one of these classes. In our day the Spiritists claim that Jesus Christ is an advanced spirit of the sixth sphere. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that before our Lord came into the world, He was a created angel and none other than the archangel Michael! Here Paul vigorously refutes such absurd notions by stating in the clearest possible terms that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of angels – in fact, of all beings, whether visible or invisible.”<sup>1</sup>

Summarizing Jesus as Creator, Paul writes,

**<sup>17</sup>He is before all things,  
and in Him all things hold together.**

Before anything was created Jesus existed as God.

The term “is before all things” (in the present tense),  
shows the *timelessness of Deity*.

Jesus used this in the same way when He said,  
“Before Abraham was I am.” (Jn. 8:58).

The Creator of everything also is the Sustainer of everything  
- **and in Him all things hold together.**

The writer to the Hebrews records,

But of the Son He [God the Father] says,  
“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever...” (Heb. 1:8).

Jesus is the central part of all creation and He rules over it.

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<sup>1</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 1994.

### III. Christ's Relationship to the Church

<sup>18</sup>He is also head of the body, the church;  
and He is **the beginning,**  
the **firstborn** from the dead,  
so that He Himself will come to have **first place** in everything.

Not only is Jesus Christ the Creator of all things but He is also the Creator of the New Creation – saints who make up His church. The metaphor often used for the church is the “body,” in which Christ is the head.

The term, ***‘firstborn from the dead’*** does not mean that Jesus Christ was the first to rise from the dead, (several resurrections are in both Old and New Testaments) but that he was the first to rise from the dead, never to die again.

He was the first to rise with a glorified body, as Head of His new creation.

As MacDonald writes,  
“His resurrection is unique, and is the pledge that all who trust in Him will also rise. It proclaims Him as supreme in the spiritual creation.”<sup>2</sup>

The end of the verse states,  
so that He Himself will come to have **first place** in everything.

This emphasizes the meaning as Christ as the Firstborn;  
(Gk.– prototokos) or ‘pre-eminent One.’

In creation and redemption Christ is in first place because of who He is and what He has done.

<sup>19</sup>For it was the Father's good pleasure  
for **all the fullness to dwell in Him,**  
<sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,  
having made peace through the blood of His cross;  
through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven  
Col. 1:15-22

**Fullness** – This refers to the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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<sup>2</sup> MacDonald, p. 1995.

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form...”  
(Col. 2:9)

As God, Jesus the Son took on human flesh in order to become a sacrifice on the cruel cross of Calvary.

Literally, when Jesus died, God suffered death in the Person of Christ

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them... He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

**Reconcile-Gk. apokatalasso** “restoration to a primal unity” (Vincent)

**Lightfoot says;** “The whole universe of things, material as well as spiritual, shall be restored to harmony with God.”

Jesus was who He was in order to accomplish the ultimate rescue:

**<sup>13</sup>For He rescued us from the domain of darkness,  
and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,  
in whom we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness of sins**.** (v 13).

What do we take away from this lesson?

1. Who Jesus is and what He has done is central to Christianity.
2. Our response should be intense gratefulness and joy.
3. Our prayer and focus should be to walk worthy of Christ.