

The Supremacy of Christ in Everything

by John Piper

This sermon focuses on the exaltation of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20, highlighting the supremacy of Jesus in creation and the church. It addresses the importance of guarding against false teachings that diminish Christ and emphasizes the joy and endurance believers can have through Christ's sacrifice and redemption. The sermon challenges listeners to reflect on whether they truly worship Jesus as God and to experience the peace and reconciliation brought by Christ's blood.

Scripture: Colossians 1:15, Acts 17:25, Colossians 1:18, Colossians 1:18, Colossians 1:20

Topics: "Supremacy of Christ", "Guarding Against False Teachings"

Description

This sermon focuses on the exaltation of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20, highlighting the supremacy of Jesus in creation and the church. It addresses the importance of guarding against false teachings that diminish Christ and emphasizes the joy and endurance believers can have through Christ's sacrifice and redemption. The sermon challenges listeners to reflect on whether they truly worship Jesus as God and to experience the peace and reconciliation brought by Christ's blood.

Transcript

Let's pray. Father, I ask that by the means of this Word and by your Holy Spirit, you would exalt Christ in our hearts and in our minds, and that we would be protected from false teachings that diminish Christ or distort Christ, and that we would be made joyfully thankful to endure whatever this world throws at us until Jesus comes. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. So let's begin with the so what question. So what that Colossians 1 15 to 20 is probably the greatest exaltation of Christ in the Bible.

Maybe the greatest, maybe others are close. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through him.

Without him was not anything made that was made. He became flesh, the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory full of grace and truth, the only glory of the Father in the Son.

That's close. There are others. In these last days, he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, and through whom he made the world.

He's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature. He upholds the universe by the word of his power. When he had made satisfaction for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

That's close. But Colossians 1 15 to 20. Is probably the greatest.

So here I am, you're gonna watch me for the next 35 minutes or so, wave my little expository finger, and point it toward this Mount Everest of Christ's exaltation, and then you're gonna go home, or Sunday school, have lunch. And the crucial question is, so what? So I'm gonna give you two answers to that to start, so that you can be testing yourself as you listen. Is it happening in me? And when you leave, did it happen? Answer number one to the so what question of the greatest hymn to Christ in the Bible.

False teaching was beginning to infect the minds and hearts of the believers in Colossae. You've heard that before. And Paul intends, I'm gonna argue, that this picture of Christ, verses 15 to 20, with a clarification and an exaltation of his majesty, become a theological vaccine to prevent the disease of Christ diminishing and Christ distorting error.

Okay, go with me to chapter 2, verse 8. I'm gonna argue that in every single case where you get a glimpse of the false teaching, the issue is, is Christ big enough? Is your Christ big enough and clear enough? Okay, so verse 8, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. So there it is. If your Christ that you embrace is not big enough, not clear enough, you will be a sitting duck for Christ diminishing, Christ distorting philosophy, empty deceit, human tradition.

Drop down to verse 16. Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come.

The substance belongs to Christ. If you don't have the full, big, glorious Christ, you will mistake shadows for reality in this world. One more, verse 18 of chapter 2. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the head.

If you don't embrace a Christ that's big enough and clear enough, you will stop holding fast to the head, and you will replace the head with sectarian strategies of self-improvement, asceticism and the like. So, answer number one to so what is this hymn to Christ, this exaltation of Christ in 15 to 20 of chapter 1, is designed to prevent all that from happening. It's meant to keep you from falling into errors, keep you from being children just blown around by Christ belittling, Christ distorting falsehoods.

Here's answer number two to the question of so what. Last week, Kenny walked us through the prayer of chapter 1, verses 9 following. Let's pick it up there.

Get the train of thought from that prayer into this text, because it's the relationship between that prayer and the majesty of Christ that explains the so what. So, he's praying in verse 11. You with me? He's praying in verse 11 that we would be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience.

And then comes this little phrase with joy, which can go either way, right? Kenny talked about that. Could go backward or forward in it what it modifies. Endurance and patience with joy or with joy giving thanks to the Father.

And as I thought about this, I thought experientially, I cannot make any difference between those. I mean, verbally, I can, but experientially, I can't. So, here we are now.

Enduring with patience, pandemic, political acrimony, war in Ukraine, church conflicts, sexual debauchery in our culture, the heartbreak of lost loved ones. And we're enduring. Does it make any difference to say we are enduring with joy, and to say we are enduring joyfully giving thanks to the Father? I can't see it.

They mean the same thing. Joy, thankful joy marks our endurance. It's what it is to be a Christian in these days.

It's what he's praying for. Now, keep going. In verse 12, he says, the reason that you can have joy while you endure these days is because you've been qualified by the Father.

He has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Your inheritance is not outer darkness where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. Your inheritance is a world in which there's no more need for sun.

There's no more need for moon because the glory of God is His light and His lamp is the lamb. That's your inheritance. Rejoice in it.

That's the point. That's the way he's arguing here in his prayer. And then verse 13 explains how that's already happened in great decisive measure.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness. So, your inheritance is light. It's coming.

Light is coming. It's only light coming. No darkness at all.

And you have already been transferred out of the domain, the authority, the kingdom of darkness into, transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son. And then verse 14 explains how in the world can sinners like you and me say that about ourselves. And notice that little phrase in him at the beginning of verse 14.

It's because in Christ we have redemption. The forgiveness of all of our sins. How sweet is that? And because we're forgiven, He takes us out of the authority and the domain of darkness and He puts us already in the kingdom of His beloved Son, light.

You are the light of the world, Bethlehem. You are children of the light now. And you will inherit a world where there's no darkness at all.

Now, keep following us. Let's just walk it right into today's text. So, He wants us to endure with joyful thankfulness in this fallen world.

The reason we can endure is because we are going to inherit a world of light. And the reason we can inherit a world of light as guilty sinners is because there's a redemption that's been paid, a ransom, and all of our sins are forgiven. And we're already in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Now, it seems to me that at this point in His praying, He has become so full of Christ and the absolute essential nature of the greatness of His sacrifice, His redemption, and the greatness of His kingdom in which we are. So, sacrifice and king, just so great is Christ, if this is all going to happen, that He is launched into a hymn to Christ. Which means that the way this hymn is functioning is to sustain our joy through enduring whatever this world throws at us till He comes.

That's the logic that I see. So, the second answer to the so what question as you go home in a few minutes, is, is that happening? Did this biblical portrait of the greatness of Christ, the majesty of Christ, have that effect on you? I can endure anything with joy. Look at my Christ.

So, test yourself. That's the second so what. Protection from false teaching and joy while we endure till He comes.

That's the so what of this passage. So, let's look at it. I'll wave my little expository finger here, and hopefully, unlike a dog and a six-month-old, you stop looking at the finger, and you will look at the mountain, the Everest of Christ.

I see five ways that Paul exalts the supremacy of Christ in regard to creation, and three ways that he exalts the supremacy of Christ in regard to the church. Let's take the five first. Number one, Christ is God.

Verse 19, for in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And if you want to see an underlining of it with greater clarity and specificity, look at verse 9 of chapter 2. For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. Now, remember in verse 13, Christ was called God's beloved Son.

So, putting the pieces together, the Son of God possesses the fullness of the deity of His Father. There is one God in these two persons. And if it were another text, we'd talk about the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

He's fully God. And this divine Son came to earth, clothed Himself with humanity, and He has a body. Don't miss the word in verse 9 of chapter 2. In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells, say the word, bodily.

He has a body. He rose with a body. He ascended with a body.

He is in heaven today with a body. He will descend with a body. He will never lay down His body.

That's amazing! God has taken not just human nature into union with the Godhead. He has taken a body. Which means you can see Him.

When He was on the earth, they could touch Him. Just as we saw Him, we touched Him. We touched God.

If you've seen me, Philip, you've seen the Father. It's not what it means in verse 15 here. Right here.

He is the image of the invisible God. Like, you can't see God, but you can see Jesus. He's got a body.

He is the image of the invisible God. So, just before I move on to my second of five, let me just ask you, do you worship Jesus? Muslims don't, Hindus don't, Buddhists don't, Jehovah's Witnesses don't. When the eleven met Him after the resurrection, chapter 28 of Matthew, verse 17 says, they worshiped Him and they were not idolaters because He's God.

So, is your Christ big enough and clear enough in your minds and in your hearts so that He is the greatest treasure in your life? That's what it means to worship. Embrace and treasure as supreme. Is that Jesus for you or is He just kind of a little teeny participant in this thing and there's a big God kind of amorphous out there? That's heresy.

Jesus is God. Number two, Christ is before all things. Colossians chapter one, verse 17, first part of the verse, verse 17.

And He is before all things. Now, why would Paul say that? I mean, that is so obviously implicit in everything he says here. Why would you make that explicit, Paul? And I think Paul would smile and say, there are some implicit glories that ought to be made explicit.

Oh, don't let clear, implicit, magnificent things go unspoken to your children, to each other. It's what wives and husbands are for, you know. Talk to each other about the glory.

Don't let implicit things just lie there. Well, everybody knows that. He's before all things.

Are you kidding me? He's before everything. We need to ponder the obvious sometimes. For example, if you ponder this, would it not draw to your attention the fact that Christ's relationship to all that is not Christ is different than your relationship to all that is not you? Very different.

We think we're creators, right? Creators. We're creators. We're not.

Not the way Jesus is. We rearrange what's there. We rearrange molecules and make an atom bomb.

Or we rearrange chemicals and make a vaccine. Or we rearrange materials and make a house. If you are before all things, and you bring things into being, you don't rearrange anything.

There's nothing there to rearrange. I mean, this is good to speak to your children about. There was nothing there.

I mean, children would get wide-eyed. What did he use to make us? Nothing. He was before everything.

He is absolute reality. Everything is secondary. I love to talk to myself about the universe being secondary.

Galaxies are secondary. Supernovas are secondary. Putin is tertiary.

I mean, low down on the scale of reality. Christ was before everything and therefore is absolutely real. Everything else depends on that and is secondary.

It's good to say that to yourselves. Oh my. Number three.

Christ created everything that is not God. Christ created everything that is not God. Chapter 1, verse 15, middle of the verse.

He is the firstborn of all creation, 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. Now, when you hear that phrase, firstborn of all creation, you and lots of people say, that sounds like he's part of creation.

Firstborn of creation, but the best of creation. That's not what it means. I'll give you four reasons why it's not real quick.

One, he's God. We already said that. We've seen that.

God is not part of what he made. Number two, this is the main one. The one Paul wants you to see most clearly.

The logic between the end of verse 15 and verse 16 is connected with this word for. Tremendously important here. Oh my, these little words.

Listen, he is the firstborn of all creation for because by him all things were created. How does that work? How does that work? It makes no sense to say he's part of creation because he created all things. That does not make any sense.

And Paul makes sense. Therefore, firstborn of all creation doesn't mean he's part of creation. Argument number three, the word of in English, genitive in Greek, good grief, means a hundred things depending on the context.

So when I say David, my friend David Mathis say, is the coach of his son's little league team. I do not mean he's 10 years old and plays on the team. Because everybody knows that's what of means in that sentence.

Coach of the team doesn't mean member of the team. It means he's over the team. He's an adult over the team.

And that's what it means here. He is the firstborn over all creation. Fourth argument, the word firstborn has morphed from biological meaning, retaining that meaning to a meaning of highest exalted status.

And you can see it, for example, in Psalm 89, 27. I'll just read it to you. God says to David, as a type of the Messiah, God says to David, I will make him the firstborn, the highest, the kings of the earth.

It doesn't mean he was born of the kings of the earth or part of the kings of the earth. It just means he's great. He's like the firstborn in the sense that firstborns are great.

They're highest. So for those four reasons, don't hear the phrase firstborn of creation to mean part of creation, but rather firstborn over creation. Now, when Paul fills in just a few things that Christ has made, he does so in order to help these Colossians not push back with some possible exceptions.

He doesn't want them to say, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, not thrones, not dominions, not rulers, not authorities, because those include evil powers. They're evil. Lots of them are evil.

And they might stumble over, he didn't make evil, so he didn't make them. Wrong. He did make them.

Says so right there. And the point is they're evil. Putin is evil.

What's going on in Ukraine is evil. God made him, made Russia, made Ukraine, made you. You, you escape the problems of the world by denying Jesus his deity.

That's not the solution. So he says, no, yes, they're evil. In fact, you can see it right here in the text.

If we, if we had a translation that was just a tad more literal, because in verse 13, when it says you have been delivered from the domain of darkness, that word domain, exousia, is the same word as authorities right here. In verse 16, he made the authorities from which you've just been delivered. Just as clear as day, God made the evil powers of the world.

So, Colossians, don't make any exceptions. I've given you a few examples of the things that he made just to keep you from doing that. Is it any wonder that Jesus, as the maker and creator, walked through this

world and just said to a fever, go? And it went.

He said to a storm, be flat. And the waves went flat. He said to wind, stop blowing.

It stopped blowing. That's what creators do. And he's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Number four, Christ holds everything together. Verse 17, chapter 1, he is before all things. In him, all things hold together.

He doesn't just bring all that is into being. He keeps all that is in being. That fact, if you believe it, really believe it, might have a greater personal effect on you than believing he made you.

Because you can sort of feel like, well, he made me, but he did that 70, how old am I? 76 years ago. He does, that's ancient history. But right now, these wizened old fingers, teaches God, if he doesn't say, fingers, remain, remain, hold together.

And guess what? He is not taxed by this. God is not worn out by keeping everything together in the universe, galaxies. He is holding together the metal on the tanks rolling into Ukraine.

He is holding together the cell phones in Ukraine, connecting the resistance. He's holding together the pew that you sit on. He's holding together the clothing that you are wearing.

He holds together the food that you eat. He holds together the skin that covers your bones. As your creator, he's not distant.

He's very, very close. And you are millisecond by millisecond, absolutely dependent on him for your existence. If he decided that you should not be, you would fly into a billion fragments and disappear.

Yes, you would. You are personally and radically dependent on Christ. Even if you don't believe on him.

I'm saying that to the unbelievers in the room who don't embrace Christ, and you're listening to these words. And we just want you to know, whoever you are, we're so glad you're here listening to this crazy talk. And we are praying, oh God, grant them to see there's nothing greater than Jesus.

And he's real. Number five, last one in relation to creation. All things were created for Christ.

I suppose for me personally, this is the most important one. It shaped everything I've done for the last 50 years. It lies behind what I call my Christian hedonism.

I love to think that Christ made everything for Christ. And when you say it like that, it's like, hmm, hmm. Verse 16, at the end of the verse, I want you to see it for yourself.

All things were created through him and for him. Underline that. For him.

What's that mean? It doesn't mean he created everything to meet his needs. He's God. God has no needs.

Acts 17, 25, God is not served by human hands as though he needed anything. God doesn't need you. Jesus doesn't need you.

He make you to meet his needs. So what does it mean then? For him. Wouldn't you say that the clue is found at the end of verse 18? That in everything, he might be preeminent.

So my interpretation, putting those two verses together, is that he made everything so that he could display his preeminence in everything. For him means for his preeminence, for his excellence, for his glory, for his supremacy, to make known, to lift up. The heavens are telling the glory of Jesus.

Because all things were made through Jesus, for Jesus. To which I have found over the years, people stumble and think that's egomania. Jesus made everything to exalt Jesus.

Yes, that's what it says. So let's turn to the final three. And I'll just deal with these very briefly.

The final three statements of Paul as to the supremacy of Christ in relation to the church. Because it's these three that solve the problem of the egomania that's left over from the first five. If you get the next three, you won't accuse Jesus of egomania in making everything for Jesus.

First, verse 18. He is supreme as the head of the body. Verse 18, first part of the verse.

He is the head of the body, the church. Let me just name them and I'll come back and say a word about them. Number two.

He is supreme as the beginning of the new creation as he shatters death and comes out the first of millions. Okay, that's second half of verse 18. He is the beginning of what? Man, did I wrestle with that.

Hours some time ago. Why did he say that? The beginning, beginning. He's already talking about creation.

He's in the middle of church stuff here. Resurrection here. What's the beginning? And my conclusion is beginning of the new world, beginning of the new creation.

He's coming out of the grave. Death is history and he's the first of many. So when he came out to be preeminent in coming out first, those who are coming out after are not begrudging his coming out first.

Because you're out, I get out. That's fine. Number three.

We've already looked at verse 19. I'm going to skip verse 19 and go to 20 and say this. He is supreme as the one whose blood, you see that at the end of the verse, whose blood secures a new heaven and a new earth in which everything is reconciled.

And there's total peace with God. So I'll read it again. Through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Here's what changes the whole idea of egomania. When we say that Christ has created everything for the glory of Christ, which he did, the apex, the highest point of that glory is the glory of grace. And that's what is unfolding in relation to the church.

It's the glory of being the head, which is supreme in the body. It's the glory of being the head that supplies and supplies and supplies. It's got the mouth in there.

It's got the ears in there. It's got the eyes in the head. It's giving guidance.

It's giving wisdom. It's giving knowledge. It's giving sustenance.

The head is everything. If you lose the head, you lose the life. This is love.

It's not egomania. This is love. I'm going to be supreme, your head supplying every need.

Okay, yes. Number two, it's the glory of being not the only one to rise from the dead. He didn't say, hey, I rose from the dead, not you, not you.

I'm number one. You stay in the grave. That's exactly the opposite of what it says.

He's the first of millions upon millions of undeserving people coming out in his train in due time. This is not egomania. This is, I rose from the dead first to be preeminent in all things.

And I get to have you coming out with me. That's why I did it. And we're very happy.

I'm very happy to say you're number one. First in to kill death, first out. I'm happy with that.

And then number three, it's the glory of shedding blood. I wish I had a whole sermon on verse 20. You might have noticed that I did an Ask Pastor John on that verse on Monday.

That total accident, that was scheduled months ago. If you want to know the details of how I got here, go there. But here's my conclusion for verse 20.

I think verse 20 is saying that when Christ shed his blood in order to make peace and thus have a reconciled world, he did it in two ways. And this is important to distinguish because otherwise this text would sound like everybody's going to be saved. They're not.

Chapter 3 verse 5 says they're not. Second Thessalonians verse 1 9 says it's forever that they're cut off. This is not universalism.

Well, what is it? What happens by the blood of Jesus in verse 20? How does he make peace and have a reconciled world in which everybody is reconciled? And the answer is number one, by covering all the sins of all his people who believe. Every sin forgiven because of the blood of Jesus. The other, and I don't know who's preaching, Kenny, when you get over to 215, but nail it.

When he dies in 215, he disarms the principalities and powers. Meaning, I think, he strips them of the one damning thing they have in their hand, unforgiven sin. All my accusers, human and demonic, are finished because in Christ all my sins are forgiven.

There is nothing that can be brought against me in the court of heaven and therefore the demon accuser is gone. And I think he's banished out of this new heavens and new earth into outer darkness where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now we can say that because of the cross, peace has been made both in the covering of the sins of God's people and the banishing of those who will not believe and who can no longer accuse the people of God. So I close.

Bethlehem, dear dear Bethlehem. Jesus is our God. Jesus Christ is before all things.

Jesus Christ created all that is not God. Jesus Christ holds everything together. And Jesus Christ created everything for the glory of Jesus Christ.

And this is not egomania because it's the glory of the all-supplying head who is supreme and preeminent and supplies everything we'll ever need for holiness and joy forever and ever. It's not egomania because

it's the triumph over death as he comes out first, first and preeminent, bringing millions with him into everlasting happiness. And it's not egomania because he establishes a new heaven and a new earth in which there is complete reconciliation, nothing at odds with God at all.

And the blood of his Christ covers every sin that was ever committed by God's people. And the blood of Christ strips the devil and human accusers of the one thing they could use to damn us. And they are cast out forever.

So, what does God want from you now? The so what? You're going to leave now. We're going to sing a great song, glory be to Christ. And then you're going to leave.

So what? So what? What just happened? Here's what he wants. God, I pray that, this is Paul praying for you, that they would be strengthened with might according to your glory so that they would have endurance and patience with thankful joy as they contemplate what they just saw. So, Father, that's, I think, Paul's goal.

The glad, servant-like, humble endurance of God's people with thankful joy no matter what this world throws at us until Jesus comes. So, work that in us, I pray. This profound love for Christ in his supremacy over all things.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/bkr9oze7olA.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/the-supremacy-of-christ-in-everything/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net