

Colossians: Jesus Our Lord**Colossians 1:15-23**

The story so far. Growing in the Christian life is about understanding and relying on what God has done for us in Christ.

The Big Idea. We can be confident in Jesus because of who He is: the full and final Word who reveals God's character, authority and purposes in His world; and who shows what He has done—he has reconciled a rebellious world to God through His death on the cross.

Summary.

The false teachers in Colossae clearly undermined core gospel truths. It is not that they never talked about Jesus. The problem was that they subtly shifted people's focus from the biblical and historical Jesus. They undermined his full identity and finished work on the cross by implying that coming to Christ in conversion was not enough to have confidence for the future and eternity. So, in these momentous paragraphs, Paul lifts our eyes to the wonders of who Jesus is and what He has done. Having done that, he unpacks the astounding confidence that is every Christian's right and privilege. This provides the foundation for the next section: stick to Jesus for the whole of your Christian walk; don't think you can graduate from Him (see **Col. 2:6-7**).

Talk about: If they give Jesus any thought at all, how do your friends and colleagues tend to view Him? What relevance would they say He has for life today?

Investigate: Read Colossians 1:15-20.

1. In **verses 15-20**, Paul uses the words "every" and "all" eight times. He is trying to drive home the sufficiency of Jesus for everything—He is fully God; He made everything and is the Redeemer of everything; He thus has authority over everything; He sustains everything; He is the first to rise from the dead; He brings real and lasting peace with God.
2. Spot the parallels between the two halves of this passage: (See table next page).

	1:15-17 - CREATION	1:18-20 - RESCUE
How is Jesus described?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image of the invisible God • Firstborn over all creation • He is before all things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the body, the church • Firstborn from among the dead • God pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him
What does Jesus achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All things created by Him (and that really does mean everything!) • All things created for Him • All things hold together in Him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First born from among the dead (so has supremacy) • God pleased to reconcile all things to Himself through Christ • Made peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

- It is important that Jesus is God's image, because it effectively means that He makes the invisible God visible. He provides the greatest window into the character and purposes of God that the world has ever known. See **John 14:9**.
- Paul makes astonishing claims about what God has done through Jesus (vv. 13-14). Most people have no difficulty with the concept of God creating and sustaining the universe. What is truly mind-blowing is the Bible's claim that this same creating, all-sustaining God became a human being, none other than Jesus of Nazareth.
 - What qualifies Jesus to bring about this rescue is that He is God.
- The universe depends on Jesus both past and present. **Past:** Jesus was the one at the beginning; He was before all things; He created all things. **Present:** He holds everything together, and it is for him that everything exists.
- In **verse 16** Paul spells out that Christ's authority even extends to human rulers. Paul was writing from prison (**4:18**). The Roman world was hostile to the gospel and its messengers. In the face of such persecution, it was vital to cling to a confidence in the sovereignty of Christ. His lordship extends even to those who sent Paul to prison in the first place.
- Let's look at **verses 18-20** again. It is important that we understand that Jesus is the "head of the body, the church", because if we don't acknowledge it, we inevitably go wrong. We will make *reason, or tradition, or our leaders* into the head, and so compromise the purpose and character of the church. It seems in chapter 2 that this is the danger the Colossians were wrestling with.

- If Jesus is Lord of the church, then His word will be our rule and guide.
8. The extent of Jesus' victory on the cross (**v. 20**) is great and vast because through it He reconciled all things unto Himself—whether on earth or in Heaven.
- Jesus's death on the cross makes peace with God. Human rebellion against God caused a profound dislocation and rupture throughout God's creation. Jesus's death repairs and restores it all. Peace comes because the shedding of His blood—His death in our place, taking the punishment for rebellion we deserve onto Himself, so that we might be restored to friendship with God. See **Hebrew 9:19-26**.

Explore More. Read **John 1:1-14** and **Hebrew 1:1-4**, to see more about Jesus's identity and mission.

Apply:

1. How might you respond to a Christian friend who says: "All you need to know about Jesus is that he died to forgive us"?
 - God's purposes with the cross was not simply about forgiving someone or "getting them to heaven". It is designed, in one great decisive victory, to restore everything in the universe to the lordship of Christ.
2. What would you say to a friend who thinks Jesus is irrelevant?
 - Jesus is not just a "special friend" for Christians. The resurrection here points to Jesus's supremacy. He is Lord of all whether people recognize that or not, whether we think He is relevant or not.

The alienation from God experienced by the whole creation had been the experience of the individual Colossians as well. But through hearing the gospel of the victorious death of Christ, they reconciled to God and are presented "holy in his sight". This is what they are to continue trusting in. Their lives were changed.

1. **Verse 23** tells us what a confident Christian will look like:
 - "*keeps*" *their faith*. They continue to believe the truths of the gospel and also live by it. The truth that Jesus is the Lord of all and very purpose for the existence of the world would be the truth that dominates their decision and choices.

- *“is steadfast.”* That is, they are prepared to fight or contend for this truth, even when it costs them. They will hold to it even if they are persecuted for it.
- *“is not moved from the hope of the gospel.”* They are confident that in Christ they are fully accepted by God and sure they will live with Him forever. This gives them the ability to endure suffering and hardship now, and to be happy not to seek after what the world has to offer.

Pray:

Thank God for:

- The confidence of knowing Jesus' great authority as Creator and Rescuer.
- Our own reconciliation to God.

Ask God:

- For the ability to continue in your faith, unmoved from the gospel's hope.
- To change the hearts of friends who fail to recognize Jesus' authority.

Homework: Jesus Our Rock. Read **Colossians 1:24—2:7**