

JESUS MATTERS

Leader pages on pp. 138-141

THE POINT:
JESUS IS GOD, AND NO
ONE HAS DONE WHAT
JESUS HAS DONE.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-22

MEMORY VERSE

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him.

17 He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.

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18 He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

20 and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions.

22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.

KEY WORDS

Image (v. 15)—The Greek term for “image” carries the meanings of both representation and manifestation. Jesus is both the perfect likeness and manifestation (revelation) of God, who cannot be seen by human eyes.

Fullness (v. 19)—The term means It means “complete” or

“total. God’s will was that all His fullness dwells in Christ. All the divine attributes are completely present in Him.

Alienated and Hostile (v. 21)—All sinners are separated from and enemies of God by their sin (Rom. 5:10). This alienation and hostility originated in their sinful “minds.”

WHY DOES JESUS MATTER?

This world is full of brokenness. Children are against their parents and vice versa. Husbands and wives are at odds with one another. Housing, gasoline, clothing, and food prices are high. The amount of senseless violence and destruction are continuing to rise. These along with natural disasters have left people distressed, discouraged, restless, and confused. They can see that they need help in navigating through this life of uncertainty. They have placed in the window of their hearts a "help wanted" sign.

I have found that there are two persons interested in the job. John 10:10 says, "The thief (Satan) cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." Satan does not want to improve your life but wants to demolish it. Yet, on the other hand Jesus said, "I (Christ) am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jesus wants to change your life because having Him matters.

As we study these verses together, we'll see that Jesus has left a brief resume listing His credentials and capabilities. Join me in discovering why Jesus matters and why you need to give Him the job of ruling and reconciling our lives.

Creator of All Things //

Colossians 1:15-17

Have you ever asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) It's the question Pilate asked Jesus two thousand years ago—a question people still ask today. Many who ask this question will acknowledge that truth resides in God, but many religions and philosophies have skewed precisely what that means. God's Word is clear on this issue. "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe, through him." (Hebrews 1:1-2) Jesus is both the representation and the manifestation of God, and He is also the perfect revelation of the truth of God to humanity.

God's Word, the Bible, doesn't give us a myth or tell us a fairytale about how the world came into being. It doesn't tell us how some ancient gods created the world by killing other gods and creating soil, mountains, seas, and sky from various parts of their bodies, like the ancient Scandinavians. It doesn't try to have us believe that man was formed from a ball of maize—after failing to be able to do so with wood and mud—like the ancient Mayans. No, the Bible tells us the truth.



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The Bible tells us the truth about how the world was created and who made it.

Paul said in Colossians 1:16 that Jesus created everything. John echoed Paul and put it this way in his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created." (John 1:1-3)

WHAT CAPTURES YOUR ATTENTION IN THIS DESCRIPTION OF JESUS?

Did you grow up as I did in a house where your phone hung on the wall, and the receiver was connected to the phone on the wall by a long cord? Today, we don't have phones on the wall; they're now in our pockets and even on our wrists. Suppose you were walking down the street and found the first cell phone you'd ever seen, and it was on a park bench or just on the ground. At first, you might not have known what it was. You would've picked it up and figured out how to turn it on. Maybe it would've rang while in your hand, and you might have realized this was a phone—even though it wasn't connected to the wall by a cord.

How did that phone get there? I'm not asking how it ended up on the bench or ground, but how did the cell phone come about? Did it just pop into existence one day? Was there an explosion in a nearby factory that caused a bunch of electronic components to be thrown together, and suddenly, instantaneously, the cell phone came into being? Or you might think the opposite. Perhaps that cell phone began as a clump of iron ore that evolved over many years into the phone you found on that bench or ground. Sounds far-fetched, right?

If I came across a cell phone for the first time, I would conclude that somebody, somewhere, someway, had created it. Its existence points to the fact that some thinking, creative, rational, powerful being had made it. It wouldn't just pop into being or evolve from a pile of minerals into a complex machine.

The same is true about the world and universe we live in. It exists. We see and experience it every day. We're part of it. And the very fact that we're here in the world—with much more complexity than the latest smartphone—points to the reality that a thinking, creative, rational, powerful being caused it to come about.

That's what we can see from observation. The revelation of God's Word tells us who that Creator is, of course, and His name is Jesus. Jesus is the Creator of all things.



DIGGING DEEPER IMAGE OF GOD

In Colossians 1:15, Paul called Jesus the "image of the invisible God." We receive our English word "icon" from the Greek word that is translated "image." It is an artistic word used to depict a copy. In this case it is used to represent an exact reproduction. Christ is the exact reproduction of God in human form. Because of this Christ could make this statement to Philip, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Christ being the image of the invisible God has nothing to do with physical characteristics but involves the essence of God, His person.

Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ is "the express image of his person." We saw God's love, compassion, the grace of God, the mercy of God, and the peace of God. Not as some imperfect representation but the exact perfect, pure, unblemished reproduction of God, in the life of Christ Jesus.

How will you use this truth about Christ in teaching and evangelism?



Ruler over All Things //

Colossians 1:18-20

Jesus isn't just the Creator of all things; as this early church hymn declares, He is the Ruler of all things. If you create something, it belongs to you, and you can do with it what you want. I had a friend when I was a boy who loved to build model cars. He would spend hours gluing, assembling, and painting model Mustangs, Corvettes, and so forth. Then, he would do the strangest thing. He would glue a giant bottle rocket to the car, light the fuse, and watch the car fly down his driveway before the firework exploded, sending hundreds of painted plastic parts flying everywhere. He created it and could do what he wanted even if it didn't make sense to my young mind.

Through His creation, His life, death, and resurrection from the dead, Jesus is revealed to be the Ruler over everything. He's in charge of creation, and He's in charge of the Church. That's what Paul meant when he wrote that Jesus is the head of the Church and He has first place in everything. Some translations use the word "preeminence" here. That's a good way of understanding what Paul is communicating because Jesus isn't just first in time ("beginning"); He's first in authority. He's in charge.

What does it mean for Jesus to be the Ruler of all things? I have a pastor friend named Nicholas in South Africa. He says that Jesus is "the Boss." What does that look like in the life of a Christian? It means that Jesus has the authority over every part of our lives, guiding our decisions

and actions to align with His will. It also means that He is the central focus of our worship and devotion. By His resurrection, He gives us hope and purpose, shaping our life and future. And, as we follow Him, our choices and relationships are transformed to reflect His love, integrity, and character.

What does Jesus's preeminence mean for a world that rejects Him and refuses to accept His rule? It means that despite this rejection and refusal, Jesus still holds the ultimate authority over all creation, directs the course of history, and stands as the final judge of every person and nation. His continuous offering of grace through the unchanging truth of God's Word brings hope to a world in desperate need of redemption and reconciliation.

Jesus Is the Reconciler of All Things // Colossians 1:21-22

The Bible says that before someone comes to faith in Christ, they are at war with God. It's a hard truth for some to accept because they don't feel they're at war with Him. But Scripture says that before we become Christians, we are separated and alienated—in conflict, at war—with God. Paul told the Romans, "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life."

Paul uses the same imagery of reconciliation in his letter to the Christians in Colossae and reminds them that Jesus isn't just the Creator and Ruler of all things; He is the Reconciler of all things. The image of reconciliation is a powerful picture. In the world where Paul wrote his letters, reconciliation had a legal and relational aspect, and we see both of these in the reconciliation Paul speaks of here in Colossians 1. Legally, through our sin, we have broken God's law. Relationally, we have broken God's heart with our rebellion and are alienated from Him.

The only way to achieve reconciliation is for someone to pay the price for breaking God's law and serve as the mediator between those who are at war. Jesus did all of that through His death on the cross.

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Paul says Jesus endured all He endured for us so that He might present us "holy, faultless, and blameless before him."

- **Holy.** Normally, we think of holiness as being pious or religious, but today, people often use it in a more pejorative sense: "He's holier than thou." However, the word actually means to be set apart or dedicated to God's service.
- **Faultless.** Holiness is what Jesus has called us to be—set aside for God's service. Faultless has to do with our nature and our standing when we're reconciled.
- **Blameless.** Jesus reconciled you to God so that you might be dedicated to His service, faultless and blameless, before Him and others. Jude 24 says that this is the work of Christ in your life. "Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy."

HOW HAVE YOU SEEN JESUS CHANGE A PERSON'S MIND, HEART, AND ACTIONS?

DID YOU KNOW?

Some interpreters have incorrectly taught that Colossians 1:20 teaches universalism. Alan Cairns said, "Universalism is the heresy of the ultimate salvation of every man. This view leads naturally to the conclusion that all men will be saved. Universalism uses Acts 3:21 and Col. 1:20 to teach that God's purpose is to restore all things to their original created purity through Christ (Rom. 5:18; Heb. 2:9), so that ultimately every soul will be brought into union with God (1 Cor. 15:24–28)."²⁶ Another way of saying this is that everybody goes to heaven regardless of whether they want to or not. Yet, they minimize other scriptures which clearly teach that wicked are punished eternally (Ps. 9:17; Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19–31; Rev. 20:10–15). This also goes against man's free will to choose God's salvation.

Biblical Truth: "The wicked will return to Sheol—all the nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17).

How will you speak truth to someone who believes that believe that everyone is going to heaven?

LIVE IT

What areas in your life that you currently need to let go?

In this study, we've seen that Jesus is the Creator, Ruler, and Reconciler of everything. Jesus is God, and no one has done what Jesus has done. Choose one of the following applications:

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- **Observe.** What do you notice about how Jesus made the stars, the trees, the flowers, and people? Take time to look around at all Jesus has created and be thankful. Be specific. What are you grateful for, and why? Thank God specifically.
- **List.** Make a list of any areas of your life that you have not surrendered to Him. We often become so used to being the boss of our lives that we forget He is to be the Ruler over everything in them.
- **Share.** If you've experienced the reconciliation and salvation Jesus provided through His death, you know how life-changing that has been. Make it a priority this week to help someone else reconcile with God.

DAILY READINGS

1. GOD MAKES ALL THINGS POSSIBLE // MATTHEW 19:26

What seems impossible to man is possible to God. In fact, the phrase "I'm possible" can be derived from the word impossible. The word itself, when looked upon differently, attests to God's ability to do what mere humans cannot do. God allows certain trials and tribulations into our lives to show us how insufficient mankind is and how almighty He is. All things are possible through Him; we need only to trust and believe that. While what is seen is factual, it is not necessarily truth. Truth rests in God's Word alone. When, humanly, insurmountable facts contradict God's Word, the believer's responsibility is not to fear or panic, but to speak Truth into the situation and let God do what He does best: perform the impossible.

It is impossible for God not to keep His Word.

2. WHERE WERE WE? // JOB 38:4

God asks Job in Job 38:4, where was Job when He used His Word, Jesus, to lay the foundation of the earth? God is asking Job this question to reveal to him that He is God alone. There is not a human on earth who can mimic His intelligence or uphold creation as He does. God alone is supreme in presence, power, and prudence. The intellect man has access to here on earth pales in comparison to God's wisdom. No amount of education, wealth, status, or fame will ever prevail above God's brilliance. Believers do best when bowed in surrender to the One, Omnipotent God.

Authentic wisdom begins and ends with God.

3. EVEN MORE THAN THAT! // EPHESIANS 3:20

No matter what the believer may petition God for, God desires to do exceeding, abundantly above all that is requested of Him. God desires to exceed abundance in relation to the measure of what is requested of Him concerning any specific situation. This means that mankind does not have the ability or capacity to ask on God's level of desire for His beloved. Any time we ask God for

anything according to His Word, He nods yes in His perfect timing but adds on so much more to it. Accepting Jesus as one's Lord and Savior makes this truth a possibility in the life of mankind. With acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, one exits a life of poverty and enters a life full of possibility and prosperity in every area of life.

Jesus's shed Blood opened the door of abundance to all believers.

4. BELIEVE AND CONFESS! // ROMANS 10:9

Romans 10:9 proclaims that, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." This truth holds true not only at the point of initial salvation but for the duration of the believer's life. Believing God's Word and confessing it over our lives is how salvation is realized in any given situation. Jesus is our ever-present help, and we need only to believe. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and therefore the only One who has the power to deliver us out of life's hardships. All power in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Him (Matt. 28:18), and it is therefore to our advantage to trust Him and Him alone.

Jesus saves us from whatever comes against us.

5. FAITH AND GRACE // EPHESIANS 2:8

God saved us by His grace when we believed, and we cannot, to any extent, take credit for this. It is an undeserved privilege. Salvation is a free gift Jesus's shed blood made possible for us. Salvation is not earned through religious effort, but through genuine faith and belief in Christ. No amount of works, on our behalf, could ever qualify us for what the blood of Jesus alone has secured for us. The grace of God given to us through Jesus's sacrifice has provided us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). There is nothing in this life or the one to come that Jesus has not already provided for all those who believe and receive.

Jesus is God's grace gift to mankind. All we must do is believe.