

If Christ is supreme, stay locked in!

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[0 : 00] As we begin, let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us now to tune our hearts to deeper understand the riches of your supreme!

Son, Christ Jesus. Please empower us by your Holy Spirit that he may open our eyes and behold the majesty and! splendor of the Son. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Who is Jesus to you? Who is Jesus to you? Some say just a man, others perhaps a great teacher.

However, I'm sure most of us here today would gladly declare Jesus is my Savior. And if you asked the Christians in the church at Colossae, they would have probably declared Jesus is my Savior too.

So, if the Colossian Christians could say that, then why did Paul need to write to them in the first place? Last week, Paul's big prayer for the Colossian church was that they would grow in their knowledge of God, that they would grow in their faith, and that they would grow in their spiritual fruit.

[1 : 15] More and more of the good things they already had. But the Colossians might then ask, how? What's the next step to growing?

And this is where we encounter the big Colossian problem. If you recall, there was another kind of gospel circulating in the Colossian church at the time.

It was a bit of a Rojak, if you will. On the one hand, it pushed for hyper-spiritual experiences. Things like visions, angelic visitations and encounters, and chasing after emotional highs.

But on the other hand, it also pushed all kinds of laws onto the Christian life, like the need to observe certain festivals. So were these truly the keys to Christian growth?

Were these really the secrets to faithful fruit-bearing? The temptation was rather simple. Colossian Christians, if you really, really, really want to be a mature Christian, then don't miss out on these things.

[2 : 29] Yes, you have Jesus, but that's really just step one. Yes, yes, we're with you, Paul. We know that we are saved, but you need more.

And that temptation happens today, too. See, I've had my own gospel Rojak experience. When I was growing up as a young Christian in this church, I learned Jesus is my saviour, too.

I heard those words in Sunday school, and a big thank you to all of the faithful teachers. I prayed prayers, I sang songs, and on occasion, I even read my own Bible.

Wow! Now, I believed, but I didn't really feel like I was growing. At least not until I joined an inter-school Christian camp in my teens.

Now, at this camp, I was exposed to so much I had never seen before. The Singaporean pastors would prophesy words over my friends and I that none of us could understand, and people were falling all around me.

[3 : 37] There were tears. There was gold dust on my hands. The list goes on. And at that moment, Christianity felt real to me for the first time.

It felt bigger than just some story of a man and a cross. I felt like I had reached the next step of my Christian maturity.

But I will be direct, and I will be honest here. While at that camp, the name of Jesus was uttered many times, more often than not, it was used as an invocation, like some sort of magic word you would say to do something spiritual.

And in the preceding months that followed, my feelings of Christian realness and maturity began to fade, leaving with the pastors who returned to Singapore.

And I was left asking, where to now? See, I knew Jesus was my saviour. I'm sure that was true, but there must be something more.

[4 : 44] And that, my friends, is the result of Gospel Rojak. Paul understands the struggle that many of us face.

We know Jesus is our saviour, but because the gospel starts to feel overused, like a story we've heard our grandpa tell us too many times. We find ourselves seeking more for Christian growth. Perhaps we're missing something. Maybe we just need to zoom out and see the bigger picture beyond Jesus. And Paul's answer today is this.

Yes. Yes. Yes. To mature, you do need to expand your view, but not of Christianity. You need to expand your view of Jesus.

You need to grasp just how vast and glorious the Jesus you already believe in truly is. Paul wants to open our eyes to the supremacy of Christ.

[5 : 47] And in today's passage, he does so through a stunning piece of poetry. And as we discover just how big Jesus truly is, God willing, by the end, you'll feel grounded and settled in your knowledge of Christ.

Now, as you look at Colossians 1.15-23, you may ask, is this really poetry? And while it's not immediately clear in English, Colossians 1.15-23 is indeed poetry in two parts.

And in the first half of the poem, Paul beautifully teaches that Jesus is all supreme over all creation. Now, that point is immediately clear from verse 15. The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Now, we must not be misled here. Jesus being called the Son and firstborn does not imply that Jesus is somehow a created being.

[7 : 00] Now, that clearly cannot be the case because here the Son is the image of the invisible God. And that may sound strange at first.

How can something invisible have an image? Well, it might have made more sense to the first listeners. Because in Greek philosophy, an image shares in the reality that it reveals.

And may very well be said to be the reality. Or if I put that in simpler terms, when calling Christ the image of the invisible God, Paul is not saying that Jesus is somehow a created being who is a distinct picture of God.

Rather, Paul is saying that Jesus is an exact, visible representation of God. He illuminates God's presence and reveals the invisible God to us.

Or in even simpler terms, Jesus is God. He is the Yahweh of the Old Testament. Now, humans are also made in the image of God.

[8 : 18] But there are two things which set us apart from Jesus. Firstly, he is a perfect image. In his life, and on the cross and what followed, Jesus lived as the perfect image of God.

His perfect humanity fully glorifies and reflects the God that he reveals. So Jesus is different from human beings.

Yes, we are also made in the image of God. But because of our sin, we are distorted images. Who no longer perfectly reflect God, but instead decided to set up our own image to worship instead. And secondly, Jesus stands apart from other humans, well, simply by not being created. Rather, he holds authority over all creation, including you and I.

That's why he is called the firstborn. You see, in calling Jesus firstborn over all creation, Paul's readers would have understood it to mean that Jesus is supreme over all creation.

[9 : 40] In the Old Testament, firstborn isn't mainly about birth order. It's more about your status and your authority. So that's why, for example, in Psalms 89 verse 27, the promised king who is coming can still be appointed as the firstborn, even though he comes after David.

And so, as the firstborn, he gets the highest honour of being the most exalted king on earth. So Paul isn't saying that Jesus is first to be born.

He's saying that Jesus outranks all created things, which naturally leads us to verses 16 and 17.

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. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Now, did you notice just how maximal the language Paul uses is here?

All things were created in him. All things are created through him. All things are created for him, and in him all things hold together.

[11 : 15] So how can Jesus not be supreme over all creation if creation finds its very beginning in Christ?

Paul is saying that Jesus was present in Genesis 1. It is by his power all things were created. But there is a subtle difference between saying that all things are created in him versus all things are created through him.

See, through him implies that it is by his power all things are created. That's good. But in him implies more to do with verse 17, where we see that in him all things hold together.

In other words, creation can only be sustained if the creator keeps on sustaining it within him. And I don't just mean that in some abstract sense.

[12 : 26] You imagine, for example, that someone paints a beautiful painting of the cosmos, and then he walks away. What happens to that painting?

It might sit on a shelf nicely, or be framed and put on a wall. If it's really good, it might be sold to a museum. But the painter has left. The painting remains.

Now, Jesus' relationship with the created cosmos that we inhabit is nothing like that. If Jesus walked out on the cosmos, it would not just sit nicely on his cosmic mantelpiece.

Friends, it would cease to exist nor function. Jesus created all things, and in him, they stay created, they stay functional, and they stay out of chaos.

Now, you might say, well, science has revealed that the universe is not chaos. It's actually governed by the rules of science, the rules of physics and chemistry and biology, you name it.

[13 : 38] God doesn't have to keep sustaining the universe. And, you know, hey, as a fellow lover of science, I might have to agree. You know, we can study the cosmos, and it begins to make sense.

The universe ticks because there are rules to it. You know, rules that stop, for example, water from turning into wine, or dense objects, like humans, from walking on water.

wait just a minute. Take a step back and look at the life of Jesus. What were some of the things he was known to do?

Well, to break the laws of physics, the laws of chemistry and biology, to challenge nature and win. Jesus constantly did things that defy the laws that govern our universe.

Why? Because the very laws that govern created order bend at his will. And why shouldn't they when he created and he sustains all creation?

[14 : 45] And friends, this goes beyond the cosmos that we can see because Jesus created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones and powers and rulers and authorities.

He created them all. Now, when Paul says thrones and powers and rulers and authorities here, right after mentioning visible and invisible, we understand then that Paul is not merely referring to the Roman Empire or the Trump administration.

He's describing spiritual realities beyond what we can see. The invisible, the dominions and the powers and forces of both good and evil in the spiritual realms, all of them are created to and subject to the supreme Jesus Christ.

So it's no wonder then that beyond healing the sick and feeding the 5,000 and raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus also showed his supremacy in commanding demons.

demons, that demons would be able to possess and torment and enslave humans but cower before Jesus is no surprise when you realize that Jesus reigns supreme over them as well.

[16 : 15] And if Jesus is the authority above all authorities, if the universe is created by him and bends at his word, if all created order finds its beginning in Jesus, the image of the invisible God, well then creation is most certainly for him as Paul puts in verse 16.

Brothers and sisters, this means that the universe finds not only its beginning but its purpose and its meaning in Jesus.

All things were created for him. All things were created to honor and to glorify and to worship Jesus. So your purpose is Christ and the purpose of the universe is Christ. Christ. When I took a family trip to the Balkans two years back, I was amazed at the beautiful landscapes and cities, the majestic waterfalls, the tranquil lakes and orange sunsets.

Do you know that feeling when you look at all of that and you say, wow, how majestic, how glorious. Words like that used to describe creation.

[17 : 44] Why? Because all of that glory points to a majestic creator in whom it stands to worship. Now friends, if all of this is true, then we are left with one certain conclusion.

And all supreme God demands all of you. He not only demands all of you, no, no, no, He deserves all of you.

Every aspect of your life, your family, your money, your marriage, your job, your children, your time, your devotion and energy, your thoughts, your words, your actions, your very spirit, heart and mind and soul, all is to be given to the glory of their supreme creator, Christ Jesus.

And if that is true, then friends, you and I are in a very, very bad spot. Because we, who were made to reflect God's glory, have rejected it.

Paul puts it starkly in verse 21. We became alienated from God, enemies in our own minds, because of our wrong actions.

[19 : 10] In other words, we are talking about more than just eating a forbidden fruit. No, our sinful rebellion cuts us off from our glorious creator, making us strangers, even enemies to him.

In rejecting our supreme ruler to be our own rulers, we bring sin and its horrific effects upon all of creation. Creation may have started very good, and today, it's much more ugly, isn't it?

You know, thinking back to that family trip, many of the beautiful landscapes and cities I saw had some history of human bloodshed and violence. The waterfalls and nature reserves need careful preservation because we keep polluting and destroying the environment.

Friends, creation is groaning under the weight of human sin. Where there was once prosperous life and blessing, now sickness, pain, death.

We are a far cry from the fully glorifying cosmos that we were created to be. So how does Christ deal with a corrupt and damaged creation?

[20 : 29] praise be to God that he doesn't walk out on it. He doesn't destroy it outright. He chooses to fix it. And what's even more amazing is that he's not just going to fix the current cosmos, he's going to prepare an all-new creation, one where he is once again all supreme.

sin. But to achieve that, he must first deal with the root of the problem, our sin. How does the supreme image of God, in whom all the fullness of God dwells, show himself as a victor over sin? Not by brute force, not by violence, but by the blood that flowed from his body, strung up on the cross. This is the second half of the poem, verse 19.

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

My brothers and sisters, that is the incredible gospel that you believe in. The very fullness of God, humbled himself by taking on human flesh, and he walked among us.

[21 : 57] He demonstrated the fullness of his deity in his miraculous signs, but in his last moments, he did not look strong, he did not look powerful, he did not look like the creator and sustainer of all things, he looked weak, he looked powerless.

Despite being the creator, creation mocked him, they spat on him, they flogged him, and they nailed him to a cross. That is what the image of the invisible God did for you.

And so it's not weakness, it's God acting as God. And truly, that means it's power and strength on display.

We've come to realize through Christ what true strength and power is for. It's to be used to serve and save the weak. It's the tried and true story arc that we all know and love.

It's Aslan the lion in Narnia. It's Gandalf the great in Lord of the Rings. In such stories, the villains lord their power over the weak. But we recognize the one true hero who although strong sacrifices themselves to save the weak.

[23 : 15] Why? Because that's the way the universe was designed. That's the way our creator made things to be. And that is what he modeled for us on the cross.

So don't be deceived, friends. That man and that cross, he is still fully God. And so Christ deals with our sin in this way.

He fixes our alienation from him. the word used by Paul to explain this is reconciliation, which means to restore a broken relationship between two parties.

And so Christ, by his blood, breaks the cycle of sin and heals our broken relationship with God.

Once we were enemies destined for eternal death, but now peace, which has been won between God and us only because our creator shed his blood in our stead.

Friends, we were created for him. You are created to be in a relationship with this gracious God.

But there's yet another amazing truth here that you may not have realized.

[24 : 32] It's that Christ did not die just for you. He did not die just to save the human race.

Because you look at verse 20, Christ shed his blood on the cross and made peace and reconciled

what?

The human race? No. To reconcile all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven. He is going to reconcile all of creation back to himself.

All things created for him. Friends, he died to save all of creation. The cosmos is not just the stage upon which the drama of salvation played out.

Friends, it is the target of salvation. You see, by his death and resurrection, Jesus sparks the beginning of a new creation.

Verse 18 tells us that he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Christ, in rising again and conquering death, opens the door for others to follow him.

[25 : 48] You can think of it this way. If Christ never rose from the dead, then none of us would rise from the dead. Or at least we would be trapped in eternal condemnation and judgment.

creation would continue on and on and on, suffering under the weight of our sin. But because Jesus has risen from the dead, he opens the door.

And as he ushers in the new creation, and because he's the first to rise from the dead, friends, you can bet he will be supreme over all of those who do the same.

And Jesus has already begun to usher in that new creation even today. Because Paul says that Jesus, in verse 18, is the head of the body, the church.

Oh, what's that got to do with the new creation, you ask? You are part of the new creation. The lordship and supremacy of Christ, which will be seen fully in the new creation, where is that best seen today?

[27 : 01] Here, in the church. It's seen in how the gospel message that created the church is being preached every Sunday and is being preached by missionaries to every creature under heaven.

So, B-E-M-K-E-C, you are the body of Christ. You were once alienated from God, God, but Christ died for you, and you have chosen to put your trust in him.

So, now, your salvation is secure in Jesus Christ. He is your head. He is your chief. He is your source of life and nourishment.

He is supreme over you. So, you want the secret ingredient to growing as a Christian? Stay attached to the supreme head.

Keep in communion with a church that recognizes the supremacy of Christ. Only when Christ sustains and nourishes you can you truly bear spiritual fruit.

[28 : 16] Christ's death for all of creation means that we can choose to set aside our differences and bear with one another. Christ's humble service means that we can serve counting others more important than ourselves.

We begin to use our gifts to serve our brothers and sisters the same way Christ used his power to serve and save us. Christ forgave so we can forgive.

That is the transforming power of the gospel you already believe. And as we continually marvel at the great supremacy of Christ we likewise will be overcome with that same sense of purpose that has captured Paul to reflect the gospel message to the whole world to be servants of the gospel.

So we should be encouraging our fellow brothers and sisters to continue looking to our supreme Christ and nothing else for only Christ is supreme.

Isn't that a wonderful picture? If B-E-M-K-E-C looked like that then we would stand in contrast to an alienated world. We would be a testament to the peace that Jesus has won by his blood.

[29 : 40] And yes these things are wonderful and we can surely aspire to them as the body of Christ but we also admit they're hard to do. We won't always do them well.

But praise be to God that we aren't saved by being a perfect body of Christ. We are saved by the supreme blood of Christ alone.

To use the analogy Paul uses, if Christ is the head, you can only grow in your Christ likeness by staying attached to the head. You don't grow in your Christ likeness to be attached to the head.

And if Christ can sustain the entire universe, then Christ can sustain you. Let me give you a picture of what this looks like.

it's in verse 22 that Jesus has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you wholly in his sight without blemish and free from accusation.

[30 : 45] So imagine a pearlescent white room where all the dead await judgment. And at the front there is a scale that will measure your righteous standing before God.

Now one man walks up far full of all of his deeds in his hand. It's thick and full of white papers with a few stray red papers bursting at the seams.

And he approaches the scale and hands his file to the angel and the angel says wow heavy. And he flips open the pages and says impressive you've given to charities built hospitals funded education for the underprivileged and then he flips to a red paper.

Oh but you did all of that for your own glory and your own fame? Well why shouldn't I? The man protested. But the angel ignores him and signals to the scales.

He steps up on the plate. The scales move. Not good enough it reads. And the man is sent away vexed and frustrated.

[31 : 52] Now a second man walks up his file heavy and very very red. The angel takes the file and says wow you've got your work cut out for you.

But as this happens Jesus walks into the room one file in hand completely white. He hands it to the angel and without any protest but in fear and reverence the angel signals to the scales.

But just as the second man gets ready to step up the angel stops him and says not you him Jesus steps up to the plate. The scales move.

He's overwhelmingly good. And the second man is welcomed! Into Paradise. That is what Jesus does for you. You are already secure before God thanks to Christ.

You need nothing else. This is the power held out. This is the hope for you in the gospel. Now brothers and sisters, I hope that at this point you've already come to see through this beautiful section of scripture just how magnificent and supreme Jesus is.

[33 : 08] And as we begin to close, I have to ask you again, who is Jesus to you? Because there are two kinds of people in the congregation today.

Firstly, either you are already on team Jesus or you, you know, maybe this is your first time hearing about Jesus and you're still deciding who Jesus is to you.

So let me first address the second group. You need to understand that Jesus Christ was not just a man who died to give you a second chance. It's much bigger than that.

Christ is the supreme ruler over all creation. He is the king of kings. He is the lord of lords. He reigned supreme when he created all things.

He reigned supreme throughout creation and history and he will continue to reign supreme in the last day. So I urge you accept his reconciling work for you on the cross and you can experience new life with Jesus.

[34 : 11] One where the entire cosmos takes on a whole new glorious meaning and purpose. You were not created out of chaos. You were created to be in a relationship and to feel the love of a God who loves you so much that he died to win you back even as his enemies.

So now to the Christians is Jesus merely your saviour or is he so much more?

Because the gospel is not just Jesus is my saviour he rose as your king. And my prayer is that through today's passage you have come to see the lordship of Jesus in a new light.

If everything we've just explored is true then we must stay locked in to the gospel. The great and precious promises that we've seen they all come with a condition in verse 23.

If you continue in your faith established and firm and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. So if you consider yourself a Christian please heed this warning.

[35 : 29] Christ is your supreme head. And if you decide that an all supreme Christ is not enough for you and that to grow as a Christian and to be saved you need more then you are sadly settling for less and you will lose connection with the head and you will wither and you will die.

And what a sad thing that would be. I think back to that spiritual hunger! I experienced as a teen and realized it was not the gospel that was deficit it was my faith.

I failed to recognize that the Christ I was taught in Sunday school was so much bigger than I could ever imagine. I thought that he was just a good man who died on the cross to give me a second chance.

I mean, I knew he was God, but it never clicked in my head that he was God. We can all be tempted from time to time to feel that Jesus just isn't enough.

We end up chasing those spiritual highs because they're novel, they're exciting, they make Christianity look big and powerful and fantastical, but we all want to experience that life-transforming Worship rally?

[36 : 43] Ask yourselves, are these things truly helping us cling to our Supreme Creator, or are they merely distractions from Him? Now, for others, it may be less about experience, it's more about reverent law-keeping and action.

Some Christians hold to the Sabbath to this day, and some dress in traditional Jewish attire, and refuse to call Jesus Jesus. He must be called Yeshua, they say. Whether it's spiritual highs or solemn rule-keeping, both are two sides of the same coin.

The feeling that Jesus just isn't enough, the feeling that we need to see things bigger, to get to that next step, and the sad irony, is that if you forsake the gospel of Christ for these things, then your picture is just not big enough.

Because today, we've seen that Jesus is so much bigger than we could ever imagine. So brothers and sisters, no one likes a scam.

Don't fall for this one. Don't trade away the supreme Jesus for a handful of nothing. Stick to Jesus, because he is all supreme.

[38 : 02] I mean, seriously, why would you look for anything else if Christ is supreme over all? If he is the very image of God, with all of God's fullness dwelling on him, then you won't find true fullness in spiritual experiences, or strict rule-keeping.

you already have the real deal. If all things, heaven and earth, visible and invisible, authorities and powers, were created in him, then why fear demons?

Why feel the need for extra spiritual blessing? And God's plan, established before creation, was to reconcile all things through Christ's sacrifice.

So you don't need any supplemental salvation plans. You don't need any gospel plus add-on rules. After all, you can only be reconciled to a supreme God on his supreme terms.

And if Christ is supreme over the whole cosmos, you can bet he's sufficient for you. So stand firm when people try to shake your faith by suggesting you need more.

[39 : 13] You don't need more. You have Christ, who is all supreme and all sufficient for you. So keep turning to the gospel.

Pray that Christ would sustain you. Keep reading your Bibles. Keep searching and seeking out good and faithful gospel teaching and discipleship. Be satisfied in Christ.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Remind yourself of these things. Remind yourself that if Christ is supreme, then you need to stay locked in.

Let's pray. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for how you have showed us today the majesty and beauty of Christ.

We thank you that you have created us for a good reason, that we may behold the glory of our risen Savior Jesus, who died on the cross to deal with our sin.

[40 : 15] We thank you that you didn't give up on us. And we thank you that one day we will, together with the whole new creation, worship and glorify the supreme Christ forever.

Help us today to always see Jesus as enough. Help us to stay rooted in him and seek nothing else. In the name of the supreme Christ, we pray.

Amen. Amen.