

MAJESTY – WORSHIP HIS MAJESTY!

Colossians 1:15-19

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This is the clearest statement in all of the Bible as to the nature of Jesus Christ. The Word, Who was Jesus, was God. And Jesus Himself affirmed His deity when He said in John 8:58 when He said, “Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”. And the words I AM are the Greek equivalent to God’s description of Himself to Moses in the burning bush. And there was no doubt in the minds of the Pharisees listening to Jesus as to what He was saying. For when He told them that He was the I AM they took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy. And the same thing happened in John 10. When Jesus told the Jews that He and His Father were one, they took up stones to stone Him again because they said that He, being a man, was making Himself God (John 10:33).

Well, beloved, for 2000 years now nothing has changed. Most of the world denies John 1:1. They say, “There is no way that Jesus could be God. God would never take upon Himself the sins of all mankind and die on a cross. Utterly ridiculous”. But what the world calls ridiculous is the bedrock of the Christian faith. Christianity either rises or falls on the nature of Jesus Christ. If Jesus is not God then He is a liar. Paul is a liar, Peter is a liar, John is a liar, and Jude is a liar, for all of these write that Jesus Christ was God, and if Jesus is not God then He could not be our Savior. And the devil knows that. And that is the reason he infiltrated the early church with false teachers who were purporting the lie that Jesus was not God. That is the major reason that Paul wrote the book of Colossians, to absolutely destroy this heresy that threatened the church. And the purpose of my message is

that you leave with joy in your soul that God has become a Man and has died for your sins. And that if you do not know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior that you will come to know Him today.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Colossians 1:13-19. Two weeks ago we looked in depth at the redemption that we have in Jesus. Jesus delivered all those who trust in Him from the domain of darkness, from the death grip of Satan. And He did it through the shedding of His own blood for our sins. And beginning in verse 15 Paul tells us just Who this Jesus is that died in our place. He says first of all that Jesus is the **likeness of the Father**. Jesus is the **image of God**. Now, the word “image” means “an exact representation in every respect”. In other words, there is no difference between the original and the image. The image could just as well be the original as the original. verse 19 repeats the thought – in Christ **all** the fullness dwells. And in 2:9 Paul repeats the thought again, saying that in Jesus dwells **all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form**. Can you see what Paul is doing? He is fighting the death fight with the heresy of Gnosticism, the notion that Jesus was just an emanation from God, a demigod, a high-class angel.

We read of Jesus being the image of God in other places in the NT. Jesus said in John 14:9, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father”. Heb. 1:3 says that Jesus is “the brightness of His (God’s) glory and the **express image** of His person”. But how can this be? How can Jesus have the exact same nature as God the Father, how can Jesus be God, if there is only one God? Well, friends, it is a mystery. Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3:16, “And without controversy great is the **mystery** of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh...” Paul says that there is no argument whatsoever against the fact that Jesus’ deity is a mystery. You say that you don’t understand the Trinity? So what? Do you

understand electricity? Few of us do. But we use it every day. Do you understand your smart phone? Very few of us do. It is a lot smarter than we are. But what would you do without it? Do you understand your wife? Who does? But we still reap the wonderful blessings of being married, don't we? Well, beloved, the Trinity is like your wife. No one understands the Trinity. But what blessings come from this precious truth!!! God, manifested in the flesh. God, dying for my sin. Like the old hymn writer said, "Amazing love, how can it be, that thou My God shouldst die for me".

But I want us to pursue this thought of Jesus being the image of God just a bit further. Images are always helpful when we are seeking to understand what something looks like or how something operates. If I buy something for the house or a gift for one of my grandkids that must be assembled, if it has more than two parts I need a diagram of how to put it together or else I'll be all day trying to figure it out. If I want to know how to be a better husband, the best way to learn is to hang out with a couple where the man is doing it right and watch him at work. Whoever first said that a picture is worth a thousand words knew what they were talking about.

So tell me, can you think of anything in the world that would be harder to understand, to figure out, than what God was like? How God operates? Men have been trying to figure out God ever since they've lived on the planet, and the vast, vast majority have gotten it wrong. It was not very long at all after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden that men began to create idols and bow down to them. They were images just as Jesus was an image all right, but images of imaginary gods. And in the NT era the Greeks and Romans created their pantheon of gods, and many were vicious, angry creatures. The Mormons declare that one day you can become a god yourself if you are good

enough, and that you can have a world of your own to rule over, just like God rules this world. They believe that Adam was actually God and that Eve was one of his celestial wives that He brought down to the Garden of Eden with Him. I'm just saying there are some strange ideas about God that have been conceived in the mind of men.

But beloved, God desires so much that we know Him, that there is absolutely no confusion in our minds as to what He is like, that He has sent us a perfect image of Himself to live and move among us, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, I ask you, what is your concept of God today? Is He a tyrant in the sky, as many of the Greeks and Romans believed? Is He a senile old man, out of touch with the universe, as many believe today? Or is He a gloried Santa Claus to you, coming to town with switches for you if you're naughty and presents for you if you're nice?

Friends, don't be deceived by believing in a god that you've created in your own mind! A god you've created from what you've read on the internet or what you've gleaned from conversations with your friends. You are no smarter than the Greeks, Romans, and Mormons. There are tons of people who say, "My God doesn't care what my sexual preference is if I am committed to a monogamous relationship". Or, "My God doesn't care if I ever go to church or not if I love my neighbor as myself". And these people are right. The god they've created in their own minds lets them live as they please without any consequences at all. But they are false gods that lead them to real destruction. And the only way you can know what the real God is like then look to the perfect image of God, to His Son Jesus Christ.

But notice in verse 15 something that being the likeness of the Father entails. Paul writes that Jesus is **the firstborn of all creation**. Now, ever since the first century this verse has been a proof text for heretics who deny the deity of Christ. And here's

what these heretics say. “Why, it says right there in the Bible that Jesus was the firstborn. It’s plain as day. He was the first creation of God. So He can’t be God Himself”. In our generation it is the Jehovah Witnesses among many others who cry that firstborn means the first of God’s creations. But while the word “firstborn” can mean firstborn in time; its primary meaning is firstborn in position or rank.

You see, in Exodus 4:22 Israel is called the first-born of God, even though there were many nations that preceded her in existence. But she was and is uniquely special in God’s eyes. Israel alone is God’s chosen people. In both Jewish and Greek culture the firstborn son always had the greatest inheritance. That’s the reason that Jacob stole Esau’s birthright and blessing. As the firstborn Esau was to inherit much more than Jacob, and Jacob was covetous of his brother. In verse 18 Paul calls Jesus the firstborn from the dead, but numerous people were resurrected before Jesus. But He was firstborn because He was God’s only begotten Son, His only unique Son. So “firstborn” means one who is honored above all others, and God has honored Jesus above all creation.

But “firstborn” means more than honor, it also means authority, which brings us to the second characteristic of Jesus. He is not only the **likeness of the Father**, but He is also the **Lord of all creation**. Look at verse 15 again. Jesus is the sovereign ruler of this universe. And should anyone in Colossae question Jesus’ authority, Paul goes on and tells us just why He has such authority. Look at verse 16. By Jesus all things were created in heaven and earth. They were created through Him and for Him, that is, for His pleasure and His glory. Did you know that you were created for Jesus’ pleasure and glory? You certainly were. Paul says that whether you eat, drink, or whatever you do, do all to the

glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Oh, what a privilege! But Jesus is Lord because He created all things.

There is another reason that Jesus is Lord of all creation. Look again at verse 17. By Jesus all things consist. They hold together. We've pointed this out before. But what is everything in this world made of? It is made of billions and billions of atoms that come together and form whatever structure you may be speaking of. This pulpit consists of billions and billions of atoms of wood. But do you remember from 5th grade science the makeup of an atom? Atoms consist of protons, neutrons, and electrons. The protons are positively charged, the neutrons have no charge, and the electrons are negatively charged. The protons and neutrons comprise the nucleus of an atom and the electrons are in continuous revolution around the nucleus. And we know that particles of like charge repel each other. So how is it that billions of positively charged protons can stay together to form anything? Why does this pulpit not just explode and fly off everywhere into space? Not a scientist alive can tell give you a reason. Listen to the testimony of one, Karl K. Darrow, who was a physicist at the Bell (AT&T) Laboratories:

“You grasp what this implies (the fact that like particles of the atom repel each other). It implies that all the massive nuclei have no right to be alive at all. Indeed, they should never have been created, and, if created, they should have blown up instantly. Yet here they all are.... Some **inflexible inhibition** is holding them relentlessly together. The nature of the inhibition is also a secret... one thus far reserved by Nature for herself”

But if the learned Mr. Darrow were a Christian he could tell you how the atom holds together. It could say, “It is by the power

of Jesus Christ. By Jesus all things hold together. What mighty power belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ”!

Now, if Jesus Christ holds all things together on this planet, we can be sure of a few more things. We can be sure that the world will not be flooded one day because of melting glaciers due to climate change. We can be sure that we will not run out of natural resources one day that would cause a permanent world-wide blackout. We can be sure that the ozone layer will not be destroyed one day and all of us will be burned up by deadly ultraviolet rays. Now, all these things just might happen after the Rapture, when the devil is the devastating despot over the entire world, but not while King Jesus is in charge! Because our King Jesus holds all things together.

There is a third characteristic that Paul gives about Jesus in our text. He is the **likeness of the Father**, He is the **Lord of all creation**. And Jesus is also **leader of the church** (verse 18a). There are three basic forms of church government among the different denominations today. There is the congregational form, to which most Baptists adhere. There is the Presbyterian form, to which most Presbyterians and some Baptists adhere. There is the Episcopalian form, to which Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Church follows. But there is another form to which every church that professes to be Christian had better adhere, and that is the Submissive form, the form that is submissive to Jesus Christ. For God has made Jesus the head of His church. He is the One who is the chief, the master, the Lord of the church. Not a pastor. Not a body of deacons. Not a body of elders. Not an administrative board. It is Jesus Who leads His church.

And notice why Jesus is the head of the church. He is the beginning of the church. And the Greek word means that Jesus is the founder of the church and the source of the church’s life and power. But Jesus is also the head of the church because He is

the firstborn from the dead. By His resurrection life in us we will be resurrected one day. And here's another reason that God has made Jesus the head of the church. God says in Acts 20:28 that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. Let that soak in for a moment. The price of the church's redemption was the blood of Jesus, which was the blood of God. How valuable is the church to Jesus! And because He purchased the church it is His church, as He said in Matt. 16:18. And Jesus says in that same verse that He is building His church. And for all these reasons, beloved, Jesus has the right to be the head of His church!

And beloved, all of these things also cry out to us with a loud, unison voice, "Jesus loves His church!" Peter says that He has made us a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people (1 Peter 2:9). And concerning Jesus' love for him, Solomon wrote, "His banner over me is love" (Song of Solomon 2:4). Beloved, there is no greater position, no greater privilege, than to be member of Jesus' universal church, the saved of all the ages of every race, tongue, and tribe. And likewise, there is no greater earthly society of which to belong than the local church, God's people coming together to worship and Him and carry out His mission in this world. For the believer in Jesus, that's what life's all about.

So we've seen that Jesus is the **likeness of the Father**, and that He is the **Lord of all creation**, and that He is the **leader of the church**. But before we close we must see the end result of these three things. Look again at the last phrase of verse 18 ("that in all things He might have the preeminence"). The Greek word for "preeminence" is an interesting word. It means "to be first or have first place", to have the highest place of honor that there is. And that is the position of our Jesus Christ. Above all angels, above all men, above all other created things. If the carpenters had had an annual convention in Jesus' day and brought their

masterpieces to be judged, Jesus would sweep the awards every year. Likewise for the Academy Awards and the Nobel prizes and the CMA awards and every professional sports award or in any other professional guild. No one would ever win but Jesus. He alone would receive glory and honor. But here's what makes the word "preeminence" so interesting. It is the only time it is used in the entire New Testament. Because no other creature under heaven is worthy to be in the same classification as the preeminent Jesus!

Back in the year 2000 Tiger Woods did an amazing thing. He was already the best golfer in the world, but at the U.S. Open Tiger stamped an exclamation point on it. Tiger won the U.S. Open by a whopping 15 strokes. It was the largest margin of victory in a major golf tournament in history. And to give you a perspective on what he did, the old record was 13 strokes and it was set in 1862. I remember watching Tiger walk up the 18th fairway on the last hole and thinking, he is a man among boys. Can you imagine how small and inept every other PGA golfer felt that day? Tiger had put them all to shame, and he had all the glory! Oh, but if Tiger and Jesus ever teed it up together, Tiger would be a school child and Jesus would get all the glory. For in all things Jesus has the preeminence!

So who is Jesus? Jesus is the likeness of the Father. Jesus is God! Jesus is the Lord over all Creation. Jesus is Leader of His church, and He is worthy of all of our worship and praise. But the question you must answer today is, "Is Jesus the Lord and Leader of my life?" Is He? May we pray.