

## Colossians 1:15-17

April 20, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

*What do you believe about Jesus?*

*What is informing your beliefs about Him?*

### Today's Confusion about Jesus Christ:

- One among many religious leaders, all equal in substance, claims and message
- Jesus is simply Western culture's Ghandi, Dali Lama, Buddha, etc.
- Jesus had a social, political or humanitarian movement not an eternal one
- People want to make Jesus out to be something more acceptable, manageable, and more inclusive:  
*The Da Vinci Code* told us Jesus was human, had a girlfriend and child, this made Him more-human.  
Mormons call Him "a god" not "The God".  
Islam calls Him "a prophet of God" but not God in the flesh.
- We try to assign to Christ attributes that are something less than God, Creator, something shorter than eternal and pre-existing, less than completely sovereign, less than the finisher of our faith.

**Heresies over the centuries: Heretical** means opinions that differ from revealed truth.

Arianism and Ebionism, denied the Christ's divine nature and preexistence:

"...there was once a time when he was not," Nicea 325 – Christ is eternally and truly God.

Docetism and Nestorianism denied Christ's human nature.

Monarchianism, denying the trinity, one person not three persons in one God; Ephesus 431 unity of Christ's personality; Chalcedon 451 orthodox Christology – two natures (God/Man) in one person.

"Few would deny the importance of Jesus Christ, but many would dethrone Him. They would give Him prominence but not preeminence" -D. Akin.

The Scriptures prepared us for this confusion:

Jesus said: "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible" (Matt. 24:24).

"For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached..." (2 Cor. 11:4).

"Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:8).

**So who really is Jesus Christ?** (See NT Wright, FF Bruce, D. Akin, D. D'Souza).

The Scriptures are to inform our beliefs about Jesus Christ.

John 1:1-18, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

Philippians 2:6-11, "Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God . . . but made Himself nothing . . . being made in human likeness".

Hebrews 1:1-3, "The Son is the exact representation of His (God the Father's) being".

Jesus Christ, John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

John 8:58, "I am (YHWH)".

### Colossians 1:15-17

"This is one of the great Christological passages in the New Testament, declaring as it does our Lord's divine essence, pre-existence, and creative agency (Creator)" -FF Bruce.

## **God - "He is the image of the invisible God..."**

### **Invisible God**

Jesus is "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God" (1 Timothy 1:17).

"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only (Jesus Christ), who is at the Father's side, has made Him known" (John 1:18).

**Image** (Greek is "eikon")= likeness, form, manifestation of the invisible God, God in the flesh. From all eternity Jesus Christ represents perfectly the character, nature, and life of God the Father.

In no way implying a weak or lesser version of the original but He is the original made manifest.

Image = "The revelation" of God to man, surpassing signs, wonders, creation and even Scripture.

Image = Jesus Christ is God in His creation.

**We were created "in"** the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) but **Jesus Christ "is"** the image of God.

Jesus "is" present tense, the perfect image of the nature and being of God.

### **Jesus said:**

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

If you want to see God, then look to Jesus, to see Jesus is to see the Father.

All theophanies are brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the One who they were prefacing has arrived.

Jesus said He was YHWH, "I Am," John 8:58 (48-59).

God (Elohim) designates Himself "I Am" in Exodus 3:14-15.

Moses asked: What is Your name? or Who are You? God (*Elohim*) said, "I Am" (YHWH).

First person singular, hence, "the divine name can only proceed from God Himself" -Sarna. This led Israelites to not write or speak the name.

Jesus was asked "who do you think you are" (John 8:53). "Who are you?" "What is Your name?" Jesus said,

1. "before Abraham was born . . ." meaning I am preceding, pre-existing, and eternal.
2. "I am!" I am YHWH. "I am" = I am an absolute Being, eternal, unchanging, dynamic presence" -Sarna.
3. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).

Jesus is the God of Israel, the "Us" in "let Us make man in Our image . . .", the second person of the Trinity, the God-Man, the pre-existing One – I have always been.

**Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God," God in the material making visible the invisible.**

Colossians 2:9-10, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

## **Firstborn - "the firstborn over (before) all creation" (1:15)**

Not first in a line of created beings as Arian said: "there was once a time when he was not".

**But, first, foremost, Lord over the Cosmos (His material creation).**

**Firstborn, meaning "the Heir of all things,"** having priority and supremacy over all else.

God (the Father) "has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2).

Psalm 89:27 - "I will also appoint Him My firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth."

He is first in time, before all creation, pre-existing, infinite and eternal.  
He is first in rank, He is over/above all things and holds supremacy over all things, He alone is God.

He is the One and Only Son to God the Father and therefore heir to all creation, the firstborn. Primogeniture, He holds the exclusive right of all the inheritance as the Firstborn.

**Creator "For by (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 were (have been) created by Him and for Him" (1:16).**

Genesis 1:26-27, "Let us make man in our image" – He is there in Genesis 1.  
John 1:3, "Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made."

**"All things . . . things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities".**

"This is the totality of all that was made - the structure of the universe to the molecules in your body. From the most powerful angels: Michael, Gabriel, Seraphim, Cherubim, Satan; to any and all powers, rulers" -FF Bruce.

Jesus Christ created all things and He is sovereign over all things, therefore "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11).

Personally, to give you assurance, comfort: God created all, knows all, is superior over all, is able to create and destroy, will hold all things accountable and His authority and justice will prevail. And you are His daughter or son.

**Eternal "He is before all things" (1:17).**

"Before" means eternal, infinite, pre-existing.  
John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

Jesus has always been, "without beginning of days or end of life" (Hebrews 7:3).

He stood before time, before creation, before the sun, moon, stars, planets, angels.

He was there as the Spirit hovered over the waters, with God the Father and God the Spirit, Gen. 1:1

**Sustainer "And in Him all things hold together" (1:17).**

All things hold together in Jesus Christ, He is the Sustainer.  
"Through Him the world is sustained, prevented from falling into chaos. No creature is autonomous. All are God's servants (Ps. 119:91) and dependents (Ps. 104)" -FF Bruce.

What would it be like if He loosened His hold and gave us over to our own desire without restraint, i.e. Katrina?

***What do you believe about Jesus? And what is informing your beliefs about Him?***

***Who is His equal?***

**Jesus Christ and other Religious and Social Leaders:**

Did any one of the religious leaders claim to be God?

Did any one of the religious leaders claim to be the heir of all things?

Did any one of the religious leaders claim to create all things in heaven and earth, by Him and for Him?

Was Muhammad, Ghandi, Dali Lama, or Buddha there in the beginning as the Spirit hovered over the waters?

Did any one of the religious leaders claim to be before all things?

Did any one of the religious leaders claim that “in Him all things hold together?”

We acknowledge their accomplishments and we acknowledge Christ’s complete distinction from them.

**He is much more than a “religious leader” or one of many ways to God; He is God and there is no other.**

Jesus Christ is God, reigning as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer and Sovereign One over all things; He is Transcendent and Immanent, both God and friend – this is the incomparable Jesus Christ. He is nothing less.

**For You:**

“For those who have been redeemed by Christ, the universe has no ultimate terrors; they know that their Redeemer is also Creator, Ruler, and goal of all” -FF Bruce.

“I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).