

Christ is the Creator

Colossians 1:15-17

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

The three things about Christ's identity are:

1. Christ is God ("the image of the invisible God," cf. John 1:1-4, 18; Hebrews 1:1-3).
2. Christ is King ("the firstborn of all creation," cf. Colossians 1:18; Romans 8:29; Revelation 1:5; and Psalm 89:27).
3. Christ is Creator ("all things were created by, through, for, after, and in him," cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6).

"What does that make me?"

1. A human being (not divine) so WORSHIP (Psalm 100:1)
2. A subject, so SERVE (Psalm 100:2)
3. A creature, so GLORIFY (Psalm 100:3) by being (Genesis 1:26-28) and doing (Genesis 2:15) good work.

Discussion Questions

1. (Ice-breaker) How is a creature refusing the control and design of its creator either like or unlike a violation of copyright law?
2. (1:15a) Is John 1:1-4 or Hebrews 1:1-3 the closer parallel to Colossians 1:15a ("He is the image of the invisible God"), and why?
3. (1:15b) Do you think Proverbs 8:22-31 concerning "wisdom" (8:1,12) is a helpful or a dangerous parallel to Colossians 1:15b ("the firstborn of all creation"), and why?
4. (1:16-17) List all the prepositions used in these verses to describe the relation between "all things" (repeated 4 times) and Christ. How would you explain what each preposition is offering to the complete picture, and which of those prepositions is most meaningful to you today, and why?

* A footnote (1:16-17): The ESV translation has a footnote next to "by" in verse 16, which explains that the Greek preposition could be taken either in a causal sense ("by means of") or in a spatial sense ("in the sphere of"). If it is the former (as the ESV and NIV have it), some commentators wonder how it is distinguished from the "through" at the end of verse 16. If it is the latter (as the RSV and the New English Bible have it), those commentators say that it is parallel with the "in" (same Greek preposition) at the end of verse 17, thus forming an *inclusio*, a literary device by which the author "brackets" (a good word for this season of NCAA basketball!) a section of text by repeating an expression at both beginning and end of the section. Verse 16 starts with "in him all things were created" and verse 17 ends with "in him all things hold together." The first "in him" refers to the past, when creation was first accomplished ("were

created”). The second “in him” is paired with a verb with present tense repercussions (“hold together”). The point of the “in him” understanding would be that the world of the unseen, hostile, demonic forces is still “in him” and therefore under his control. There are no rogue molecules or hostile angelic powers outside of his authority and might. Those hostile forces were a significant part of the “Colossian heresy” (cf. 2:15, 18). Paul is reminding the Colossian believers of the same truth that the apostle John stressed in 1 John 4:4—“he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Therefore, do not worry and do not fear.

5. (1:15a and Psalm 100:1) The proper response of human beings to the divine being is **WORSHIP**. What one part of your corporate worship on the Lord’s day most needs correction, and what one part do you enjoy the most?

6. (1:14) To “redeem” here is to “buy back, as from the slave market.” How does the price that God paid in His Son for your redemption help you understand your worth to Him (see also 1 Peter 1:18-19)?

7. (1:16-17 and Psalm 100:3) Since Christ made us, we are, therefore, His. What is one thing about you as Christ’s handiwork that enables you to **GLORIFY** Him uniquely?

8. (Overall) If you only had time to meditate on one of these three aspects of Christ’s identity and your proper response (see above—God (worship), King (serve), Creator (glorify), which would it be and why?