

Lord of Creation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 June 2019

Preacher: Alan Barts

[0 : 00] All right, good morning, everyone. My name is Alan, and I am one of the pastors here. And I am so excited to be here, here, here, here, here.

Anyway, we'll start off with a bang. All right, cool. So here at One Harbor Church, we typically preach through books of the Bible. And last week, as Jesse alluded to, we began a new series through the book or letter called Colossians.

This letter was written by a man named Paul. It contains some of the most powerful evidence debating the sufficiency of Jesus as the Christ or Messiah, i.e., God's chosen king.

I would say that, like myself, if at times you experience doubts or a lack of faith, you're going through a little rough patch, I would encourage you to go back and read this letter. It can easily be read in a single sitting, and I assure you, it will stir your faith in the sufficiency of Jesus.

This is a relatively short book. It's only four chapters, and it's written to a new church in the city of Colossae, which is in present-day Turkey. Paul wrote this letter while in Rome in prison.

[1 : 15] I think this is just a vital key aspect of this thing there, in prison. He was not staying in a five-star, all-inclusive resort in Rome, you know, living the dream.

He was in a disgusting, rat-infested pit, and yet he still felt compelled to pen this letter. I often, you know, have spoken to people who write and read about people who write and what they do.

They kind of try and go and isolate themselves in, like, a beautiful location to be inspired by those kind of things. And yet, to me, it's more of a great conclusion that this is a God-inspired letter, given the circumstances of where he was.

I would say the passage we are covering today could be considered the pinnacle of this entire letter. I would say the passage we are covering today could be the pinnacle. It is a short passage, but it contains some of the most exalted language to describe Jesus that has ever been used.

They were experiencing, this church was experiencing some pretty rapid growth, but somewhere along the way, they had moved on from the sufficiency of Christ and had taken on some advice from false teachers, such as the need for some Jewish artifacts or the importance of angels or different kinds of pagan mysticism to kind of add to or complete their faith as Christians.

[2 : 33] Colossians 1, verses 15 through 20 is the passage that we are going to cover today. And many scholars feel like Paul may have not actually been the original author of these verses due to the loftiness or headiness of the language and the rhythm in which it was written.

Many scholars think that he is simply quoting an old hymn the Jews used to remember the qualities of their Messiah. It is logical to think this way. I mean, is it easier to remember a passage or a paragraph or a song?

Which is how things were passed down back in those times. We're actually going to split this passage. We're going to focus on verses 15 through 17 today and look at them through the course of two weeks.

But I want to read all of it so that the cohesiveness of this passage will be clear to you. While I'm reading this passage, I want you to focus and pay particular on one word, the word all. How many times it is used in these few verses.

So starting in verse 15, it goes, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

[3 : 41] Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things.

Whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. This is the word of God. Do you notice how many times the word all appeared in this passage?

Seven times. With five of those being found in the verses we are focusing on today. The word all is defined as the whole quantity or amount. The whole number.

Everyone. Everything. These verses are split into two distinct parts. The first part being what we are looking at today which is Jesus' role and place in creation. And the second part which we will look at next week is his role and place in recreation or redemption.

[4 : 47] Like I said we are going to focus on the first part today. With that being Jesus Christ is Lord of creation. Verses 15 through 17 include language and descriptions of Jesus that have a significant influence on our belief or theology of Jesus as Messiah.

Think about this question. If someone asked you who is Jesus, how would you answer? Of course there are many absolutely correct answers.

I mean he is God. And there are lots to be said about him, right? I know my go-to answer would be Savior or Lord, Messiah. Maybe if I wanted to be really spiritual I would say he is the word.

What are some others? Many of us only refer to Jesus due to what he has done for me, for you, after he took on flesh. Paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.

And that is absolutely true and something we need to remember and never forget or diminish its importance to our eternal hope. We need to remember that there is a difference between what we do and who we are.

[5 : 54] Jesus was something before he was born into creation. Before he took on flesh and became a man, he was and has always been. These verses are boldly and clearly defining his role as the creator of all.

Listen to this quote from one of the greatest proponents of atheism in the world today. I now believe there is a God. I now think the evidence does point to a creative intelligence almost entirely because of the DNA investigations.

What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together.

That's Anthony Flew. He's actually the author of There Is a God. He boldly defended the ideals of atheism for over half a century until the science of creation proved to him that life could not exist without divine intervention.

For instance, DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid, the language of life, the code that defines who we are, what we look like, everything about us is written in this complex compound found in every cell in your body.

- [7 : 14] For instance, my brown hair, my hazel eyes, my uncanny good looks, my phenomenal sense of humor, and of course the abundance of humility I obviously have.
- It is found in every cell in your body. Scientists say that if you unwound this compound in every cell in your body and stretched it end to end, it would stretch across the galaxy.
- Think about that for a second. That is crazy. That's a long ways. All of this evidence points to a creator that exists and one that could not be created.
- Jesus Christ is preexistent. Verse 16 says, For by him all things were created. 17 says, And he is before all things. Now wait a minute.
- Some of you may be saying to yourself, Wait a second. You just read verse 15, which clearly states that Christ is the firstborn of all creation. This could lead to the question of, If Christ is the firstborn of creation, then how can he be God?
- [8 : 21] Is Christ pictured as part of creation, and therefore not as God? You may be having a Scooby moment. Huh? What is that?
- I would say the term of is very ambiguous by itself. For instance, One of the titles of the president is commander in chief of the armed forces.
- He is not a part of the armed forces. He is over the armed forces. Clearly the first word of verse 16, For, explains verse 15. If Paul was trying to say that Christ is part of creation, he would not have written in the very next verse that all things were created by him.
- This firstborn of all creation is clearly explained in verse 16. Not in the sense that he is a part of creation, but he is over all of creation. There are a couple of other passages of Scripture that speak of Jesus as the creator.
- One of those is found in John 1, verses 1-3. Very famous passage of Scripture. It says, In the beginning was the Word, or Jesus, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
- [9 : 28] All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. Another Scripture is found in Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.
- It says, Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- These verses are screaming in a very blunt and crystal clear fashion that Jesus is supreme over creation. One biblical commentator says that in that culture, the firstborn male child were considered preeminent over their siblings, meaning supreme over.
- So Paul calling him the firstborn of creation is confirming his preeminence. But just like that culture also believed the firstborn received double, triple, or oftentimes all of the inheritance, this means that all of creation is his.
- All of it. In the same way a playwright owns all of their creations, it is their property, and creation is God's property in every way. The Bible takes the supremacy of Christ over creation a step further and says that Jesus holds all things together.
- [10 : 43] Without Jesus, all of creation could not exist. Going back to Hebrews 1, verse 3, it says, He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.
- And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. Look at the last three words of that verse. Word of his power, not power of his word.
- Through the word, God created, God changed, and God even destroyed. This scripture is stating that not only did God speak and the world was created, but it still remains today because Jesus is continuing to orchestrate its existence with his word.

The only logical conclusion when considering this evidence is to state that not only did Jesus speak and creation came into existence, but without him, there would be a great implosion. Therefore, he is supreme.

It seems like the Colossians had heard the good news and believed in Christ, but had also adopted false teachings of needing Christ plus angels, needing Christ plus historic artifacts, et cetera, et cetera.

[11 : 52] I assure you, this kind of rhetoric exists today. Don't be fooled or think that somehow these people were ignorant and there is no way that I or you would do such a thing. We must never forget or move on or think that we need to doubt the fact that Jesus is sufficient.

Remember a small, subtle variation from Christ's sufficiency may seem harmless at first, just like angels. It's very small at first, but the further you go away, the further you get away from that original line.

But over time, it will lead to more confusion. It will lead to more doubt and make you a much, much easier target for the enemy to isolate and eventually take you out. Jesus isn't just better than other options.

He is the only option. All other options are guaranteed to do one thing, lead to failure and disappointment. Verse 16 says, 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.

The terms we see here, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, they were generally referring to spiritual beings in that time. F.F. Bruce says, These probably represent the highest orders of the angelic realm.

[13 : 09] Here the point is that the highest angel princes, like the rest of creation, are subject to Christ as the one in whom, through whom, and for whom they were created.

They were created in those of creation or centered in the Son. They were created through him because he is the divine agent in creation. They were created for him because he is the goal to which they all tend.

What Paul is saying is that all of those exist because Jesus created them and they continue to exist today only because he is holding them together.

Why on earth would you think you need to add to the creator of the universe with something that he created and continues to hold together? That is distorting the truth and believing the lie told in the very, very beginning in the Garden of Eden.

Did God really say? First century Christians believe this lie. Believe me. You and I can easily fall for the same trick.

[14 : 14] As Christians, many of the things we have talked about today are easy to believe and many of you have been shaking your head in agreement when talking about those big ideas about the lordship of Christ and his role in creation.

But what happens when this lordship of Christ hits a little close to home and we start talking about the things that we own? Oh lord. Now, I can hear you right now.

Now wait just a minute preacher. I will not stand for you talking about my stuff. I work for it. I earned it. This is America, not North Korea. Right? I would push back on that idea and say that if Christ is lord of creation and he is my lord, then we are stewards of creation, not owners.

Jesus himself told several parables explaining this very point. he teaches that everything we have been given is a loan and we will be held accountable for how well we steward or take care of that item or items.

Matthew 24 gives a great illustration of this value. It starts in verse 45 as Jesus is saying, Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his master has set over his household to give them their food at the proper time?

[15 : 24] Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But as that wicked servant says to himself, My master is delayed and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites.

Holy smokes. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Why is this servant presented as so wicked as to deserve such a terrible judgment?

You ever thought about that? Because his mentality changed from that of a steward to that of an owner. He became a hypocrite. He was no longer stewarding another man's property.

He was pretending to own it. He was a thief. The very next chapter talks about the parable of the ten virgins and their lampstands with oil. They were meant to stand watch for the bridegroom to lead him to his bride for their wedding to light the way and keep him safe.

Five of the ten ran out of oil for their lamp and had no reserves. They had to leave and replenish the oil. However, by the time they returned, the bridegroom had already come by. Well, you might say, so what?

[16 : 41] The point is they were given a task. They were given one job and instead of being fully prepared and making sure they had enough oil, they assumed. They were poor stewards.

Many of you may be wondering if One Harbor is being a good steward with the resources given to us. That is a valid question and one that may hit pretty close to home if you have been part of another church that did not steward their resources well.

I assure you, there are checks and balances on top of checks and balances when it comes to One Harbor and our resources. A good question you might want to ask yourself if you are a member of that group, is the standard against which churches should steward their money any different than the standard against which you steward yours?

Truth is, there is no difference in many spheres we encounter and how the Lord sees them, whether public or private, non-profit, for-profit, so forth and so on. They all belong to Him.

Period. In our culture, in America, we tend to struggle with this concept because we see our stuff as items we own, not steward. Many people are upset about churches abusing money and other resources and I agree with that mentality but it is so easy for you and I to think that we own our resources, most especially those Benjamins.

[18 : 00] The vast majority of Americans' view of ownership does not line up with the biblical view of ownership. We see private property as ownership. You have the right to prevent someone else from taking it but you do not have the right to hold on to it with a closed fist.

Remember, everything in creation, visible and invisible, was created by Him. There is no limit to what He is Lord over. What about being good stewards of your time?

Is that not a gift? What about children? They are not mine. I am just a steward for a season. If you truly have the mentality that none of your possessions are owned by you and you are just taking care of them for a short while then you are going to be fine.

That is the right mentality. I am not talking about perfection. I am talking about a heart motive. We are all going to fail in this subject matter. We are all going to have shortcomings. But if our heart motive is correct, if we come to God and repent for those things, He is faithful and just to forgive us.

Luke 16 says, and verse 10 says, One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. And one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

[19 : 18] And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? Hmm. What is Jesus saying here?

He is saying that all we have now is not our own. And if we cannot be a faithful steward with all that belongs to God, then He will not give us something that will belong to us.

What is He referring to? That which is your own. What is that referring to? That phrase, that which is your own. He is referring to we will one day reign with Christ over creation.

This is pointing to the redemptive power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will not just be there when He returns and watch from the sidelines as He rules, but we will reign with Him.

One day, we will no longer be stewards. We will be owners. Jesus is the rightful heir and there is no arguing that point. But there are references throughout the New Testament referring to promises of us, you and I, being heirs, sharing in that inheritance.

[20 : 22] Romans 8, for instance, verse 16 says, the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

This reference does not mean that this inheritance is really Jesus's and we simply get to share like a redheaded stepchild. No, this says that we are fellow heirs. We get the full inheritance.

And when we obtain the inheritance, then we take possession and are transformed from stewards to owners. With ownership comes authority. 2 Timothy 2, verse 11 to 12 says, the saying is trustworthy for if we have died with Him, we will also live with Him.

If we endure, we will also reign with Him. The Bible is saying that we will have more authority and power over our possessions in heaven than we do now.

Jesus said, if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, now, who will give you that which is your own, then? Psalm 37 says, delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your hearts.

[21 : 36] Millions of people all over this world are killing themselves thinking they are achieving the desires of their hearts only to find emptiness and disappointment.

Seek the Lord and you will find peace. You will find delight. Sorry. You will find contentment. You will also find ownership and authority.

But only in His timing and His ways. If this desire for authority and ownership outweigh the desire for Jesus, then that mentality is wrong.

And you desire creation over the Creator. Course correction can be achieved because the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was and is sufficient for all of our shortcomings.

And if you're here today and you're not yet a Christian, Paul refers in Colossians 1 verse 23 to the hope of the gospel. There is no sweeter message of hope in all the world than to hear God announce that when you get up in the morning miserable and depressed with a sense of guilt and estrangement before a holy God, you can go to bed that very night, you can go to bed this very night with a quiet and peaceful heart knowing that every sin you have ever committed and ever will commit is forgiven and you are reconciled to the Almighty by the death of His Son.

[23 : 02] That's the free offer of the gospel. I would love the opportunity to talk with you about what it looks like to serve this Lord of creation after the service. That would be a great honor to me.

And if you're here today and you are a Christian, who is the true Lord of creation in your life? Jesus Christ or you? Do you fully believe that we are called to be stewards in this life and not owners?

I struggle often with this, especially when it comes to my kids. I want to be a good dad, you know, providing for them, keeping them safe, loving them, etc.

But more often than I would care to admit, I think of them as mine instead of the true Lord of creation, Jesus Christ. the good thing is that he paid it all.

And we get to remember this every week and I'm so thankful that we do this here, that we take communion every week. It is just such a great reminder that Jesus paid it all. That through his broken body and his shed blood that we are wiped clean.

[24 : 08] That we are true heirs. I would encourage you to do business with God today. If you find yourselves thinking, more highly of his creation than the creator.

Take time to do that before you come and take communion. Lord, we are just so thankful for this time that we have come together to learn more about who you are. That you are the great, almighty Lord of all.

Lord of creation. God, I pray that this truth would find a good home in our hearts. That it would grow deep roots, Lord, that forever our lives would be changed. Our mentality would be changed today.

That if we call you Lord and Savior, that we are heirs. God, that we have a hope for not only today and tomorrow, but for all of eternity. That we will reign and rule with you.

we would stop worrying about and be anxious about the things of this world. The things that we don't have. The things that we wish we did have. That we would be content.

[25 : 11] We would be known as a people who are content with what you've given us. We would be known as phenomenal stewards of all of our possessions that you've given us, God. Whatever they may be.

Lord, rule and reign in our lives today. Change us. God, if there are people here today that do not know you as Lord and Savior, God, I pray that you would speak to them in a very powerful, powerful way that you would draw them to yourself, God.

That you would reveal yourself to them in just a way that they would humble themselves and call you Lord and Savior today. Have your way in our lives today. We're so thankful. In your name. Amen.