

## The Deity Of Jesus Christ

Colossians 1:15-23

**Intro:** Lew Wallace, a famous general and literary genius, was an avowed atheist. For two years, Mr. Wallace studied in the leading libraries of Europe and America, gathering information to write the book that in his mind would forever destroy Christianity. While writing the second chapter of his book, he suddenly found himself on his knees crying out to Jesus, “My Lord and my God.”

Because of solid, irrefutable evidence, he could no longer deny that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Later, Lew Wallace wrote Ben Hur, one of the greatest novels ever written concerning the time of Christ.

Similarly, the late C.S. Lewis, professor at Oxford University was an agnostic who denied the deity of Christ for years. But he, too, in intellectual honesty, submitted to Jesus as his God and Savior after studying the over-whelming evidence for His deity.

Join with me this morning as we examine the biblical evidence supporting the deity or the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. As the Second Person in the Trinity, He is described as possessing all the attributes of the godhead; He is co-equal co-eternal, inseparable, interdependent, and eternally united in one absolute divine Essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptural evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ is extensive. Louis Berkhof summarizes the evidence for the deity of Christ in these words: “We find that Scripture (1) explicitly asserts the deity of the Son in such passages as John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20; (2) applies divine names to Him, Isa. 9:6; 40:3; Jer. 23:5, 6; Joel 2:32 (comp. Acts 2:21); 1 Tim 3:16; (3) ascribes to Him divine attributes, such as eternal existence, Isa. 9:6; [Micah 5:2]; John 1:1, 2; Rev. 1:8; 22:13; omnipresence, Matt. 18:20; 28:20; John 3:13, omniscience, John 2:24, 25; 21:17; Rev. 2:23, omnipotence, Isa. 9:6; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 1:8, immutability, Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8, and in general every attribute belonging to the Father, Col. 2:9; (4) speaks of Him as doing divine works, as creation, John 1:3, 10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10, providence, Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 17:2; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3, the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 9:2-7; Mark 2:7-10; Col. 3:13, resurrection and judgment, Matt. 25:31, 32; John 5:19-29; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:1, the final dissolution and renewal of all things, Heb. 1:10-12; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:5, and (5) accords Him divine honour, John 5:22, 23; 14:1;

1 Cor. 15:19; 2 Cor. 13:13; Heb. 1:6; Matt 28:19” (L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 94-95).

Perhaps one of the greatest passages proving Christ’s deity is recorded in chapter 1, verses 15-23 of Paul’s Letter to the Colossians. In these eight short verses Paul presents one the most closely reasoned presentations of the uniqueness and pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ found anywhere in the Bible.

Paul, you may recall, was writing to counter false teachers that had made their way into the church at Colossae. These false teachers were denying the deity of Jesus Christ. In combating this heresy, Paul presents Jesus Christ as equal with the Father, and preeminent over all creation and the church. **He is the LORD of All!**

## I. Christ’s Preexistence With The Father (1:15; 2:9)

### A. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (v. 15a)

#### 1. His image or manifestation as God

The opening line of verse 15 describes Christ as “the image of the invisible God.” To say that Christ is the image of God is to say that in Him the very nature and being of God have been perfectly revealed— *that in Him the invisible has become visible*. The Apostle John explains that “No one has ever seen God” but “the only begotten God, the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known” (John 1:18).

The Greek word translated “image” is *eikon*, from which we derive our English word *icon*. It means “an image or representation.” In Jesus’ day it stood for an image, like that of Caesar reproduced on a coin, portrait, or bronze sculpture.

**It is actually more appropriate to speak of Christ as not merely the “image of God: but as the *revelation* of God the Father.**

#### 2. His revelation as God (Heb. 1:1-3; John 1:1, 18; 14:8-11)

The meaning of Christ’s representation as “the image of God” goes far beyond His merely representing the image of God, it also carries the idea of revealing the very essence or personal character of God. Thus, Christ as the “the image of the invisible God” is not just a portrait of Him, but

the very revelation of what God is really like. Jesus said to Philip in **John 14:9**, “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father, for I and the Father are One.”

The writer of Hebrews expressed the same truth in very powerful language in chapter 1, verse 3: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being” (1:3). That is, through *His incarnation—taking on flesh* (John 1:14)—Jesus has revealed the Father to mankind. In Hebrews not only is the Son the final revelation of God to men, the upholder of the universe, and the very image of the Divine nature but also the brilliant outshining of God’s glory, and therefore of one nature with Him—as **the ray is of one essence with the sun (Heb. 1:1-3)**. Jesus, God the Son, is literally the exegesis of God the Father. He is supreme! He is God. **As one commentator says,**

*“Jesus Christ is the objective expression of the Divine nature, the face of God turned as it were toward the world, the exact likeness of the Father in all things except being the Father”* (see John 1:14, 18; 1 John 1:1-4).

#### B. Christ is “the firstborn of all creation” (v. 15b)

Verse 15b calls Christ “the firstborn over all creation,” which at first sight might be taken as teaching that Jesus was the first person created. Indeed the Jehovah’s Witnesses take it this way. But they do so by ignoring the context, which makes Christ the Creator of everything, as well as **the rest of New Testament revelation, which makes Him eternal God** (cf. John 1:1). He existed before, and was Himself the Agent of creation. Most of all, they ignore the indisputable fact that while “firstborn” can mean firstborn child, it most often is simply a term which refers to one appointed to an exalted position of “rank or honor.”

The background for this term comes out of **Psalm 89:27** “I will appoint Him My firstborn, to be the most exalted of the Kings of the earth.” This Royal Psalm speaks of God’s appointing His coming Davidic Messiah to be the firstborn, the most exalted of all the kings of the earth. We see the same thing in **Hebrew 1:2**: “In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, *whom He appointed heir of all things*, through whom also He made the world.” So, when Paul called Christ “the firstborn over all creation,” he meant that highest honor belongs to Him. **Christ is completely supreme in creation! He is preeminent in all things.** He is

Creator in vv. 15-17 and Lord over the Church in vv. 18-23. Because He is divine, the roles and functions of deity are ascribed to Him. Similarly, He is the firstborn in the new creation by being raised first from the dead, and is thus Lord over the church (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5).

## II. Christ's Preeminence In Creation (Col. 1:16-17)

### A. Christ as the Agent of creation (v. 16; John 1:3; Heb. 1:2)

With the word “for” in verse 16, the apostle begins his explanation and proof of why Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Lord over all creation. “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him”; verse 17, “And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Christ is preeminent because **He is the Agent of creation**. The extent of His creation is beyond comprehension. It includes all things: seen and unseen, **spiritual and material**; things in the heavens and on the earth. **And in Him all things hold together.**

**Hebrews 1:2** says the same thing: *God has not only appointed Christ to be heir of all things, He also made the world through Him.*

### B. Christ as the goal of creation (v. 16)

Christ is not only the Agent of creation, but He is also the end, the goal of creation: “all things were created by Him and for Him” (v. 16b). This is an astounding statement. Peter O’Brien says, “Paul’s teaching about Christ as the goal of all creation ... finds no parallel in the Jewish wisdom literature or in the rest of the extant Jewish materials for that matter. Everything began with Him and will end with Him. All things sprang forth at His command, and all things will return to Him at the consummation or His second coming. **He is the beginning and He is the end—the Alpha and Omega. One day everything will give Him glory—all will bow** (cf. Philippians 2:11)!”

### C. Christ as the Sustainer of creation (v. 17)

In verse 17, Paul reached the climax of his argument: Christ is superior in creation because He is the sustainer of creation: “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” The *perfect tense here* informs us that He

*presently continues to hold all things together*, and that apart from His continuous activity, all created matter would disintegrate. Jesus causes the inherent attraction of matter. *In Him all things hold together*.

As the writer of Hebrews says: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, *sustaining all things by His powerful word*” (1:3).

Christ not only created us—He sustains us, and we are made for Him. We need to submit our personal problems to Him, for He knows how to fix them.

### III. Christ’s Preeminence Over The Church (1:18-23)

#### A. Christ is head of the body, the church (v. 18a)

v. 18—He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Christ has become the head of the body, the church. Christ is sovereign over the Church, just as He is sovereign over creation. The church is made-up of all born-again believers in Christ from the Day of Pentecost to the present. When we placed our faith in Christ, we became part of Christ’s Body through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Romans 12:5 informs us “So in Christ we who are many form one body.” As members of His Body we are totally dependent upon the Head, Christ, for direction. He is to control us by His Spirit.

#### B. Christ is firstborn from the dead (v. 18b)

The reason for Christ’s exalted position in the Church is that “He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead” (v. 18). Paul was saying that Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead with a glorified body. As the first-born from the dead, Christ is the source of spiritual life and power to all who believe in His name. Christ resurrection is also important because without His resurrection there could be no resurrection for others (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20ff.).

#### C. Christ is divine: His union of deity and humanity (v. 19; 2:9; John 1:14)

“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness [of deity] to dwell in Him” and Col. 2:9 adds: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” These 2 verses, 1:19 and 2:9, give us perhaps the most powerful description of Christ’s deity to be found in the entire New Testament.

The full and complete nature of God, *the fullness of the divine essence*, is said to dwell permanently in Christ. Jesus, as the eternal Son of God, is Deity incarnate (John 1:1, 14).

#### D. Christ provides reconciliation (vv. 20-23)

##### 1. He has provided peace with God through the blood of His cross

v. 20—It was the Father’s good pleasure to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of Christ’s cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

##### a. Our former alienation (v. 21)

Prior to our coming to faith in Christ we were all hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds

##### b. Our present standing: holy and blameless (v. 22)

He has reconciled us in His fleshly body through death, in order to present us before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach

##### 2. Christians are exhorted to faith in the gospel (v. 23)

“Continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. In other words, don’t accept the claims of false teachers: be it Gnostics who claim superior knowledge or mystics to boast of spiritual revelations of God. Reject these heretics and continue to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ who is Lord of All.”

Conclusion:

The biblical evidence supporting the deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is clear. As the Second Person in the Trinity, He possesses all the attributes of the godhead. He is co-equal co-eternal, inseparable, interdependent, and eternally united in one absolute divine Essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The full and complete nature of God, *the fullness of the divine essence*, dwells permanently in Christ. (John 1:1, 14; Col. 1:19 and 2:9).

What is more, according to Colossians 1:15-23, Christ chose to enter His own creation, take on a body Created and sustained by His power, die, and then undergo resurrection in order that He might be “the firstborn from among the dead”—and first in rank in salvation. What a wonder, what a marvel! Such a plan, such a dream could only come from the mind of God.

Perhaps you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin and death. As Take this opportunity as I close in prayer to ask Jesus to come into your heart and save your soul and He will. Christian, do you need to cry out to God in confession of some sin that has you in bondage? Ask Christ to forgive you and to set you free and He will.

**Let's pray!**

**Closing song: John Cunningham**