

The Iron Men of Fellowship of Champions

Colossians 1:15-18

Lesson 7

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Opening Prayer

NOTE: Before we begin, I'd like to mention that last time we had a robust discussion of the concept of forgiveness (conditional vs. unconditional). I apologize for not allowing more time for discussion. I felt we needed to be mindful of the time. Whatever your view of the doctrine, we should be able to disagree without disunity, in non-essential doctrines. That said, Dustin or I would be pleased to continue the dialogue off-line, if anyone wishes to engage further. I am always open to correction by the Scriptures.

Introduction:

- The most dangerous heresy of the Gnostics was denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, the central fact of His person, power, and work. Jesus was and is God. In this passage, the Apostle Paul will be declaring Jesus's relation to deity (He is God and a member of the triune Godhead), His relation to creation (He created it), and His relation to the church (He is its head).
- Deity (Gr. – theotes = godhead):
 - Jo 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jo 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. Jo 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. Jo 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- Jesus claimed to be God.
 - Jo 14:8-10 "Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us". 9 Jesus says to him, "Am I with you all for so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip?— the one having seen Me has seen the Father. How is it you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? I am not speaking the words which I am saying to you from Myself, but the Father abiding in Me is doing His works."
 - Jo 10:30 "I and the Father are one."
 - Lu 22:70 And [the Sanhedrin – chief priests] all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." Lu 22:71 Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

- Jo 8:51-59 “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” 52 The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets [also;] and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ 53” Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out [to be]?” 54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw [it] and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.
- Ex 3:14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”
- His disciples claimed He was God.
 - Jo 20:28 Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”
- Gentiles claimed He was God.
 - Mk 15:39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”
- The religious leadership of the Jews wanted to assassinate Him, and they tried and convicted Him on the basis of His claim to be God.
 - Jo 10:31-31 “The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus replied to them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” 33 The Jews answered Him, “We are not stoning You for a good work, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.”
 - Lk 22:66-71 "66 When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying, 67 “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” 70 And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” 71 Then they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.””

Read Colossians 1:15-18

Colossians 1:15 (NOTES)

- “image of the invisible God” - “image” - (Gr. - eikon = likeness and manifestation). The same word in English is “icon.” Paul is stating that the nature and being of God are perfectly represented and revealed in Christ. Jesus is the representative manifestation of the Father. Paul reasserts the fact that Jesus puts a face on God. What was previously unseen is now seen. Jesus is God incarnate.
 - Heb 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
 - 2Co 4:6 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
 - Jo 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.
- The chief Apostle and writer of the NT makes several such broad declarations of the deity and total supremacy of Christ. Note these superlative expressions.
 - Eph 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, Eph 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. Eph 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, Eph 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
 - Php 2:8 [Jesus] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Php 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, Php 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, Php 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- “firstborn of all creation” - A superficial reading of this verse may lead one to conclude that Christ is part of the creation. He is not. The NIV, NKJV and RSV all translate the phrase as “firstborn over creation,” which is the more correct rendering. The term “firstborn” (Gr. prototokos) means first in time (precedence) and rank (position). Christ preexisted the creation (precedence) and ranks above it as its Creator (position).
 - Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. Col 1:19 For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.

- Ro 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Ro 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;
- Heb 1:6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”
- Re 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood —
- Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
- “firstborn” - Also carries the connotation of Christ being His Father’s representative and heir. Christ has been given the management of all that belongs to the Father, the creation. Firstborn does not denote the first person given birth to, but rather it is a reference to precedence and position. This phrase is linked with the similar phrase, “only begotten” (Gr. - monogenes = only one of its kind), which appears once in the OT and 5 times in the NT.
 - Ps 2:7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’” #Ps 2:7, John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, 1Jo 4:9
- The term “firstborn” is also used of Christ 5 times in the NT.
 - Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
 - Ro 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to become] conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;
 - Heb 1:6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”
 - Re 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood —
- Ishmael was Abraham’s first born son, but Isaac was his “only begotten son.” #Ge 16:15, Ga 4:22-31
 - Ge 17:19 But God said, “No, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. Ge 17:20 As for Ishmael, I have heard

you; behold, I will bless him, and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. Ge 17:21 But I will establish My covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”

- Ge 22:2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." Ge 22:12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Ge 22:16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,
- Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and the one who had received the promises was offering up his only son;
- Esau was Isaac’s firstborn son, but Jacob received the inheritance.
 - #Gen 25:19-34
- Jacob’s firstborn son was Reuben by his mother, Leah. But, Joseph was given the double portion inheritance rightfully belonging to the firstborn son, since he was the firstborn of Jacob’s favored wife, Rachel. This double portion inheritance was given to Joseph’s two sons, but although Manasseh was the firstborn, Jacob blessed Ephraim as the firstborn and only begotten son.
 - #Gen 29:32 41:51, Gen 48
- David’s firstborn son was unnamed and died. His second son was Solomon who succeeded him to the throne of Israel and, among other things, built the temple and became the wisest man who ever lived and the wealthiest among all the kings.
 - #2Sam 12:1-24, 1Ki 1, 3:5-14
- Adam was the first human ever created, but Christ is the second Adam, taking Adam’s place as head of creation.
 - 1Co 15:45-47 “So also it is written: “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING PERSON.” The last Adam [was] a life-giving spirit. 1Co 15:46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 1Co 15:47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.
- **Discussion:** Why is this issue – *God putting the person who wasn’t born first, and who did not deserve the position and inheritance according to the law, in the place of the one who was born first and did deserve the position and inheritance* – such a big deal in Scripture, and why do we care – what does it teach us about God and ourselves? It teaches us at least three things:
 - Humility: In God’s economy, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. To be pleasing is to humble oneself before God. Pride wants to be first, wants honor

and recognition that is not merited. Humility sees oneself truly and clearly, as God sees him, and relies on God's grace.

- Election: God chooses whom He will. Salvation is not based on natural lineage (Jews), by operation of the law, but is based on God's election, by His grace.
 - Rom 9:6-13 "6 ... For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named." 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins [Jacob and Esau] by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.""
- Gentiles: This is this same principal that God employs in bringing the Gentiles into His redemptive plan. The Jews were called out of Ur of the Chaldees (flames of destruction) for an inheritance (God refers to the nation as His firstborn), but it was rejected by the Jews at Canaan in the Negev. Their rejection became our blessing. #Ex 4:22-23, Mark 9:35, Num 13, Rom 9, Rom 11

Colossians 1:16 (NOTES)

- "by Him all things were created" - Christ was the agent of creation. #John 1:1-3, 14
- "For" - Jesus is the "firstborn" over all creation because He created and will redeem it.
- "by Him ... through Him and for Him" - By or in Him in the sense that it was created within the sphere of His person and power as God.
- Through Him in the "agency" sense - the Father commanded the creation, but Jesus was the agent who performed the act of creating.
- For Him - The elect of humanity were given as a gift to the Son because of the overwhelming love of the Father for the Son.
 - John 6:37-40 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

- Heb 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross ...
- “all things” - That is the creation. Just as all things are created by Him, all things are subjected to Him. He is superior in all respects. #1Co 15:27, Eph 1:22, Heb 2:8, Ps 8
- “in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” - Paul again takes the Gnostic heresy head on by showing that Christ was above even the angels (and the demons - fallen angels), all of whom he created for His own purposes. Christ is superior to everything He created. #He 1:1-2:18

Colossians 1:17 (NOTES)

- Apart from Christ, nothing has happened or can happen. He is the single source for all that is. #John 1:1-3, 10-12, 14
- “in Him all things hold together” - all things are in held unity. The very substance of matter is the atom, whose nucleus is made up mostly of protons (positively charged with a mass 1,836 x that of electrons), with some electrons (negatively charged) and neutrons (no charge). Opposites attract; like charges repel. Atom is largely like charged with protons; should explode. Modern science has only recently labeled the agent responsible for holding the matter together as “the strong force.” Science offers no other explanation. Science assumes its presence, because without a force stronger than the positive charge of protons, atoms would not hold together, and matter would be impossible. We know this strong force to be a person, the Lord Jesus.
 - Heb 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds also things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, 'He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Colossians 1:18 (NOTES)

- "He is also the head of the body, the church" - “He” is emphatic, meaning Christ “alone” is the head of the church.
- “Church” = (Gr. - ekklesia) A derivative of the word, kaleo - "to call." Literally, the called out assembly, a group called together, congregation united in purpose. This refers to the worldwide Christian church through the ages, those both living and dead. The Church katholikos (universal).
- **Discussion:** The Church is not an autonomous, headless body. Christ is its head. What is the relationship between Christ and the Church?
 - Eph 5:22-32 22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He

Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

- 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;
- 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

- **Discussion:** How are we affected by that definition as members of the Church? How should we respond to that understanding of it?
 - The church exists and conducts its affairs within the realm of Christ's authority. It serves His purposes, and He cares for it.
 - "head of the body" - The head thinks, makes decisions, gives orders, protects and provides for the body, runs all its systems, and is the primary source for collecting information through sight, smell, sound, and taste. The body provides for the functions and actions that the head directs and is the primary source for collecting information through touch. The head and the body combine to form a complete whole organism. In the spiritual sense, the church (the body of Christ) is the means by which Christ (the head) accomplishes His will in the earth. We are one with Christ as a single unit.
 - "He is the beginning" - (Gr. - arche, pronounced ar-kay' / Eng. - arch) That is Christ is the progenitor (founder, originator) of the Church. He is supreme in rank over the church. He precedes it in time as the first resurrected "to newness of life" (Ro 6:4). He initiated its creation by His voluntary death, burial and resurrection.
 - "the firstborn from the dead" - Not that He was the first resurrected from the dead (Jairus' daughter, Lazarus, many others were resurrected before Jesus), but that He was the first resurrected to a glorified eternal body and to newness of eternal life. The others all died again. Christ will never die again. Keep in mind that "firstborn" (monogenes) refers to position and precedence, not simply precedence alone.

- “so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything” This is essentially a summary of Paul’s remarks from verse 15 to verse 18. Christ has preeminence, total supremacy in all things, including even now the ecclesia He founded.

Application Discussion

Closing Prayer

Small Groups

- Discuss current Scripture reading assignment.
- Prayer:
 - Anything praiseworthy.
 - Areas of accountability.
 - Other prayer requests.