



Who Is Jesus?

Colossians 1:15-18

1. Jesus is the Form of the Father (Verse 15a).
2. Jesus is the Crown of Creation (Verses 15b-17).
 - **He is the First-born (Verse 15b).**
 - **He is the Creator (Verse 16a).**
 - **He is the Purpose (Verse 16b).**
 - **He is the Origin (verse 17a).**
 - **He is the Sustainer (verse 17b).**
3. Jesus is the Chief of the Church (Verses 18-20).
 - **He is the Head (verse 18a).**
 - **He is the Beginning (verse 18b).**
 - **He is the First-born from the dead (verse 18c). [\[1\]](#)**

Two days ago, a movie was released that has caused many Christians great anxiety. It is called, The DaVinci Code. The movie is based off the book of the same title, which has sold more than 20 million copies across our nation. The reason why many Christians are so concerned with this book and with the movie is because of their blatant attack on the Christian faith. Both the book and the movie present a conspiracy theory that questions the validity of the Bible, and thus, what it teaches about Jesus Christ. The DaVinci Code presents Jesus Christ as a mere human being who married Mary Magdalene, and had children by her. Supposedly, the descendants of these children are still alive today somewhere in France, which helps to bring the story into a modern context. The book and the movie are blatant attempts to discredit Christianity. From the best that I can tell from the early reviews, the movie isn't that good. A film critic at the Boston Globe said, "A small, surprisingly ordinary movie" (Ty Burr). The Chicago Tribune says, "How can a film contain so many clues yet remain utterly clueless?" (Michael Phillips). The Rolling Stone magazine said, "A dreary, droning, dull-witted adaptation" (Peter Travers). The San Francisco Chronicle said, "A pretty-good-but-who-cares effort" (Mick LaSalle). Perhaps the most insightful of all of them comes from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Eleanor Ringel Gillespie), who wrote, "If you liked the book, you'll be fine. [\[2\]](#)

None of these publications are especially friendly to Christianity, and so these negative reviews are somewhat surprising. But regardless of the reviews, the movie is apparently doing very well at the box office, which means millions of people will see the movie and be exposed to its heretical teachings. It may well be the best film of the summer. Before you fret much about the damage this movie may inflict upon Christianity, let's put it into the context of church history. Since the days of the early Christian church, enemies of the gospel have always attempted to discredit Christianity. Just consider Jesus. He was attacked when he walked on earth. People hated him, and sad all types of bad things against Him. They put Him to death. Even after he was dead, they continued to call him a liar. And it will always be this way. As long as time continues, such attacks will always come upon our Lord.

As we continue with our study of Colossians, we see this was taking place in Colossae during the days of the apostle Paul. Paul had heard about the church from his close friend, Epaphras. There was great good at the church. People had come to faith in Jesus Christ and were growing in their love for Him. However, there was also much evil at the church. Others had come upon the church, seeking to draw it away after false doctrines. The church at Colossae was being bombarded by a mixture of teaching that included elements from Judaism and Gnosticism, and Asceticism. The church was being told that they needed to keep practicing the Jewish laws and regulations. They needed to keep the festivals and the new moons and the Sabbath days (Col. 2:16). (Judaism) The church was being told to delight in the worship of angels and look for visions and seek a "higher" knowledge (Col. 2:18). (Gnosticism). The church was being told that they needed to keep away from the things of this world as if they were evil in themselves, "do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (Col. 2:21). This is known as Asceticism.

It's no different today. The Da Vinci Code book and movie are telling the world that you cannot trust the Bible, nor its teachings. They say that Jesus was a mere man, who was unlike anything that the gospels tell us He was. When Paul addressed the saints in Colossae, he simply instructed them of the greatness of Jesus Christ. When you fully understand the supremacy of Jesus Christ, the heretical tendencies become obvious. The Jewish laws and regulations were shadows pointing to Christ, who is the substance of it all (Col. 2:17). The Gnostics, who sought this "higher" knowledge could find it in a true knowledge of Christ (Col. 2:2). The ascetics, who thought the world was evil, didn't realize that Christ created it all (Col. 1:16). So also with The Da Vinci Code. Jesus Christ is more than a mere man, whose offspring was His only mark upon the earth. He is the sovereign God of the universe. Knowing and grasping such a truth will fully enable you to understand what is wrong with the movie. Such a fact alone will equip you to give an answer to those who may see the movie and come away confused. You can set them straight by telling them about what you will learn here as we study this passage this morning.

With that as an introduction, I invite you to open your Bibles to Colossians chapter one. We will be looking at verses 15-18 this morning. With this passage, Paul begins a bit of a transition from his introductory remarks to focus His attention upon addressing the situation that existed in Colossae. It's not a huge and obvious transition. However, it is a transition, nonetheless. In this passage, He will begin to focus His attention upon Jesus Christ. Listen to what Paul wrote (beginning in verse 15), ...

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of 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. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 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. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

As we address the question of "Who is Jesus?", my first point this morning is, ...

1. Jesus is the Form of the Father (Verse 15a).

Verse 15 starts out, "And He is the image of the invisible God." Perhaps someone has come up to you and said, "You are the spittin' image of your father." Or maybe, of your mother, or brother, or sister. I have experienced this many times before. People everywhere have said that I look like my father. I remember on one occasion when I was at college, my father surprised me with a visit one day. He didn't tell me that he was coming. He simply arrived on campus unannounced. As the campus was fairly small, housing about 1,000 students, it wouldn't be too difficult to find me. As he walked around in search of me, some of my friends spotted him. They found me and said, "We saw this man walking around campus. He looks just like you!" (Actually, I look just like him.) In some sense, this is like what Paul was saying. But he is also saying a whole lot more. All of us here in this room bear some resemblance to God. We are all made "in" the image of God (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:7). There is something about us that give some sort of representation of God.

But, here in verse 15, Paul is saying something more than that Jesus was a human being. Rather, Paul was telling these people at Colossae that Jesus is the image of God. He is the Form of the Father. In other words, Paul is saying that in every way, Jesus is an exact manifestation and representation of God. The writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus is "the exact representation of the nature of God" (Heb. 1:3). On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He had one final evening with His disciples. During this evening, Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (John 14:8). Jesus said, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:9). You want to see God? Look at Jesus. He is the One who explains God. Here is the marvelous thing about Jesus Christ. We know that "No one has beheld God at any time" (1 John 4:12). We know that God "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16). But, when Jesus walked and talked on this planet, we beheld God, because we beheld the image of God! Jesus was the visible manifestation of the invisible. You want to see God? Look at Jesus. You want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. John 1:18, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

Who is Jesus? He is the Form of the Father. My second point this morning is that, ...

2. Jesus is the Crown of Creation (Verses 15b-17).

- He is the First-born (Verse 15b)

It says in the second half of verse 15 that Jesus is "the first-born of all creation." This word, "first-born," has stirred much controversy down through the ages. Many have taken this word, "first-born," and have implied that it speaks of the "first" one "born" in terms of time. They think that Jesus was the first being created. After being created, Jesus, in turn, then created everything else. The result of this teaching is that Jesus, then, becomes a created being. It all comes from a faulty understanding of what the word, "first-born" actually means. All you need to do is look down to verse 18 to figure out that "first-born" doesn't necessarily mean, "first thing born." In verse 18, we are told that Jesus "the first-born from the dead." This is speaking about His resurrection. Jesus certainly wasn't the first being resurrected. There are several people who were raised from the dead "before" Jesus was (in time). Lazarus was raised from the dead by Jesus Himself (John 11:38-44). The daughter of the synagogue official (Matt. 9:18-26) was also brought back to life. There were many that were raised when Jesus died (Matt. 27:52). Elisha even raised a little boy from the dead (2 Kings 4:18-37).

Furthermore, consider these facts: Israel was called the first-born, though they weren't the first nation (Ex. 4:22). The Messiah is prophesied to be the first-born, though the Messiah wasn't the first one born (Ps. 89:27). Though Joseph's son Manasseh was born first and Ephraim was born second (Gen. 41:51,52), God called Ephraim His first-born (Jer. 31:9). So then, what does "first-born" mean? It simply identifies who among the children is the one who will be the greatest. It signifies dignity and precedence. Normally, this place of honor was given to the first-born male. According to the law, when the first-born son would get double the inheritance (Deut. 21:17). (I love that verse, probably because I happen to be a first-born son). But, as I have shown you, it isn't always the case that the one born first in time is actually considered the "first-born" (Ephraim and Manasseh). The point is that the first-born is not necessarily first in time, but first in rank. So, the first-born, means "the greatest." Or, as I have put it, it means "the crown."

In reference to Jesus, the reason why Jesus is the first-born is the greatest of any creature that has ever stepped into creation. Perhaps you are familiar with Alfred Hitchcock, the great movie producer. He was the Steven Spielberg of the previous generation. One thing that is peculiar about his movies was that he always made a cameo appearance in each of them (at least from 1926 on). It usually happened during the beginning of the movie. Perhaps he tries to get on a bus (North by Northwest). Perhaps he winds a clock (Rear Window). - Perhaps he walks by in the background (Rebecca). - Perhaps he is out walking his dogs (The Birds). This isn't unique to the movie industry either. Francisco de Goya painted himself, in the Portrait of the Count of Floridablanca (1783). With his back to the viewer he shows a painting to the Count for his approval. Norman Rockwell once did this as well. Perhaps you are familiar with the painting, Freedom from Want. It is a picture of a grandmother holding a huge turkey at the head of a crowded dinner table. Rockwell paints himself looking over his left shoulder from the bottom right hand corner right at (you) the observer of this popular picture of-- grandmother holding the huge turkey at the head of the crowded dinner table.

There are many other examples of this type of thing in art. I've only pointed out a few that I have tracked down. In some sense, this is a picture of what it means that Jesus Christ is first-born of creation. He steps into His creation. However, the parallel fails, because in each of these examples that I gave you, the artist always took an insignificant role, off someplace in the background. But in the case of Jesus, He

comes into creation and takes center stage and is the glory of it all. Of anything, or anybody that has ever come into this visible creation, Jesus Christ is the greatest of everything. He is the first-born. Why? Verse 16 tells us, ...

- He is the Creator (Verse 16a)

"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 through Him and for Him" (verse 16).

Notice how verse 16 begins. It begins with the word, "For" or "Because." The sense of things is that Jesus is the first-born, because He made every thing. Jesus isn't the first-born, because He was the first thing created. Jesus is the first-born, because "by Him all things were created." Jesus isn't the first-born among all created things. Jesus is the first-born over all created things.

Those who take this term, "first-born" and say that God only created Jesus, and then left Jesus to create everything else, entirely miss the truth of verse 16 as it relates to the whole Bible. I trust that all of you know that the Bible says (in its very first verse) that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). And throughout the rest of Genesis, chapter 1, we see what God is doing. There is no indication that God created the "first-born" creature of the universe, who, in turn creates everything. There is no doubt that it is God, who creates. Yet, we find out here, that the creation came about through the agency of the Son "by Him" or "through Him" or "in Him." Here we delve into the mysteries of the Trinity. "The Father created through the agency of the Son." We cannot possibly understand how this works.

Perhaps an illustration might help. One of the things that I remember about growing up is that my earthly father often included me in on whatever he was building or fixing. When chair-leg would break, he would often show me how to glue it together and even have me do it. When there was plumbing to do, we would do it together. When there was a new sump pump to put in, we would do it together. When there were shelves to build, we would do it together. This continues to this day. Whenever I have a project that I would like to have done. He often says, "I'd be glad to help you. When do you want to come to DeKalb and make it?" As a result, I am comfortable in building things or repairing things around the house. In some small sense, this is what God did with creation -- our universe came about with the Father working through the Son.

1. "by Him all things were created." We are given a list of the "all things" created. This list includes "in the heavens", which probably is speaking about everything created that is beyond the earth such as the moon, the sun. It is talking about the planets, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, Pluto. The asteroids, the comets, the space dust. The stars, the solar-systems, the galaxies, everything. Scientists are continually discovering new planets and stars and solar-systems and galaxies all the time. When scientists discover some new planet or star or solar system, Jesus Christ can say, "I knew about that star." "Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars. The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power not one of them is missing" (Is. 40:26). "He counts the number of the stars; He gives name to all of them" (Ps. 147:4).

2. "on earth". This is talking about everything that is upon this earth. It is the water, the land, the rocks, the dirt, the lakes, the rivers, the hills, the mountains, the grass, the trees, the flowers, the bushes, the birds, the snails, the worms, the tigers, the molecules, the atoms, the protons, and the neutrons. All of this has been made by Jesus Christ. He is the creator. We are His creatures who have never discovered anything that God didn't know. We are researching into DNA and vaccines, hoping for new discoveries. Jesus has known them all. Perhaps a good way to think about these discoveries is to think about the explorers, Columbus and Magellan. Sometimes we look back upon them and sometimes laugh. Columbus discovered something great -- a new world, though he didn't know it. But we know what the new world is like. We know that it isn't India. This is how Jesus looks upon us. In all of our new technology and discoveries, He has known it all beforehand.

3. "visible and invisible" We have been talking about the things visible. But do you realize that there is a whole world beyond the things that you can see? As vast as the universe is, there is still more. Do you realize that every person who has ever lived and died upon the earth now lives in the realm of the invisible? There are more people in heaven or hell today than there are on this planet right now. There are about 6 billion people on the planet right now. In another generation (say 70 years), the population of heaven and hell combined will increase by another 6 billion, as this generation dies. I can't tell you how many people are in these places.

In some sense, the invisible world is larger than the visible world -- it houses more people than the earth does. And this doesn't even account for all of the angelic beings in the invisible places. This is primarily what Paul was speaking about when he said, "whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities." In Ephesians 6:12, Paul describes our struggle in this world. "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." When Jesus Christ created the world, He created "all things." And so, the next time that you happen to be outside and gaze upon the wonders of the creative work of God, I would encourage you to think in your mind that Jesus Christ was the one who created it.

Look at the end of verse 16, "all things have been created by Him and for Him."

- He is the Purpose (Verse 16b)

I pick this up from the last two words of verse 16, "for Him." "All things have been created through Him and for Him." We are told elsewhere that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude" (1 Tim. 4:4). In some sense, the world has been created for us to enjoy. But ultimately, the reason why the world has been created is not for our enjoyment. We have been created for His enjoyment! If we go back to the artist illustrations, we can think about it this way: Jesus painted the picture of the world, where He was the focal point of it all, so that He could hang the picture in His own studio to display for all to see His glory and His grace and His justice. Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper said it very well. "There is not one square inch in the entire universe of which Christ cannot say, 'This is Mine!'" [\[3\]](#) The world was created for Jesus to show forth His glory. Isaac Watts said it well, "there's not a plant or flow'r below but makes Thy glories known." The Westminster confession says very clearly that we were created "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." But in a greater way, we were created for Jesus' glory and for His enjoyment. Let's face it. Jesus didn't have to create the world. Jesus Christ had plenty of glory before the world came into being. He had glory with the Father (John 17:5). He had unbroken fellowship with Him (John 1:1). Why

disrupt a good thing? For His own glory.

- He is the Origin (verse 17a)

I pick this up from verse 17, "And He is before all things." In other words, Jesus Christ isn't bound by His creation. Jesus existed before anything was created. Perhaps you are familiar with John's prologue. It begins with this sentence, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The idea John gives us is that of a continual state of being that never had a beginning, nor will have an end. You might say, "in the beginning, the Word was" (John 1:1). The sense that John gives us here is that Jesus always was. There was never a time in which Jesus "came into being." A few verses later, we are told of John the Baptist, "there came a man, sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6). Jesus never "came to be" in the eternal sense. The only time Jesus "came to be" was when He took on flesh, as John 1:14 says, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

There was never a time when Jesus came into being. In the early 4th century, there was a heretic named Arius. He claimed that Jesus was like God, but he wasn't God. He said that Jesus was a divine hero, greater than a human being, but lesser than God. He held that Jesus had a beginning, but God didn't have a beginning. Much of his heresy was derived from the mis-understanding I addressed earlier regarding the word, "first-born." But, we must realize that Jesus was before all things. Before the world was created, there was something. And that something was Jesus. Before there existed an earth, before there existed a moon, before there existed a sun, before there existed a single molecule, before there existed any space in which to place a single molecule, there was the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It existed in perfect harmony, in perfect fellowship, and in perfect glory. Jesus prayed, shortly before His crucifixion, "Glorify Me together with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5).

The world had a beginning. Before the world had a beginning, the Son of God was enjoying perfect fellowship and glory with the other members of the Trinity. And, the world has an ending. When the world ends, the Son of God will enjoy perfect fellowship and glory within the Trinity and those who have believe in Jesus will join Him. But, I ask you, what is the difference between eternity past and eternity future? Jesus was in perfect glory with the Father before the world was created. When the day comes that the world is burned with fire and is no longer. Jesus will still be in perfect glory with the Father. But, with Him will be the church, extolling Him for His great grace and kindness toward them (Eph. 2:7).

- He is the Sustainer (verse 17b).

I get this from verse 17, "and in Him all things hold together." Jesus is the glue that holds it all together. Jesus ensures that the world continues to work as it ought. Within the universe, Jesus controls the forces of nature, which prevent everything from falling completely apart. There are four fundamental forces in the universe.

1. The gravitational force, which control the orbits of planets and stars. It also holds all of us on the earth.
2. The electromagnetic force, which controls the orbit of electrons around their nuclei. It also allows us power and lights.
3. The strong nuclear force holds the protons of an atom together.
4. The weak nuclear force governs the neutrinos.

You lose any of these forces, and nothing works. The atomic structure breaks down and you have separate particles going everywhere in the universe. On top of that, Jesus sustains life on our planet. Jesus keeps the earth an average of 93 million miles away from the sun. If it were too close, we would burn up. If it were too far away, we would freeze over. Jesus keeps our planet tilted at 23 ½ degrees so that massive ice build-ups don't occur at either the north-pole or the south-pole to freeze our planet. Jesus keeps the moon the perfect distance from us to cause the tides to come and clean away our harbors and shorelines. Apart from the moon, our ocean sides would become one stench pool of garbage. Jesus keeps the ozone layer in perfect shape to protect us from the deadly rays of the sun. This all happens just to create an environment in which we can survive.

On top of that, our bodies are infinitely complex. They are able to provide for itself, and repair itself when injured. The Bible says that Jesus is active in sustaining it all. Notice with me, here, these are the things that Jesus does. These things aren't attributed to the Father. This is what Jesus does. Do you see now, why I have called Jesus, "the Crown of Creation"? He is the First-born (Verse 15b). He is the Creator (Verse 16a). He is the Purpose (Verse 16b). He is the Origin (verse 17a). He is the Sustainer (verse 17b).

3. Jesus is the Chief of the Church (Verses 18-20).

- He is the Head (verse 18a).

Verse 18 says, "He is the head of the body, the church." In other words, Jesus is the ruler of the body. Jesus is the authority of the body. We get a sense as to what this means when Paul wrote in Eph. 1:22, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body" (and verse 23). Doesn't this make sense? If Jesus is the First-born, the Creator, the Purpose, the Origin, and the Sustainer, then certainly, Jesus would exercise His rule and His reign over His church, which He is building. Jesus wouldn't take His hands off the church. As Jesus rules the natural creation, so He rules the new creation.

We find out from other Scriptures exactly what this means. Jesus is the One who "purchased" the church (Acts 20:28). Jesus is the One who "gave Himself up" for the church (Eph. 5:25). Jesus is the "builder" of the church (Matt. 16:18). Jesus is the "Chief Shepherd" of the church (1 Pet. 5:4). Jesus "loves" the church (Eph. 5:25). Jesus "cleansed" the church (Eph. 5:26). Jesus feel the persecution of the church (Acts 9:4). Jesus "saves" those in the church (Heb. 7:25). Jesus "makes intercession" for the church (Heb. 7:25). And, Jesus is the "head" of the church (Col. 1:18).

It is from Jesus that we take our marching orders. The church stands and falls with Jesus. If you strike down Jesus, you strike down the church. As we are connected with Jesus, the church grows.

In this sense, Jesus is the "source of life" for the church. Look over at Colossians 2:19. These people (who were delighting in self-abasement,

the worship of angels, and taking his stand on visions, inflated by his fleshly mind) were in error, because they were "not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God" (Col. 2:19).

Jesus is the One who provides life to the church. When you neglect Jesus, the church will wither and perish and die. When you forget about Jesus, and become too interested in strange doctrines, and myths, and genealogies, and speculations, and fruitless discussions, and wrong uses of the law, and trivial points of theology, and eschatological time-tables, and church-growth methodologies, and leadership styles, and any other issue that would overshadow the gospel, you will not further the administration of God, which is by faith in Jesus (1 Tim. 1:3-8). To neglect Jesus is to neglect our life source. He is the Head (verse 18a).

- He is the Beginning (verse 18b). The text simply says, "He is the beginning." I believe that this still relates back to the church. Just as Jesus was the beginning of the creation, so all is Jesus the beginning of the church. Just as God breathed life into the nostrils of Adam "the breath of life; and Adam became a living being" (Gen. 2:7), so also did Jesus "breathe" upon the church and it became a living being. Many people point to Pentecost in Acts 2, when the church had its beginning, when the Holy Spirit began to fill the believers gathered in that upper room (Acts 2:4). This is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:45, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." It was His death and resurrection that brought about the life of the church. This leads us to our next point, ...

- He is the First-born from the dead (verse 18c).

Verse 18, "the first-born from the dead." Again, let me remind you that this doesn't mean that Jesus was the first one ever resurrected from the dead. It means that He is the chief of all those who were (or will be) resurrected from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ establishes soooooo much. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that vindicated the words of Jesus, ...

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

"An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39-40).

"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day" (Matt. 17:22,23).

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that establishes that Jesus was the Messiah.

"You will not abandon my soul to Sheol. Neither will you allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (Ps. 16:10).

"God fulfilled this promise ... in that He raised up Jesus" (Acts 13:33).

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that demonstrates that He is the one who will judge the world.

"He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
It is the resurrection that vindicates our faith.

"If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ... But now Christ has been raised from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:16,17,20).
The implication is that our faith is not in vain, because Christ has been raised!

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives us hope for a resurrected body for ourselves (1 Cor. 15:42-44). It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives us the power to live a godly life, "as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

So, you say, "So what?" What difference does it make? You say, Jesus is the Form of the Father, the Crown of Creation, the First-born, the Creator, the Purpose, the Origin, the Sustainer, the Chief of the Church, the Head, the Beginning, and the First-born from the dead. What difference does it make? Are these things merely a theological exercise in Christology, or does it all make a difference? It does make a difference! Jesus is all these things, so that "He Himself might come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:18). In other words, the Father sent the Son on a mission with a goal: "So that He Himself might come to have first place in everything".

Let me ask you now, "does Jesus Christ have first place in your life?" Does Jesus take first place in your marriage? Do you and your spouse prioritize the things of the Lord? Do you pray together? Do you speak with one another about the Lord? Do you encourage each other daily with the realities of Christ? Does Jesus take first place in your finances? When you are considering using your checkbook, are the firstfruits given to God (Pro. 3:9-10)? Are the things that you purchase often related to the kingdom? Does Jesus take first place in your job? Are you thankful that the Lord continues to use your job to provide for you? Or, have you come so used to the way that Jesus has provided for your work, that you become ungrateful to Him on a daily basis? Does Jesus take first place in your prayers? In recent days, I have often made it a point in my prayers to begin first with a remembrance of the gospel of Christ. It has a wonderful way of reminding my heart of the great realities of life and the provision of God for my sins through Jesus. Does Jesus take first place in your thoughts? Is Jesus first in your heart and mind? Does Jesus take first place in your theology? The Pharisees placed great attention upon the Scriptures. However, they erred when they didn't place Jesus at the forefront of all of their studies. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (John 5:39). In other words, the Pharisees missed their theology, because Christ was not central to their theology.

Does Jesus take first place in your relationships? The Scripture often upholds Jesus as the model of how our relationships ought to function. Jesus forgave us, and so, we ought to forgive others (Col. 3:13). Does Jesus take first place in your plans for the future? James admonished those who made their plans simply based upon the financial considerations, rather than considering the place of the Lord in their plans (James 4:13-17). Does Jesus take first place in your activities of life? When planning your various activities for tonight or this Wednesday or next Saturday or three weeks from Tuesday, does Jesus have any place in your decision making process? Are your activities prioritized by your relationship with Jesus? Does Jesus take first place in your material possessions? Do you view the things that you possess as objects to use for ministry? Have you given up all your possessions to be used as the Lord would have them to be used (Luke 14:33)? Does Jesus take first place in your words? Are your words consistent with everything that was spoken this morning about Jesus? We need to place Jesus first in our lives.

I close with a living illustration of how I observed this take place this past weekend. On Friday, I attended a conference in DeKalb, where a man named Norm Wakefield was a speaker. He was scheduled to speak at 8am. Shortly before his speaking engagement, his daughter fainted in the shower and hit the back of her head on a soap dish. It cut a pretty large gash in the back of her head. Because Norm needed to go and teach his session, he left his daughter in the care of his wife in the hotel room. He was speaking about how we need to trust in Christ, who is the anchor for our souls. It gave him great opportunity to provide for those of us in the audience a living illustration of how he was placing Jesus Christ first in his difficulties. He told us that the way in which we ought to conquer through the storms of life is to remind ourselves of who Jesus is. He is God's Son and He is our high priest (Heb. 1:1-3). We are to continually remind ourselves that Jesus made purification for sins and sat down at the right hand of God, where He now intercedes for us (Heb. 1:3; 7:23). He will preserve us and save us through suffering, trials and temptation by giving us mercy and grace (Heb. 10:39; 4:16). We simply need to draw near to Him and hold fast our confession (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:23). ^[4]

He used his current trials to explain exactly how Jesus Christ was being placed in the forefront of the difficulty. As the seminar was taking place, a good friend of ours, who was working at the conference was busy behind the scenes, contacting my father, who is a retired orthopaedic surgeon. Only the day before had my father put some stitches in my brother-in-law, who had an accident. As to be expected, he told my friend that he would be more than happy to help Norm Wakefield's daughter. As we left the session, we saw our friends, who were standing outside the door, who explained the situation to us. We remained around to help persuade Norm to take his daughter to my parents' home. I assured him that my father loved to do this type of thing. Jesus was providing for the Wakefields as they trusted Him and put Him first place in everything.

Later, we heard the story that Norm had called each of his three other children, and had asked them to pray for the situation. Norm's daughter, who hates doctors, behaved extremely well on the kitchen counter as she received her stitches. After stitching her up, my father discovered that the Wakefields had been so busy that they didn't have time for any breakfast. So, my parents served them grapefruit and toast for breakfast. Later in the day, I happened to attend another session in which Norm was speaking. In recalling how kind and gracious the Lord had been to their family, Norm was very moved. I believe that Jesus was merely displaying His great care and concern for the Wakefields, who had determined to put Jesus first in everything.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 21, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] In preparation for this sermon, I relied heavily on my previous study of this same text for a message I preached at a conference at Kishwaukee Bible Church in DeKalb, Illinois on 11/2/2002 titled "The Message of the Bible". As such, my outline and many of my thoughts are similar to what was spoken on that occasion. However, in this message, I sought to place my thoughts into the overall context of Colossians in greater proportion.

[2] These quotes were read at <http://movies.yahoo.com/movie/1808625216/critic> on May 20, 2006.

[3] This is a famous quote that can be found all over the internet.

[4] These thoughts can be found in Norm Wakefield's book, *Anchored in Christ*, pp. 282-283.