

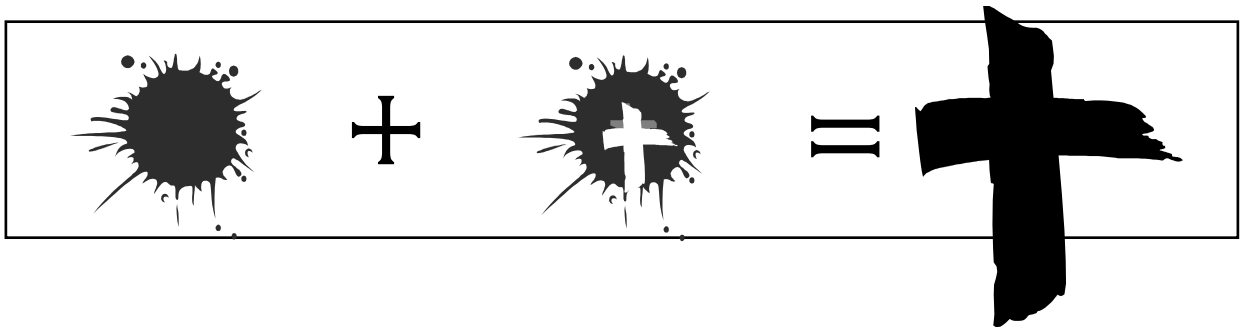
Chapter 3

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Reigning Grace and the Supremacy of Christ

“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**”

(Col. 1:16).



REVIEW

The person and work of Jesus Christ is so vast and of such limitless quality that all He does is lavish in its ability to cancel out the nature of the crime against Him by His people. Only God is able to remove the shame, fear, and guilt of His people.

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AN INTRODUCTION

In the *Story* of God the primary character taking center stage and enabling the entire plot to make sense is found in a singular element. The element is not abstract, but personable and relational. He is capable of sensory experience. His name is Jesus. We are about to embark on a journey in which we will discover a well that never runs dry, a light that never dims, a strength that never diminishes, and a love that never changes. This chapter will show how Jesus Christ is the answer to every question and the solution to every problem. He is the promise fulfilled and the picture completed. He is the *Story's* Hero. Here we will see that Jesus Christ is not only necessary, but that He is enough.

Humanity was created with a thirst for its Creator. Such questions as, “Who am I” “Why I am here” and “Where am I going” haunt us. Augustine correctly captured this truth when he wrote, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord.”¹ We try to answer the questions through drug addictions, drinking binges, and moral defilement, but nothing and no one created can fill the void.² These questions can only be answered correctly as they are answered in Christ.



THE STORY'S HERO, JESUS CHRIST

The Bible is a *Story* about who God is, what He does, and who His people are in Him. It is a *Story* with a villain, sin, and a hero – God's Hero, Jesus Christ.

The answer to life's questions and the solution to life's problems are found in a person, and His name is Jesus. He is the Hero of biblical revelation and of life itself. The Scripture is clear: Jesus Christ is enough for this life and for the life that is to come. Jesus Christ is set forth as having first place over all things created. The supremacy of Jesus Christ is seen in passages such as Romans 11:36, Colossians 1:16, and 1 Corinthians 8:6.

“For **from Him**, through Him, and **to Him** are all things. **To Him** be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36).³

“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**” (Col. 1:16).

“Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, **by whom** are all things, and we exist **through Him**” (1 Cor. 8:6).

All things created revolve around Him. He is the substance of which all things are mere shadows. **Life has no meaning apart from Him.** It is an empty shell of what it was meant to be. Somehow, in the midst of living life we miss the life giver. God has given us all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17).

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17).

Yet, we have replaced Him with the gifts He gives. **God never designed nor intended the good gifts He gives to do what only He can do.** Read carefully the following statements as they set forth this unchanging truth.

The gift is never greater than the Giver. Grace isn't greater than God. My salvation is not greater than my Savior.⁴

Christ Himself is better than any of His blessing: better than the power, or the victory, or the service that He grants. Christ creates spiritual power; but Christ is better than that power. He is God's best.⁵

When Jesus Christ is “high and lifted up” in the life of His people, sin begins to lose its appeal, the flesh only whispers, sinners find an attraction that was previously unnoticed, and His people passionately pursue Him. God is bigger than anything or anyone.

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No matter what the problem may be, Jesus Christ is Lord over it. Nothing can escape His authority. Before Him, all things must bow.

It is my earnest prayer “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of **Him**” (Eph. 1:17). I pray we would “fix [our] eyes on **Jesus**, the author and finisher of faith” (Heb. 12:2), and that together we would “see **Jesus** only” (John 12:21; Matt. 17:18).

As we begin this study, let us not lose sight of Him. He is the summit of the mountain and the pinnacle of the pyramid. Jesus Christ is the enormity of the sequoia tree and the greatness of the Grand Canyon. He is the innumerable host of stars painting the evening sky. Jesus Christ is the vastness of the ocean bodies. Jesus Christ is the substance of which all things are but mere shadows. May it please the Father to reveal to us His Son.

The purpose of this study is to establish the supremacy of Jesus Christ. **Jesus Christ is not an appendage to the Christian life, but the very essence of the Christian life.** He is the hub from which all of life radiates. Truly, without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is this truth we wish to examine and establish as the first truth.



THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Scripture declares Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and one day He will be acknowledged as such by all He has created (Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). The apostle Paul sees and celebrates the Lord Jesus Christ as having first place in all things. “[He] furnishes for us in his Epistles more material on the subject than any other New Testament writer. [He will] systematize the doctrine and associate the word with all that God has done for man in Christ.”⁶ To facilitate our study, our primary focus will be in **the Book of Colossians**. Since the Pauline letters are occasional letters, the occasion suggested by the content of the letter is an attack against the very person of Christ Himself.⁷ Just as then so also, now many “things” seek to encroach on the singularity and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Such things as intellectualism (2:3), ceremonialism (2:16), experimentalism (2:18), asceticism (2:20-21), and racism (3:11) are all seeking to detract from the glory of Christ.⁸ The question is whether or not Christ is enough, or do we need more? This is always the most fundamental issue in any heresy that seeks to undermine biblical Christianity. We rightfully call this the Colossian Heresy. **Many would argue against these things for salvation, but gladly couple them with Christ for sanctification.**

In light of the gospel, let me especially demolish the myth that legalism is a blunder that's associated only with our initial salvation - with our positional justification in God's eyes. Most believers realize we could never earn such salvation; . . . But when it comes to our sanctification, suddenly we become legalists.⁹

This, however, is still theological error. In Colossae, there was a denial of Christ's activity, His deity, and His priority.¹⁰ Such an onslaught had to be challenged. Paul's attack against such error gives for us in Colossians one of the most glorious pictures of our Lord Jesus Christ anywhere in the Scripture. It is this picture of Christ as seen by Paul we wish to focus on now.

Because we do not see Him, we are robbed of all that He is for us and we are in Him. Our unbelief steals from us the joy of Him. **Life lived in the absence of Him is empty.** It is only as we see Him as enough, in and for all areas of life both now and hereafter, that we can begin to enjoy all that He is for us and we are in Him. It is as we live in this *Story* that our story makes sense. Such knowledge of Him enables us to maximize our moment in the *Story*. The Book of Colossians notes three primary ideas as it relates to our Lord's sufficiency: His activity, His deity, and His priority. We will begin by noting His activity.

I. His activity shows Him to be enough.

The most dangerous aspect of the Colossians heresy was its depreciation of the person of Jesus Christ. To the errorists of Colossae, Christ was not the triumphant Redeemer to whom all authority in heaven and on earth had been committed. At best he was only one of many spirit beings who bridged the space between God and men. This passage is a part of Paul's answer to this heretical teaching.¹¹

Paul seeks to show how Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come by first noting His activity.

Most consider 1:15-20 a hymn that asserts in exalted language the supremacy of Christ in creation and redemption.¹²

We will note three activities in which Christ is set forth as enough. Two are organic to the text; one is external to the text but necessary to complete the thought.

A. He is enough in His activity for salvation (Col. 1:14, 20-22; 2:13).

¹⁴ “**in whom** we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness** of sins. . . ²⁰ 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. . . ²² yet He has now **reconciled** you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him **holy and blameless and beyond reproach**” (Col. 1:14, 20, 22).

Verses 15–19 give us the nature and sufficiency of the sacrifice. In verses 1:14, 20–22 and 2:13, we see the result or consequences of the sacrifice. It is because of whom He is that we have the following results:

- Redemption (1:14)
- Forgiveness (1:14; 2:13)
- Reconciliation (1:20, 21)
- Holiness (1:22)
- Regeneration (2:13)

In His person and work, He completely satisfied the Father's demands.

“I glorified You on the earth, **having accomplished the work** which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4).

“Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘**It is finished!**’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30).

The word “finished” means “to make an end.” **The complete finality of His action consumed the demand.** Between God and man there existed . . .

- A debt we could not pay

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- A conflict we could not reconcile
- A wrath we could not appease
- A failure we could not correct

Christ came and completely satisfied the Father's demands. He said, "It is finished." Jesus Christ brought to an end the debt, the conflict, the wrath, and the failure.

- Jesus Christ paid the debt (i.e. redemption)
- Jesus Christ reconciled the conflict (i.e. reconciliation)
- Jesus Christ appeased the wrath (i.e. propitiation)
- Jesus Christ corrected the failure (i.e. justification)

Presently, the Scripture speaks of our Lord sitting in heaven. He sits because He completed His redemptive work (Col. 3:1).

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, **seated at the right hand of God**" (Col. 3:1).

"...but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, **SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD**" (Heb. 10:12).

"...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and **has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**" (Heb. 12:2).

It has been said the one piece of furniture absent from the Old Testament Tabernacle/Temple was the chair because the priest could never rest.

“Both the Old Testament tabernacle and the Mosaic covenant were mere shadows of the eternal reality that in due season fulfilled and surpassed them. They were ‘true shadows’ in that they correctly bore a relationship to that which they imaged. But, proper and necessary as they were in God’s redemptive plan, they were not the final reality.

They derived all their value by foreshadowing the person and work of the incarnate Christ, who in ‘the fullness of the time’ (Gal. 4: 4 KJV) carried out with infinite blessing and surpassing splendor exactly what they stood for.

In the Holy of Holies of the earthly tabernacle there was no chair, for the Aaronic high priest’s work was never completed. His sacrifices had to be repeated continually because they only covered sin temporarily without removing it eternally (Heb. 10:1-14). But after Christ died for the sins of His people once and for all, the value of His infinite sacrifice was such that the Father raised Him up from the dead to present the results of His atoning work in the true, heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:12). His blood atonement was infinitely worthy and thus eternally complete. Hence, a chair is provided for Him since the priestly work need never again be repeated.”¹³

Think about the strength of this one idea as it relates to our redemption.

Surely if Christ is an object sufficient for the satisfaction of the Father, much more, then, is He an object sufficient for the satisfaction of any soul.¹⁴

One of the best kept secrets among Christians today is this: **Jesus paid it all. I mean all.** Why is this such a well-kept secret? For one thing we are afraid of this truth. We are afraid to tell even ourselves that we do not have to work anymore, the work is all done. We are afraid that if we really believe this, we will slack off in our Christian duties.¹⁵

Truly, He is enough in His redemptive work. The immeasurableness of His redemptive work assures us of His complete sufficiency. **God can do what He promised because of what Jesus did.** The redemptive work of Jesus Christ is so immeasurable that everything against us has been removed.

The Bible tells us Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). His name is the only name whereby humanity can be saved (Acts 4:12). Colossians 1:14 (“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”) uses the present active indicative “we have.” This grammatical structure assures us of a present condition. Right now, at this moment in time, we have both redemption and forgiveness. It is not something we hope for, but

rather something we are to be celebrating. We are redeemed from debt, forgiven of sin, and reconciled to the Father through the Son. The second area that shows Him enough is in creation.

B. He is enough as the agent of creation (Col. 1:15-17).

¹⁵ “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For **by Him** all things were created, 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**. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together**” (Col. 1:15-17).

“The apostle now states the ground for Christ’s dominion over creation: he is firstborn (Lord) over creation *because he made it*. To him it owes its unity, its meaning, indeed its very existence.”¹⁶ “Colossians 1:15 means that Christ has the privileges of authority and rule, the privileges belonging to the ‘first-born,’ but with respect to the whole creation.”¹⁷ The second area in which Christ is set forth as enough is noted in 1:16.

His role as creator of the universe is explained through four prepositional phrases: sphere of creation (in Him 1:16); agent of creation (by Him 1:16); goal of creation (for Him 1:16); and prior to creation (before all things 1:17). Paul also called Him the sustainer of creation (by Him all things consist). Both in the natural and in the spiritual creations, Christ is sovereign and should have the preeminence.¹⁸

Creation was fashioned in order that through creation God might receive the glory. All of creation is but a shadow of His substance. His “fingerprints” are all over its imagery. The *Story* God tells is told on the stage of creation.

A.T. Robertson captures the essence of what Paul declares in the following statement.

But surely we are bound to feel the grip of Paul’s thought as he has presented in a *matchless fashion the pre-eminence of Christ in creation and in the realm of grace*. It is not too much to say that in these verses, which apparently come as a sort of appendage to the prayer, Paul sets forth the real purpose of the Epistle to the Colossians. It is this *full-length portrait of Christ as Creator and Redeemer* that is the answer to the Colossians heresy, the antidote to the Gnostic poison [emphasis added].¹⁹

Before we leave this area, I believe it necessary to complete the idea by showing how Jesus Christ is the subject and object of all Biblical revelation.

C. He is enough as the subject matter for biblical revelation (Luke 24:26, 27, 44-47).

²⁶ “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets,

He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:26, 27).

⁴⁴ “Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:44-47).

Luke 24 provides a good representation of how the Old Testament Scripture points to and prepares us for the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is only one subject in the Scripture and it is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Promise in whom, through whom, and for whom all things created find their meaning. He is the one promised who, in the exercising of His reign, will deliver His people from the bondage of sin. He is the *centerpiece* of all biblical revelation and all general creation. He is what holds all other ideas together. In His absence, nothing else has significance.

All events recorded in Scripture have a primary, overarching purpose of glorifying God through redemptive activity whereby His people are restored to fellowship and redeemed from sin. In becoming His people, He establishes covenants with them through

which Jesus Christ rules and reigns over, in, and through them. This leads us to Paul's second primary area setting forth His sufficiency.

II. His Deity shows Him to be enough (Col. 1:15; 2:9).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15).

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,” (Col. 2:9).

“Because of who he is and what we find in him, any system ‘not after Christ’ must be wrong.”²⁰ The second way in which Paul seeks to show Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come is by noting His deity.

In Greek thought an image shares in reality what it represents. Christ is the perfect likeness of God.²¹

To have seen the Son was to have seen the Father. The Son is a “spitting image of His Father.” In many ways, those who have seen my own son have seen me. My image is in my son. This is even truer of the Father and Jesus Christ.

Notice the abundance of Scriptural evidence confirming this thought (John 1:18; 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:3).

“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him**” (John 1:18).

“Jesus said to him, “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).

“In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of **the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**” (2 Cor. 4:4).

“Who, **although He existed in the form of God**, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,” (Phil. 2:6).

“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,” (Heb. 1:3).

Biblical Theologian Wayne Grudem comments,

The first three verses of Hebrews are emphatic in saying that the Son is the one whom God ‘appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world’ (Heb. 1:2). This Son, says the writer, ‘reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp (lit., is the ‘exact duplicate,’ Gk. **character**) of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power’ (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the exact duplicate of the ‘nature’ (or being, Gk. **Hypostasis**) of God, making him exactly equal to God in every attribute. Moreover, he continually upholds the universe ‘by his word of power,’ something that only God could do.²²

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John 1:18 speaks of Jesus declaring or explaining (exegete) the Father. He leads before His audience who God is. Second Corinthians 4:4 uses the word “image” or “icon.” An “icon” speaks of the very substance or essential embodiment of something or someone. Jesus images the Father. It is the same word used in Colossians 1:15. “Christ is the image of God in the sense that he is the exact likeness of God, like the image on a coin or the reflection in a mirror [cf. Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Jesus being the express image or reproduction of the Father].”²³

Because of our Lord’s activity and deity, because He is all this and more – HE MUST HAVE FIRST PLACE! The final primary idea noted by the apostle is our Lord’s priority.

III. His priority shows Him to be enough (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. 1:18).

The third way in which Paul seeks to show Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come is by noting His priority. The primary passage setting forth such a thought is found in Colossians 1:13–23. Notice the progression: various statements are made concerning the Son up to verse 18 than Paul begins to reinforce this idea with

several descriptive phrases. He is the head of the Church;²⁴ He is the beginning; He is the firstborn from the dead with the result that He might have first place (or as the *King James Bible* states, “have the preeminence”). The word “first place” is a verbal noun and is a present active participle. The idea of the action is habitual, continual, and linear. It is not simply a point in time, but a consuming domination of Him in our lives. “God decreed the preeminence of Christ over every order of being.”²⁵ Because God willed for it to be, He must have it; and He will have it; and He shall have it!

Curtis Vaughan provides an insightful comment on this idea when he writes,

The word ‘he’ is normally not expressed in Greek because it is implied in the personal ending of the verb. Here, however, it is expressed, suggesting that preeminence is the exclusive right of Christ. ‘He himself’ or ‘he alone’ is the idea. ‘Have supremacy’ literally means ‘have the first place’; or perhaps better still, ‘become first.’²⁶

From the larger context of the letter we can find four reasons as to why the Son has first place.

A. All things are sustained by Him (Col. 1:17; 2:19; Heb. 1:3).

“He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together**” (Col. 1:17).

“and 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).

“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” (Heb. 1:3).

Jesus Christ holds all things together. He is the glue. Without Him, life becomes disjointed. “Both verses (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17) indicate that if Christ were to cease his continuing activity of sustaining all things in the universe, then all except the triune God would instantly cease to exist.”²⁷ Consider the following three statements concerning the sustaining activity of Jesus Christ to the universe.

He is the sustainer of the universe and the unifying principle of its life. Apart from his continuous sustaining activity all would disintegrate.²⁸

He is the principle of cohesion in the universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos.²⁹

Verse seventeen uses the word “consist.” It carries the idea of “to put together by way of composition or combination, unite parts into one whole.” From its usage, it appears that in Christ all things are

authenticated or verified. **Creation has meaning only as it relates to Him. Apart From Him, it carries no meaning.**

Colossians 2:19 uses two graphic words to communicate the idea of sustaining. The first is “being supplied.” It is a present passive participle. Its construction communicates an ongoing activity. God gives to us, through Christ, those things which we need to function smoothly. Without His enablement we would be a body out of joint.

The second word in Colossians 2:19 is “held together.” It is also found in 2:2 “knit together.” It means “to join together, to cause a person to unite with one in a conclusion or come to the same opinion.”

Grammatically, both verbs in Colossians 2:19 are present passive participles. The passive means we are receiving the action, and the present participle accents the ongoing activity. Both verbs suggest sustenance. Our Lord’s activity sustains us daily. He is the one who gives this life meaning. Without Him, our lives fall apart. Also note John 15:5, the branch dies apart from the vine.

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me you can do nothing**” (John 15:5).

The second reason as to why Jesus Christ has priority is found in Colossians 1:19.

B. All things are summed up in Him (Col. 1:19; Eph. 1:10).

“For it was the Father's good pleasure **for all the fullness to dwell in Him**” (Col. 1:19).

“with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, **the summing up of all things in Christ**, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him” (Eph. 1:10).

The second statement showing the Son's right to have first place is seen in that all things are summed up in Him. **He is the goal of God's creative activity.**

Verse 19 gives us the reason as to why Christ is to be preeminent over everything. All of God's attributes and all of God's activities find their meaning in Jesus Christ. In Christ they are perfectly displayed. Jesus Christ is “the totality of the divine Powers and Attributes.”³⁰ Everything is “for” Him.

Colossians tells us that in Christ all fullness dwells. Ephesians 1:10 uses the phrase “the summing up of all things in Christ.” This particular Greek word is only used two times in the New Testament. The idea is captured in “to condense into a summary.”³¹

The Eternal Word is the goal of the Universe, as He was the starting point.³²

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When we look at life and all of its various pieces, there appear to be many loose ends. We question purpose and ask why. Yet if we step back and look at the big picture, when we know and see the *Story*, we will see that all things are summed up in Him. He gives meaning to life, to creation. He is the subject matter of God's *Story*.

He is like the big picture on the box cover when putting together a massive puzzle. We see all of the various pieces, but until we see the big picture we have no idea as to where we are going. The third reason as to why Jesus Christ has priority is found in Colossians 2:1-3.

C. All things are senseless without Him (Col. 2:1-3).

¹ “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, ³ **in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**” (Col. 2:1-3).

The third statement showing the Son's right to have first place is seen in that all things are senseless without Him. In describing life without God, French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre notes how, “Life is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness.”³³ In contrast to this

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hopeless existence, “Paul is encouraging the readers to look to Christ as the only ‘place’ where the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found.”³⁴ “This highlights the uniqueness of Christ as the sole true repository and integrating point of all knowledge.”³⁵

If in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, then not to draw from His well is to pull from empty cisterns and polluted pools.

He is the Father’s glorious Casket, in which are shut all the mysteries and treasures of grace. . .³⁶

Our English word “thesaurus” comes from the Greek word “treasure,” found in Colossians 2:3. It means “the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up, the things laid up in a treasury, collected treasures.”

“It is in Christ that all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge have been stored up - formerly in hiding, but now are displayed to those who have come to know Christ.”³⁷

“The adjective **apocryphos** is the basis for the expression ‘apocryphal books.’ This was used not only for the non-canonical books of the OT, but also for the secret writings of the Gnostics. Against their claims to esoteric knowledge, Paul asserts that all true knowledge is hidden - ‘stored up, hidden from view’ - in Christ.”³⁸

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In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. If we do not go to the right source, how can we ever find what we are looking for? Proverbs tells us that without first fearing or submitting before the LORD, there will be no knowledge or wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). **Our Lord is the map through which life is to be navigated.** Without Him, life is a futile, hopeless endeavor, short lived and full of frustration. The fourth and final reason as to why Jesus Christ has priority is found in Colossians 2:16, 17.

D. All things are shadows of Him (Col. 2:16, 17).

¹⁶ “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- ¹⁷ things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col. 2:16, 17)

The final statement showing the Son’s right to have first place is seen in that all things are shadows of Him. **Paul is not saying the shadow is bad. What Paul is saying is that the substance is better.**

If you have HIM, you have in that respect gone beyond them.³⁹

We have embraced shadows, not realizing the substance behind it all. We must embrace the substance. We must not allow ourselves to become entangled in the shadows of Christ.

Real food and a real car and a real spouse are a lot better than simple pictures. Pictures of food cannot satisfy hunger. A picture of a car will not move us from where we are to where we need to be, and a picture of a spouse will not gratify the desire for companionship.

Colossians calls us to live Christ. This world is not our home. **Nothing here is so tantalizing as to take His place. No work of ours can ever be of greater satisfaction than knowing Him.** God must be seen in all things. Colossians, like all New Testament books, affirms the absolute control of God in the Christian life.

Colossians is a celebration of Christ's work in our behalf. God's grace toward sinners is good news (1:6). He changes lives. It is this message Paul called the Colossae believer to embrace (2:6-10). Nothing is to distract us from this powerful truth. This is the good news of Christ to His people. The Colossae message is Christ, not man. Christ is Lord supreme.

There are two conclusions to be made when Jesus Christ is seen to be enough.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- First, He is our life (3:3, 4). Jesus Christ is our sufficiency.

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Verse three tells us we are dead and then uses the word “hidden” or “crypt” (tomb, sepulcher) to tell of our relationship with Christ. Unfortunately, today **we often struggle to free ourselves of Him who alone gives life.** We have no identity apart from Him.

When you understand that your significance and identity and purpose and direction are all anchored in Christ, you don't have to win - you're free to lose.⁴⁰

It is Christ that is instead of all, that is better than all, and that will supply all in His due time.⁴¹

Is Christ all in all? Then if we have an interest in Him, it should satisfy and content us though we have nothing or though we are nothing. Why? Because if we have Christ we have all.⁴²

The New Testament is clear. If He is our life, then we have life. If He is not our life, then we have nothing but death.

- Second, He is our prize (2:17, 18). Jesus Christ is our satisfaction.

Jesus Christ is the prize for which we are to be reaching. Is Christ our supreme joy and happiness? If He is not, He can be. Will we take of the gift that He is waiting to give so freely? Our Lord Jesus

Christ is both the means and the end. He not only dictates how we live, but for what we live.

Jesus Christ is enough. His activity, deity, and priority assure us He is enough. Within the eternal and infinite counsel of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit it was determined to write a *Story* in which the second member of the Godhead would become the *Story's* Hero. Jesus Christ is this Hero. Because He is excessive in His dealings with us, He is sufficient. He is all we will ever need . . . In fact He is more than you will ever need.

An old sailor repeatedly got lost at sea, so his friends gave him a compass and urged him to use it. The next time he went out in his boat, he followed their advice and took the compass with him. But as usual he became hopelessly confused and was unable to find land. Finally, he was rescued by his friends. Disgusted and impatient with him, they asked, "Why didn't you use that compass we gave you? You could have saved us a lot of trouble!" The sailor responded, "I didn't dare to! I wanted to go north, but as hard as I tried to make the needle aim in that direction, it just kept on pointing southeast." That old sailor was so certain he knew which direction was north that he stubbornly tried to force his own personal persuasion on his compass. Unable to do so, he tossed it aside as worthless and failed to benefit from the guidance it offered.⁴³

How significant is it that we understand this? Friend, Christ is the compass and we ignore Him at our peril. A.B. Simpson provides for

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us an excellent closing statement by contrasting the Christian life with the Christ life.

This may serve to illustrate the difference between Christian life and the Christ life. Christian life may be nothing more than the acceptance of certain ideas and principles and the observance of certain forms and rites. Christ life is a vital and divine experience through the union of the soul with the living Christ Himself. Christian life may be an honest attempt to imitate Christ and follow His teachings and commandments, but Christ life is the incarnation of Jesus Himself in your own life. It is the Christ reliving His life in you and enabling you to be and to do what, in your own strength, you never could accomplish.⁴⁴

May Jesus Christ be our consuming joy, and may we find in Him all we need and one day all we want.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

Jesus Christ is not only necessary, He is enough. In the *Story* God wrote, Jesus Christ is His response to the villain. He is God's hero. He is the deliverer who completely deals with the shame, fear, and guilt of His people. He proves who He is and what He does by His activity, His deity, and His priority. This is the message and the hope brought by the Book of Colossians. Everything about Him speaks of abundance and

sufficiency. Our only hope, healing, wholeness, and help are to trust in God's hero, Jesus Christ.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

¹ *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Bishop of Hippo, Book 1, Chapter 1 at <http://www.leaderu.com/cyber/books/augconfessions/bk1.html>

² Consider the following thought, "One of every eight Americans has a significant problem with alcohol or drugs, with 40 percent of the group having a 'dual diagnosis,' or concurrent mental/nervous disorder." Most addictions are attempts at filling the void, of silencing the voice of the Holy Spirit beckoning the sinner to be reconciled to God.

<http://www.coachinginternational.com/stats.html>

³ Romans 11:36 speaks of God the Father yet the equality of essence, the ontological trinity, is seen in the statements concerning the Son in Colossians 1:16 and 1 Corinthians 8:6.

⁴ Bob George, *Faith that Pleases God*, (Eugene: Harvest Publishers, 2001), 55.

⁵ Charles G. Trumbull, *Victory in Christ*, (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2002), 31.

⁶ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 27, 29.

⁷ "The apostle had heard that some false teachers had come to Colossae, so he wrote to refute their errors, lest the new little church be harmed." D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 335.

⁸ "In the face of all such claims, *Paul stresses the supremacy of Christ*. This combination of the greatness of Christ and of his saving work for believers runs through the epistle." Ibid., 339 [emphasis added]. "Its dominant aim is to restate *the absolute adequacy of Jesus* in relation to the world and to the church, to show how faith in him requires no outside philosophy or esoteric cult in order to perfect itself, and to expose the absurdity of any mystical supplement to the Christian experience of Jesus as redeemer." James Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* ([emphasis added] New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 151.

⁹ Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* (Crossway, 2011), 98.

¹⁰ "Paul puts emphasis on the supremacy of Christ (1:15-19), so it seems that the false teachers detracted in some way from a high Christology." Ibid., 335.

¹¹ Curtis Vaughan, "Colossians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984, 11:180, 181).

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- ¹² Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 32.
- ¹³ <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/true-tabernacle/> "The True Tabernacle," Douglas Kelly.
- ¹⁴ Jeremiah Burroughs, "Christ is All in All," in *The Saints Treasury*, 1657, 1.
- ¹⁵ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 19.
- ¹⁶ Vaughan, "Colossians," 182.
- ¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, 1994), 243.
- ¹⁸ Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), 270.
- ¹⁹ A.T. Robertson, *Paul and the Intellectuals* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956), 53.
- ²⁰ Vaughan, "Colossians," 198.
- ²¹ Cleon L. Rogers Jr. & Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 461.
- ²² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 547.
- ²³ Vaughan, "Colossians," 181.
- ²⁴ "He' is emphatic, the meaning being that Christ alone - Christ and no other - is Head of the church." Vaughan, "Colossians," 183.
- ²⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 72.
- ²⁶ Vaughan, "Colossians," 184.
- ²⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 316.
- ²⁸ O'Brien, *Colossians*, WBC, 47.
- ²⁹ J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1879), 156.
- ³⁰ Handley C.G. Moule, *Colossian Studies*, (London: Thynne & Co., 1927), 87.
- ³¹ "When a column of figures was added up, the total was placed at the top. At the end of the age everything will be seen to add up to Christ. This recognition of his preeminence will ensure that the original harmony of the universe is restored (Rom. 8:18-21)." A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 11:26.
- ³² Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 155.
- ³³ Jean Paul Sartre - French philosophy, play writer, and novelist (1905-1980). http://www.christiantreasury.com/Apologetics/Apologetic_Atheism.htm
- ³⁴ O'Brien, *Colossians*, WBC, 95.
- ³⁵ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), 252.
- ³⁶ Moule, *Colossian Studies*, 127.
- ³⁷ *Rogers and Rogers*, 463.
- ³⁸ Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, 353.

³⁹ Ibid., 176. “The Reality which projected the shadow is His, for it is in fact Himself.”

⁴⁰ Tchividjian, *Jesus*, 121.

⁴¹ Burroughs, *The Saints Treasury*, 4.

⁴² Ibid., 5.

⁴³ Source unknown

⁴⁴ A.B. Simpson, *The Christ Life*, (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980), 20.