

# **\*The Heights Baptist Church \* Sermon Series: Doctrine\***

**\* Topic: God the Son: Humanity & Deity \* Col. 1:15-23, Phil. 2:5-11 \* 4/19/26 \***

## **MAIN POINT**

“Jesus Christ is completely human but, at the same time, completely God. He is the only way for bringing people who are far from God back into a right relationship with God. He lived a perfect life, died, and rose from the dead so that He could be a substitution for us in satisfying God’s demands for perfection. He defeated death in His resurrection so that we can have life.”

(This quote is from The Heights website, under “Beliefs”)

## **INTRODUCTION**

**What are some examples of things in life we take for granted even though we aren’t able to understand them (e.g. light existing as both a particle or a wave, or God’s sovereignty versus man’s free will)?**

**Why is it necessary for us as humans to sometimes accept things we don’t understand? Why is mystery all the more appropriate to accept when it comes to God’s nature and His works?**

The incarnation—God the Son becoming a man—is a mystery that stands at the heart of the Christian faith (John 1:14; Col. 2:9). We simply do not know how the infinite second Person of the Trinity can take on a finite human nature while remaining identical and equal with God. Nevertheless, we have no option but to confess this wonderful, incomprehensible truth because the Bible clearly teaches it (1 Tim. 3:16). With respect to His divine nature, the Son is equal with the Father from eternity; with respect to His human nature, He is God’s submissive, obedient servant.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-20**

**What do these verses teach us about Jesus’ true identity?**

Paul wanted the church at Colossae to ground their beliefs in a proper view of Jesus. Paul provided them with a primer on Jesus’ identity. Paul knew the Colossians’ belief could never rise above their view of Jesus. Though they have their difficulties, these verses paint a vivid picture of the Son of God.

**Which of these traits communicate aspects of Jesus’ divinity?**

**Which of these traits communicate aspects of Jesus’ humanity?**

**When Paul claimed that Jesus was the “firstborn of all creation,” what did he mean? What did he not mean? How does this phrase help us more clearly understand who Jesus is?**

It is clear from this and other scriptures that Jesus is God, and that through Him all things were created. So, this title is not saying Jesus is a created being. In ancient Israel, the firstborn son held a preeminent position in the family. He received a double portion of the inheritance and was assigned the position of second in command to the father. He took over the role as family leader after the father died. In Psalm 89:27-29, we see this term used in this way for King David, even though he wasn’t physically the first born of the sons of Jesse. By declaring Jesus to be the firstborn over all creation, God is showing us Christ is preeminent over all creation.

## **In what sense is Jesus Head of the church?**

### **What does the church look like when Jesus is the head? What does it look like when He is not?**

Just as the physical body cannot function without the head, the church cannot function without Christ, its spiritual Head. The church receives its mandate from Christ and Him alone, though this mandate is detailed for us in His Word as revealed to Christ's apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). The fact that Jesus is at the center makes His death for us all the more amazing.

#### **ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ COLOSSIANS 1:21-23**

Paul went on to encourage believers to remain grounded, remembering what God delivered them from (vv. 21-23). People once hostile to God are now redeemed and in Jesus' family. As if that's not enough, we're also seen as holy, faultless, and blameless before God because of Jesus' righteousness that's attributed to us. Our responsibility is to remain faithful to the gospel.

### **Why was it important for Paul to remind the Colossian believers of their past? How does reflecting on who you were before Christ impact your relationship with Him today?**

### **What does it look like for you to remain grounded and steadfast in your faith?**

Our lives should be grounded on the supreme foundation of Jesus, and our faith should be fixed on Him too. When even our small decisions are not based on our personal desire but rather in obedience to Jesus we show that we truly believe in His supremacy. When we see Jesus like this and lose our lives in His greatness, we finally find out who we truly are.

#### **ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11**

### **What do these verses teach us about Jesus' true identity?**

Jesus is the perfect example of humility that we are to emulate. In these verses we see:

- 1) the Son's pre-existence and equality with God (v. 6);
- 2) the Son voluntarily taking on human nature and becoming an obedient servant (vv. 7-8);
- 3) the Son's restoration to glory as a result of His messianic work (vv. 9-11).

### **How does Philippians 2:6 refer to Jesus' identity with God? How is this confirmed in the same verse? (Note the parallel between "form" and "equality.")**

### **How did the Son "empty Himself" according to verse 7?**

### **How do verses 7-8 help us to see Jesus in the "form of servant" in addition to "form of God" (v. 6)? Why must we be careful not to confuse these two categories?**

### **Why is Jesus exalted according to verse 9?**

### **In what ways does Philippians 2:9-11 identify Jesus with God?**

Not only is Jesus' name elevated to the level of God's name [e.g., Yahweh], but also Paul alludes to Isaiah 45:23, a passage that teaches that "every knee will bow" and "every tongue will swear allegiance" to Yahweh, the Lord God of Israel.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ JOHN 1:1, COLOSINIANS 2:8-10, AND ISAIAH 9:6-7

**What do these verses add to our understanding of the truth that Jesus is fully God?**

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ JOHN 1:14, HEBREWS 2:14-17, AND GALATIANS 4:4-5

**What do these verses add to our understanding about why Jesus had to become a man?**

Jesus had to become a man in order to die in our place. This made the way for us to escape the bondage of sin and be adopted into God's family.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ MATTHEW 1:23 AND LUKE 1:26-33

**Immanuel means "God is with us." What does that show us about Jesus?**

**How does the fact Mary gave birth to Jesus, and that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit show us about who Jesus is?**

Matthew included a translation of the name Immanuel for his readers to ensure they understood the full implications of Jesus' coming. The Messiah would not only be born miraculously to a virgin but also would be God ... God with us. He is God, and He is Man. He is fully God and fully man, and He took upon Himself the mission of providing the way of salvation for sinful people.

**The angel told Joseph that the child Jesus would "save His people from their sins." Who are "His people"?**

**How did Jesus accomplish this salvation? What does this have to do with you personally?**

**Why must Jesus be both fully God and fully man for the gospel to be good news? Why is the salvation of sinners impossible apart from the incarnation?**

The salvation Jesus came to provide is still being offered to all kinds of people across the earth. One reason Christmas time is so important to the Christian church is because the coming of Jesus the Messiah was God's greatest work in His redemptive outreach to His fallen creation. God promised Abraham that He would one day bless all the families of the earth through him (see Gen. 12:3). Through the Child born in Bethlehem, God kept that promise. God invites each of us to repent of our old life of sin and to put our hope and trust in Jesus as Savior. With that salvation comes the promise of a future spent in heaven with God.

#### APPLICATION

**What does it mean for you to say Jesus is supreme in your life? What patterns or attitudes need to change for you to experience the full benefits of His supremacy?**

**Jesus' sacrificial and humble act of coming to earth secured for us eternity in God's presence. How do you need to respond to that truth today?**

#### PRAYER

Thank God for Immanuel, who is as much "God with us" now as He was when He walked the earth 2,000 years ago. Praise Jesus as the divine and sufficient Son of God that He is. Ask God to help us maintain a proper view of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ask Him to grant you the grace needed to live a life that bears witness to His glory so that others around you would see that you clearly belong to Jesus.

## COMMENTARY

### Colossians 1:15-23

These verses are a poem or possibly a hymn expressing Christ's supremacy as Creator and redeemer.

1:15. Paul employed a hymn to emphasize Christ's sovereignty. The apostle may have composed it, or he may have quoted a hymn Christians used in worship. Heretical teachers in Colossae contended Christ was merely one of many powers between people and God. In 1:15-17, Paul refuted their teaching by presenting Christ as Lord of the universe. Paul asserted that Christ is the image of the invisible God. The Greek term rendered "image" conveys the idea of a perfect representation (exact likeness). In Matthew 22:20, Jesus used the word of a ruler's image or likeness stamped on a coin. Because God is Spirit (see John 4:24), the human eye cannot see Him. He has made Himself known perfectly in Christ. The phrase "the firstborn over all creation" does not indicate that Christ was the first created being. In the Old Testament, the firstborn son occupied a position of honor, privilege, and supremacy; he was first in priority. Here, the term expresses Christ's preexistent Deity.

1:16-17. Christ is Lord over creation, for by Him everything was created. Christ is vastly superior to all created powers. He was the Agent of creation; all things were created through Him. Creation was God's idea; Christ implemented the process. Christ also is creation's goal. "For Him" literally is "unto Him." Creation moves toward Him and His purpose for it. The phrase "before all things" emphasizes Christ's preexistence. He was the Agent of creation, and He also maintains it in the sense of giving it stability. Christ sustains creation and gives it harmony.

1:18. In 1:18-20, Paul stressed Christ's lordship over the church, His body—His people who actively extend His ministry in the world. The preexistent Lord over the universe is also the church's Head—the Source of the body's life, who governs it and gives it unity. The word "beginning" stresses Christ's priority in time and power. In addition, He is the Originator of life in God's kingdom—new life made possible by grace. The phrase "firstborn from the dead" refers to Christ's resurrection as the revelation of the new quality of life He gives: resurrection life that extends beyond death. Christ's victory over death proved that He has first place in everything.

1:19-20. The term "fullness" could mean "full measure" of Deity, meaning that Christ is fully God. God's purpose is that through Christ He may reconcile everything to Himself. Everything includes humans and the universe (see Rom. 8:19-23). The word "reconcile" has the sense of restoring a relationship, of creating unity. Christ alone (through His sacrificial death) was God's chosen way of bringing about reconciliation. God made peace possible through Christ's blood—His death on the cross. The phrase "things on earth or things in heaven" refers to the whole universe, material and spiritual.

1:21-22. The Colossian believers' salvation demonstrated God's purpose "to reconcile everything to Himself" (1:20). Once, their evil actions—wicked lifestyles—showed they were alienated from God. Their former works issued from the sphere of evil in which they lived. Outside God's rule of grace, they had been hostile to Him in mind. That is, in their mind-set or disposition, they were opposed to God—His enemies. The phrase "but now" stresses the sharp contrast between the believers' former condition and their current relationship with God. Christ had made possible their being reconciled to God. In Christ's voluntary suffering and death for others, God made salvation available to all who would place their faith in Christ. God's purpose in offering reconciliation through Christ's death was to make believers holy, faultless, and blameless before God.

1:23. Paul stressed believers' responsibility to remain faithful as people reconciled to God through Jesus' death. Paul fully expected the Colossian Christians to remain in the faith—that is, their commitment to Christ. They were not to move away from the gospel they had heard to embrace the false teachings being presented to them. Paul emphasized the genuineness of the gospel the Colossian believers had heard and accepted. It was the same good news being proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire. It was the good news the risen Christ had commissioned Paul to preach as His servant.

## Philippians 2:5-11

These verses from Paul paint a poignant picture of the humility Christ revealed in His incarnation and His substitutionary death. Paul urged them to exchange their selfish motives for the Savior's attitude. While Christ has all cause for glorying, being God Himself, He willingly surrendered Himself for the needs of others. The Son of God did not seek His own advantage, that is, He refused to ignore others' needs. The passage states that Jesus Christ made himself nothing. The result was that the Savior set aside His glory to minister grace and mercy to those who are most undeserving of such blessings.

2:5-6. The phrase Make your own attitude commands the church to value Christ's character as a model. The key thought of verse 6 is that Jesus did not consider His own interests, thus allowing them to dominate His actions. Form suggests His complete deity. Equality with God indicates His coequality with God and separate personality (the second person of the Trinity). To be used for His own advantage is capable of two connotations. It can mean "to grasp" (steal), but because of Jesus' deity it probably means "to clutch" (hang on to at all costs).

2:7-8. The phrase translated emptied Himself is much debated. Theologians ponder what Jesus emptied Himself of. It is certain that He did not divest Himself of deity or its attributes. Two statements accompany the verb. First, assuming the form of a slave indicates that God the Son became a servant. "Form" indicates true servanthood, as does the word "slave." Second, the likeness of men explains both emptying and servanthood. "Likeness" differs from "form." Two statements explain the second verb humbled. First, when He had come as a man in His external form provides the time of His humility. "External form" contrasts with the form of God (v. 6). Jesus was more than human, though He came to earth in the form of a man. Second, Jesus' humility came through becoming obedient. Servants or slaves obey; Jesus obeyed God, even to the point of dying on a cross.

2:9-11. God is described as acting in verses 9-11. Again, two verbs organize the thought. First, God highly exalted Him suggests that God gave Jesus a new position, although some take it as superlative ("to the highest"). Second, God gave Him the name. This name that is above every name is Lord. Every knee will bow and every tongue should confess state one result of God's exaltation (vv. 10-11). The posture and the confession imply submissive reverence. "Every" includes spatial dimensions: heaven... earth and under the earth. Together they indicate the living and the dead (blessed and condemned). All bring glory to God. This teaches that Jesus mediates between God and humans. He is the focus of worship and the administrator of God's will on earth.