

The MYSTERY

Hidden for Ages

Is Now REVEALED

A Study of the Book of Colossians

LESSON 6

This Week's Passage:
Colossians 1:18–19; 2:9
New International Version (NIV)

1 ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him....

2 ⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form....

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:15

¹⁵ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

Day One: Read Colossians 1.

The previous verses in this section of Colossians focused on Christ's supremacy over all of creation. In verse 18, however, Paul turns to a discussion of Christ's supremacy in the new creation, the "realm of Redemption."¹

1. What image does Paul use in verse 18 for... the church?

Christ?


2. What do these images say about the relationship between Christ and the church? (Hint: Consider both the relationship between a physical head and body (compare Col. 2:19) and the figurative way we use "head" in expressions like "head of the department" (compare Eph. 1:22).)

3. How does the New Testament describe the people who make up the church?
Col. 1:12–14

Gal. 3:26–29

Titus 3:3–7

1 Pet. 1:1–2; 2:9–10

 * Eph. 1:3–14

4. Looking at the church throughout history and the world, “it would be easy to get discouraged if it weren’t for the fact that Jesus is the head of the church.”²
 - a. Why do you think this is so?
 - b. Why can we draw encouragement from the fact that Jesus *is* the head of the church?

Day Two: Read Colossians 1. Then reread verse 18.

5. Verse 18 refers to Jesus as “the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead.” The word “beginning” suggests “founder,”³ or “one who makes a start, who opens a way for others to follow.”⁴ What benefits does Jesus, the beginning or firstborn, enable us to receive?
1 Cor. 15:20–23

Heb. 2:14–15

6. Paul writes that Christ is “the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, *so that* in everything he might have the supremacy” (1:18, emphasis added). The phrase “the firstborn from among the dead” refers to Jesus’ resurrection. What connections do these verses show between Jesus’ resurrection and his “supremacy” over everything (v. 18)?
Rom. 1:1–4

Eph. 1:19b–21

Rev. 1:17–18

Day Three: Read Colossians 1:19 and 2:9.

7. When Paul writes in verse 19 that *all* God’s fullness dwells in Christ, what is he saying about Christ? (1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:3)
8. Reread Colossians 1:18–19. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 19 shows that there is a “close connection in thought”⁵ between all God’s fullness dwelling in Christ and the descriptions of Christ in verse 18. What close connection(s) do you see between the ideas in these two verses?

Day Four: Read Colossians 1:15-19 and 2:9.

9. John's gospel highlights many of the same ideas about Christ as the book of Colossians. With this in mind, read John 1:1–18 and jot down the similarities in the chart below.

Colossians 1:15–19; 2:9	John 1:1–18
The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. He is before all things....	Jn. 1:1–2, 15
For in him all things were created...; all things have been created through him and for him.	Jn. 1:3 (and 1:10)
For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form....	Jn. 1:14, 18

10. How has John 1 given you a fuller understanding of this week's passage in Colossians?

Day Five: Read Colossians 1:18–19 in the different translations printed below.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.... (ESV)

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. ¹⁹For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.... (NASB)

11. How do these translations bring out different shades of meaning that you might not have seen before?

“It stands to reason that One who is Firstborn, Point of Reference, Agent, Goal, Forerunner, and Sustainer-Governor (verses 15–17) in the sphere of Creation; and Head of the Body, Beginning, and Firstborn from the dead in the realm of Redemption (verse 18) has the right to the title, ‘the One who has the pre-eminence—the divine sovereignty—in all things....’⁶

12. How does the realization that Christ has “first place in everything” (v. 18, NASB) affect the following areas of your life?⁷

Use of time, money, and talents

Relationships

Priorities, decisions, and responsibilities

13. The supremacy of Christ is in no way enhanced or diminished by our performance, and yet when we joyfully acknowledge, accept, and submit to it, our lives are enriched and God’s glory is put on display. Pray that God would work this richness and glory into your life more and more.



A Closer Look

William Hendriksen writes, “Since, therefore, all the fullness of the indwelling essence of God is thus completely concentrated in Christ, there is no need of or justification for looking elsewhere for help, salvation, or spiritual perfection.”⁸

Paul wanted his readers to know that all the fullness they’ll ever need is found in Christ. Using the printout of Colossians in your folder, read through 1:15—2:15 and circle the words “full,” “fully,” and “fullness” to see how important this point was to Paul.



Reminder: Remember to read the entire book of Colossians this week.

* Indicates verses for further study.

¹ William Hendriksen, *Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 76.

² Sam Storms, *The Hope of Glory: 100 Daily Meditations on Colossians* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 89.

³ Douglas Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 129.

⁴ Everett F. Harrison, *Colossians: Christ All-Sufficient* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 36.

⁵ Harrison, 37.

⁶ Hendriksen, 78.

⁷ This question was inspired by questions in Sam Storms’s devotional (p. 90).

⁸ Hendriksen, 112.