

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,
in the light of what we've just read,
I feel totally inadequate.

How can I, a miserable example of a man,
ever hope to enlighten/explain
about the glorious majesty of Christ Jesus our Lord???

Lord, we pray today, that as we study this passage,
Lord, enlarge our minds...

Lord, may You reveal to us,

- Your glory;
- Your pre-eminence;
- Your supremacy;
- Your firstness over everything...

Bring us to a place today, where in our minds,
we fade into nothing,
as we marvel at the awesomeness of Who You are.

Amen.

As with many people, Robyn and I haven't been on holidays for a while now. But when we do, I most like to visit National Parks. And what I enjoy most, is to come to a lookout and see an amazing view laid out before us. And sometimes when you

come to an amazing vista, you're either struck dumb (there's nothing to say), or you can't help it – you've just gotta say something (wow... that's amazing... wow...)

-just to see this incredible landscape – the creation of God...

And I love to photograph these things. The picture up on the screen is Yosemite (California), and without a doubt, that is the most amazing scene that I've ever seen – looking out over this valley, with all the sandstone formations of the cliffs surrounding it and the waterfalls of snow-melt tumbling into the valley ... And I just stood (staring) for ages...

Sometimes, with such a view, there'll be a signpost/plaque that you can look down and read. Sometimes it'll point out certain features of the landscape; Sometimes it'll describe the geology and how volcanoes or rivers have filled or carved the landscape... And it's all very interesting...

But one day, we went to a National Park (I can't remember which one it was), and there was a beautiful view, and after admiring it for a while, I turned my eyes down to the signpost to read more about it...

And it was just totally irrelevant (completely out-of-place)... It said nothing about the geology/topography/hydrology... And of course I never expected it would say anything about the amazing creative work of God, and no surprises there (it didn't)...

It talked about climate change, and it talked about humans. It had absolutely nothing to do with what we were looking at. And here I was, looking at this amazing creative work of God, and His creation was helping me to appreciate the awesome power and supremacy of my God,, and that stinking sign was telling me that we humans control the climate. It was ludicrous...

The landscape was bearing witness to God, but some boffin decided they needed to talk about humanity and the power of humanity (be it destructive)... It was just totally out of place...

Now, the reason I've told you this, is because I want you to understand from the outset, that the message today is not about us. This bible reading is totally about the Lord Jesus Christ... We're standing at a theological lookout, and we're getting a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ – Who He is: His majesty/power...

And if you're looking for an application today, look no further than standing with your jaw dropped; your eyes wide open... And if there's anything to say, it's "Wow; He's amazing; Our awesome God; Wow"....

And so, if you've come today, hoping that the preacher's going to give you good advice so you can:

- control your kids
- boost your income;
- feel a bit more in control

sorry, I've got nothing to say on that.

Today is all about Christ Jesus. And so, if you're looking for some helpful hints for living, the only message I have for you today, is to understand your place in creation, and to understand the supremacy of Christ Jesus, over all things, and of course, over us...

Today, Paul is revealing to us, who Christ is, in relation to:

- God;
- creation;
- the church.

The Gospel of John says that no one has ever seen God. And some folk today who don't believe in God, have the attitude that "All God has to do is show Himself to me, and I'll believe." And I don't really know what they expect. Are they expecting some old man with a big long beard to appear to them?

It is true though, that if God did appear to them, they couldn't help but believe in Him, because they'd die. In Exodus 33, Moses begged to be able to see the glory of God. But God said, "You can't see my face, because you'd die. And so God set things up so that the glory of God could pass by, and Moses could catch a glimpse of His back...

But here's the thing: When it comes to the image of God, God forbid any graven images/statues/likenesses of Him... And I suspect that's because if we had an image of God, we'd fall into idolatry, and we'd worship the image. Perhaps we'd try to look more like the image ourselves, and perhaps that might make us holier...

And even in the New Testament, in all of the Gospels, and in all of the New Testament, there is no physical description of Jesus...

But Jesus said (John 14:9) **Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father...**

Perhaps it's got nothing to do with physical appearance. Paul says, ¹⁵ **He is the image of the invisible God**

We don't need a photo/statue to know what God looks like, because it's not the physical appearance that's important. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God...

He's the firstborn of all creation.

Now, that doesn't mean (like the JW's would claim), that Jesus is a created being. It cannot mean that, because the very next verse says ¹⁶ **For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him.**

For Jesus to be the firstborn of all creation,,, Well, we need to know what it means to be the firstborn... To be the firstborn, doesn't mean He was the first to be created — it means that He is **heir** of creation. It's the honour/position of the firstborn that Paul's talking about. Creation **belongs** to Christ. Why does creation belong to Him?

Because He made it. **He** did the creating. By him all things were created

Jesus Christ created all things – All things:

- in heaven;
- on earth;

That means the entire universe. But also, the physical **and** the Spiritual. I'm pretty sure that's what it means when he says the **visible and invisible**. He's not just talking about things like Oxygen/nitrogen/carbon dioxide/argon, because they're invisible... Usually when the Scriptures talk about the visible or the invisible, it's talking about the physical/spiritual. Christ created all of these.

And that's what Paul explains: in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him.

The **thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities** may include physical kings/emperors/presidents/governors/premiers/prime ministers... but usually it's talking about:

- angels;
- demons
- spiritual powers
- demons who masquerade as pagan gods

But do you know what jumps out at me here? What jumps out at me, is that creation has run amok... **all things were created through him... (yep) and for him.**

When God created, He looked at what He'd created, and He said "It's good"... And on the 6th day, as He finished His creative work, He looked at **everything** He had created, and He said "It is very good"...

Now, we don't know when Satan and his demons (created beings) fell... But even they were created by Christ and for Christ... Even the demons (as angels), were created for Him...

thrones ; dominions ; rulers ; authorities,: they are all created by Christ, for Christ... But they're not doing a very good job, are they... Satan and his demons turned against Him; Adam and Eve sinned, and so have the rest of us. Our political systems have proved over and over again, to be against God, and particularly against Jesus Christ and His children...

And yet, even in the rebellion of creation, Jesus Christ will be glorified...

As a kid, I used to love the superhero cartoons and comics. My favourite was Superman... But there was nothing glorious about Superman, unless there was an arch villain for him to take down (he was just Clarke Kent)... Are you with me? The

strength, moral integrity, and all around unquestionably nice guy, could be seen for who he truly was, only when he was rescuing the weak from the clutches of the villain...

BTW, have you noticed how in the last couple of decades, the Superhero genre has changed... Super Heroes used to be filled with all moral integrity, but now they all have a dark side... Batman has a dark side; superman has a dark side...

I suspect super heroes have been given a dark side, because we mere mortals want to see them as just like us...

But let me tell you, Jesus isn't just like us. There is no dark side to Jesus. We saw that last week, as He delivers us from the Kingdom of Darkness.

But if everything was created for Christ, things have really run amok haven't they...

But even in this, Christ is glorified.

And in the rebellion of creation, we can see Christ as:

- saviour;
- redeemer;
- suffering servant;

But we will also see Him as righteous judge.

V¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

For Christ to be **before all things**, yes, it is a matter of time (before anything was created, Christ was)... but it's also a matter of position/authority. He is before/over/above all things.

And not only that, but without Christ, everything would fall apart/chaos... **in him all things hold together.**

When a nation that once had its laws based on the commandments of God, then throws out the law of God, that society crumbles, and we're seeing that in our country.

When Paul was invited to speak at the Areopagus (university of Philosophy, at the centre of philosophy [Athens]), he said "In him we live and move and have our being"ⁱ...

In Christ, **all things hold together.**

You know, many of us think of the universe as something that God created and wound up, and set it into action, and now it's self-sustaining... But I think what we're being told here, is that Christ is the one who holds everything together...

I wonder, do any of us understand the gravity of the situation (pun absolutely intended)... With a lot of physics, science can identify forces and whatnot, but they can't explain them. They can't explain why they exist.

Take Gravity e.g. We know that gravity exists; We can quantify gravity. There's the Newtonian formula for working out the amount of gravity – gravitational forces, and how they affect different objects of mass... But we still don't know:

- *what gravity is;*
- *why it exists;*
- *where it comes from...*

And all mathematical models of how gravitational forces work, all break down when we get to the very small mass (sub-atomic particles), and the very large mass (black hole)...

Do a search for “unsolved problems in physics”, and you'll soon realise how much we don't know... But what we do know, is “It is Christ, Who prevents the universe from falling into chaos.” He holds it all together.

So, He is the image of the invisible God. He's the creator and sustainer of creation... What is He to the church??? Well, He's everything... No other God gets a look-in...

V¹⁸ 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.

Now, the Greek word there for “preeminent” is πρωτεύων (prōteuōn) (First; supreme; No.1; above everything else) ... And what we're learning here, is that Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead. Yes, there were others:

- Widow's son (Elijah)
- Shunammite woman's son (Elisha)

- Man who was thrown into Elisha's grave
- Jesus raised:
 - a widow's son;
 - Jairus' daughter
 - and of course Lazarus

But all of these, lived their lives out, and eventually died. But Christ was the first to receive His permanent resurrection body.

If Jesus didn't conquer death, He wouldn't be supreme, but He did, and so He is.

BTW, many of you may not know what the word "supreme" means, because when it comes to Pizza, "supreme" is an inferior pizza... I mean, a supreme can't come anywhere near a "meat lovers with extra cheese"... But when we use the word "supreme" in relation to Jesus Christ, we mean what we say. He truly is supreme. There is none greater.

And at the cross, we see God as God is... I was thinking about the suffering servant of Isaiah 52&53...

When Jesus was crucified, as a man, He was totally unrecognisable. Mel Gibson's film (The Passion of the Christ) brought that out.

Isaiah 52:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human
semblance,

and his form beyond that of the children of
mankind—

He was unrecognisable. He was beaten and whipped to a pulp,, But He would be high and lifted up and exalted...

Jesus suffered on the cross. He humbled Himself. He put Himself into the hands of His creation (that had run amuck), to be killed by His creation. And in this, He was exalted. Yes, He was killed, but He conquered death, And in His resurrection to life, He has become preeminent (No.1).

And the amazing thing is, this whole horrible saga, was at the pleasure of God...

Have you ever done something for somebody, and it's really cost you:

- *time;*
- *money;*
- *physical effort;*
- *didn't enjoy doing...*

*And they are so thankful, and so in a moment of magnanimity, you say, "Oh it was my pleasure" ... **Liar!!! It wasn't your pleasure at all...***

But God doesn't lie... And this is why God is so great:

It was God's pleasure, for the fullness of God to dwell in Jesus...

You know, some people believe that when Jesus came to earth, He left behind His Godliness... No, He didn't leave behind His godliness. It was God's pleasure, to be fully in Christ. It was God's pleasure, to reconcile to Himself, all things.

V²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

The reconciliation – dealing with sin and death, had an enormous cost – the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.

It is at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we see the image of God, as God is:

- The love of God in action;
- God our Saviour
- God our redeemer;

- God of justice;
- God of Mercy;

This is why Christ is preeminent/supreme/No.1. No one is above Him...

Some people believe, “It doesn’t matter which God you worship, as long as you’re sincere...” Now naïve; How wrong; how untrue... There is only one true God...

None can compare to Him. No:

- demon;
 - idol;
 - Allah
 - Budda
 - No Hindu God can stand beside
-
- No evil spirit can stand before Him;

Our Lord reigns.

This is what it means to view the Christ – to gaze in awe and wonder.

Let’s pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we give You praise and Glory.
You are truly amazing;
You are the only awesome one.

We praise You, because You are the Lord of Glory.
You have overcome the darkness;
You have conquered sin and death.

You are the creator,
and yet it was Your pleasure,
to step down from Your throne,

to wear a bag of meat,
and to be nailed by Your creation,
to a tree You created...

And in this You are glorified.
Lord, we thank You for Your love;
We thank You for Your mercy;
And Lord, we long for the day,
when every knee will bow,
and every tongue confess,
That You are Lord.

Amen.

ⁱ Acts 17:23