

Jesus Reigns

Colossians 1:15-29

We are concluding our series on ***the Gospel - the 10 Saving Acts of Jesus***. The first one and the basis for all the others is the nature of Jesus - that He IS LORD. Only because He is Lord does His death have infinite value - power to save sinners and to change us forever. Here are the 10 Saving Acts:

The Gospel: the 10 Saving Acts of Jesus

1. Jesus is Lord	6. Jesus rose
2. Jesus came	7. Jesus forgives all who believe in Him
3. Jesus lived the perfect life	8. Jesus gives us a new heart
4. Jesus calls sinners to repent	9. Jesus reigns over all things
5. Jesus died	10. Jesus is coming back soon!

We just heard one of the most beautiful and powerful passages in Scripture, from Colossians 1. Please keep your Bibles or Bible Apps open there and let's walk through this passage to be reminded again of the Lordship of Christ and what it means for us. The Gospel is the 10 Saving Acts of Jesus. This morning we will see in Colossians 1, 10 Titles of Jesus - 10 aspects of His Lordship. When we say ***Jesus Christ is Lord as our central creed***, this is what we mean: Jesus is...

10 Titles of Jesus

1. The Incarnate	6. Sustainer of all things
2. Eternal	7. The Head of the Church
3. Sovereign	8. The Risen One
4. Creator of all things	9. The Fully Divine and
5. The Purpose and	10. All Sufficient Savior

Start with me in Colossians 1:15. "He is the image of the invisible God."

Jesus is:

1. The ***Incarnate*** Son of God

"He is the image of the invisible God." Colossians 1:15

God is spirit, not physical, by nature. So ***God is invisible unless He chooses to make Himself visible***. The Old Testament is filled with times when God did just that, from when He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to when He appeared to Moses in a burning bush to when He appeared to Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Sometimes God would send a messenger that was clearly an angel. Other times The Angel of the Lord would visit people and it is likely that person was Jesus Himself.

So this verse in Colossians 1 is of enormous importance. Jesus is “the image of the invisible God.” He is the imprint or representation of God to the world just as Caesar’s face was imprinted on coins to represent him in the Roman Empire. But the meaning is even stronger than that, as the rest of this passage makes very clear. Jesus is not just a painting or statue or penny press of God - **HE IS GOD**. This verse means that Jesus is the manifestation or revelation of the invisible God. He is God in the flesh, God incarnate.

To say that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God is *not to say that Jesus is less than God but to say that Jesus is equal with God*. The offspring of a dog is a dog. The offspring of a fish is a fish. The Son of God, therefore, is GOD - of the same divine nature. If you want to know who God is and what God is like, look at Jesus. He is the incarnate Son of God.

Second, *Jesus is the Eternal Son of God*.

Jesus is:

1. The Incarnate
2. *Eternal* Son of God

“The firstborn of all creation... he is before all things... he is the beginning...” Colossians 1:15,17,18

Now, we can read this passage and I can say with confidence and clarity today - Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of the Father, coequal, coeternal, sharing *the SAME DIVINE ESSENCE as God the Father* - and you hear those words and nod your heads and agree with the familiar expressions.

If it were the **fourth century in northern Egypt** (or anywhere else for that matter), our church would likely be divided right down the middle on this point. A popular priest named *Arius* had coined the phrase, “*There was a time when the son was not,*” and even rendered it as a little jingle the peasants would sing. So many Christians in the fourth century believed only God the Father was eternal and that Jesus was created by the Father at some point in eternity past. It was called the subordination view of Christ.

The discussion was becoming a controversy, so the newly converted Emperor Constantine called a council of bishops at Nicea to protect the unity of the Church. Bishop Alexander led the discussion that resulted in the Nicene Creed, but it was Alexander’s assistant who suggested the resolution - a short, young African named *Athanasius*. His phrase was “*of the same substance*” instead of Arius’ view that Jesus was “of a similar substance” with the Father. He said:

Jesus is:

1. The Incarnate
2. *Eternal* Son of God

“Those who maintain 'There was a time when the Son was not' rob God of his Word, like plunderers.” Athanasius

He believed, as we do, that the teaching of the New Testament was that Jesus was fully God, not less than God and that this belief was essential to give the gospel its saving power. ***If Jesus was less than God, how could his death and resurrection be effectual to pay for the sins of mankind?***

Athanasius' view carried the day at Nicea, but over the next 50 years he spent 17 of them in exile whenever prevailing opinion swung back toward Arius and away from him. For much of his life he was vilified as the Black Dwarf of Alexandria, but the verdict of history landed with Athanasius, named ***the Father of Orthodoxy***. And so we can say with clarity:

Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. Third, He is the Sovereign Lord. Verse 15.

Jesus is:

1. The Incarnate
2. Eternal
3. ***Sovereign Lord***

“The firstborn of all creation... He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” Colossians 1:15,18

Now, let's sympathize with Arius. This is tricky territory. “Firstborn of all creation” by itself could support Arius' view that Jesus was the first thing God made before making everything else. But the term firstborn here means ***“First in rank”*** not first in time. The firstborn of the family in those days was both first in time and first in rank, so the phrase firstborn could mean one or the other or both. Verse 18 clarifies verse 15, showing that Paul means **Jesus is first in rank** - He is the all-sovereign ruler who governs the universe at the Father's right hand.

Notice verse 18 says, ***“He IS the beginning,”*** not He appeared in the beginning or He was created in the beginning. Jesus IS the Alpha and the Omega - the first and last, the beginning and end. As John starts his gospel, ***“In the beginning, the Word already existed.”*** Jesus is the first in rank of all creation and the first in rank and time of the resurrected “that in everything he might be preeminent.”

Jesus reigns over all things. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the Supreme Ruler, the preeminent One. Do you see the relevance of this for us? ***This is no academic theology lesson*** - this is everything! Our day to day lives and our eternal salvation rest on this point: Jesus is Lord. He is the Sovereign King. All authority in heaven and on earth belong to Him. We profess that. We believe it. We rest in this wonderful truth, for we are His - we belong to Him by faith. For He IS LORD. He is the First One, the Prime Minister, the Exalted Ruler, the King.

Jesus is the Incarnate, Eternal Son of God - the Sovereign King who reigns supreme over all things. His fourth title explains in v. 16 He is both the Creator and the Purpose of creation.

Jesus is:

4. *The Creator* and

5. *Purpose* of all things

“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.***” Colossians 1:16

Jesus was the One who spoke the universe into being. Of course it was a project of the unified Trinity, but Jesus was the One who said the words and the cosmos leapt into being. “Let there be light,” were the first words of history and they came from the lips of Jesus. “All things were created by him.” ***He can give you life today because all of life came from Him*** and He is the One who brought you into being. Jesus IS LIFE.

This world and everything in it is Jesus’ domain, the loving gift of the Father to bring glory and happiness to the Son. Likewise, it is the Son’s joy to give His own life to honor His Father. And all of this is done in the unifying, mutually glorifying power of the Holy Spirit. God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Jesus is not only the Creator but also ***the Purpose*** of all things. Everything was not only made by Him but it was made FOR HIM. Jesus is ***the answer to the reason WHY***. Why did God create this world? Why did God create you and me? Why has history followed the course it has followed? Why is your life precisely the way it is? The answer, brothers, sisters, friends - is JESUS. ***Everything in history and in our lives was intended from eternity past to ultimately bring glory and joy to Jesus Christ.***

This doesn’t mean that everything that happens is pleasing to God - evil, suffering, sadness, pain and death are not. But ultimately, in the end, ***even the most difficult things will bring glory to Jesus*** to the extent that we find HIM to be the joy and delight for our souls.

Consider the coming ***Great Tribulation***. Some of you are optimists and imagine believers won’t be here. Others of us are realists and think it wise to prepare to be here. Regardless, a seven year period of terrible suffering is coming in which a central feature will be ***the persecution and execution of lots and lots of Christians***. How could that bring glory to Jesus?

Don’t you see how that is actually ***the fitting finale of history***? Jesus laid down his life for us - what greater gift could we give to Him than to joyfully lay down our lives for him - boldly proclaiming His supremacy over evil and death as the blade falls on your neck or the fire gradually consumes you.

As the Father watched his children be shot with arrows and steadfastly said, ***“I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.”*** As the man then watched his wife be struck down he went on: “The cross before me, the world behind me, no turning back.” And finally, still unwilling to deny his faith in Jesus he knelt down to die saying, “Though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back.”

Yes, even your persecution and death can bring glory to Jesus. But don't wait until you face such a test. Decide today to follow Jesus, no turning back, no matter what. He is the creator of all things and the purpose for which all things were created - including you and me. ***Give your life to that purpose - to bring honor and glory and happiness to Him.***

- Could it be that your **illness and suffering** will bring more glory to Jesus than your health and comfort would?
- Could it be that your broken, **dysfunctional marriage** will bring more glory to Jesus than a happy, satisfying marriage would?
- Could it be that your joyful, **sacrificial giving** will bring more glory to Jesus than your material comfort and prosperity would?

The purpose of history and all of our lives is to bring glory to Jesus. That's it. That's what life is all about. Until we understand that ultimate purpose and how the little details - including suffering - fit into it, we will not understand what God is doing.

We are halfway. Sixth, Jesus is the sustainer of all things.

Jesus is:

6. The *Sustainer* of all things

“He is before all things and in him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:17

Consider that line: “In him all things hold together.” Jesus is the glue of the universe. Without him, everything would dissolve into nothingness like the end of Infinity War. Listen to this quote from Jonathan Edwards:

Jesus is:

6. The *Sustainer* of all things

“Christ's sovereign power over all things is such that we can speak of him recreating the entire universe moment by moment. If Christ took his mind off of the universe it wouldn't just fall apart, it would cease to exist.” Jonathan Edwards

Everything that exists came into being at the word of Christ and continues to exist at the word of Christ.

Hebrews 1 says

Jesus is:

6. The ***Sustainer*** of all things

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and ***he upholds the universe by the word of his power.***” Hebrews 1:3

Think about that. The only reason you are still breathing is that Jesus is, right now, giving you breath. ***He has ordained every day and every minute of your life.*** That should bring us tremendous comfort. When you sit by the bedside of your loved one, it is not for you to determine when that person will die. Jesus will stop giving her breath and call her home. He will manage that for you.

I’ve seen it over and over. Family members agonize over the apparatus supposedly keeping their beloved alive and wrestle with when to unplug what. Sometimes the machines turn off and the person lives a few more days or a few more weeks by the grace of God. Other times the loved one goes home to the Lord rather quickly. Hear this: ***machines cannot keep anyone alive when their time is up.*** Only Jesus is the Giver of life. So trust Him with His timing and trust Him for the grace you’ll need in those moments. Jesus is the Sustainer of all things.

Seventh, Jesus is the Head of the Church and Eighth, He is the Risen One.

Jesus is:

7. The ***Head*** of the Church

8. The ***Risen One***

“He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” Colossians 1:18

Head can mean both source and leader - here it means both. Like the **head of a river**, which is its starting point and source, Jesus is the fountainhead of the life of the church. But he is also the **head of the body** - giving it direction as our Leader or Brain.

What do we call it when the body does not obey the brain? **Paralysis**. When your spinal cord is severed, it cuts off communication from the brain to parts of your body so they don’t respond to your head. Sadly, that is what it’s like in the church when certain members of the church are not functioning as they should in the body - they aren’t following the leading of Jesus, their head, and they are not serving the whole body as healthy members of it.

What would you do if your left leg suddenly stopped responding to your brain? Or if your right hand would no longer lift a pen or grab onto a hamburger? You would immediately rush to the doctor to find a cure for the disease in your body. Brother, sister - if you are a regular here at Oakwood but are not yet connected and involved, please contact me or Dave soon so we can help you plug into a small group and ***find your place of service***, your way of building up the body

here. We absolutely need each one of you for the church to be as fruitful as possible for Jesus. And you need the body if you are to obey Jesus, your head. ***If you are not actively involved in the life of a local body then you are part of the paralysis and dysfunction of the evangelical church today.***

The Global Church of Jesus Christ walks with a limp because 20% of the people are doing 80% of the work. Imagine if those statistics were dramatically changed and 80 or 90% of the people got involved - not just a little here or there but fully invested... Suddenly all kinds of things would become possible. The body of Christ would stop limping and start running!

Jesus is the Head of the Church and the Risen One, the firstborn from the dead - the firstfruits of the coming resurrection. ***Because He lives*** we have confidence that He will raise us to life when He returns. You can not only trust Jesus with your life but you can trust Him with your death and with your eternity. There is no one else you can trust with these things for only Jesus walked into death and then walked back out again. As we saw a couple of weeks ago, the resurrection proved it was all true. Everything Jesus said was confirmed when he came back to life. ***The resurrection was God's "Paid in Full" receipt stamp for Jesus' sacrificial death.***

Two more.

Jesus is:

9. The Fully ***Divine*** and
10. All Sufficient ***Savior***

"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." Colossians 1:19-20

Jesus is not less than God. If you study His claims, such as the title he used for himself, "Son of Man," and the writings of the apostles, the consensus is clear and consistent: **Jesus is fully God.** He is of the same substance as God the Father, the incarnate, eternal, sovereign creator of all things, for whom all things were made, who upholds the universe with His powerful Word, who directs the church as His body and gives us life and power to us as the Risen One who lives to intercede for us at the Father's right hand - eternally One with the Father and based on all of this, He is the all sufficient Savior who reconciled us to God.

Not only did He reconcile US to God - ***He is reconciling ALL THINGS to God.*** The whole world is groaning in the pains of childbirth - awaiting its final redemption, when Jesus' work of global salvation will be fully and finally complete. That is Jesus' endgame - to restore all things to the original peace, harmony and joy of the original creation.

Now, I'll pivot with Paul at verse 21 and quote Pastor Larry who was here last year:

Sooooooooo... What does this mean for us today? Three applications.

On the basis of the 10 titles of Jesus (and knowing there is even more that could be said about Him), THEREFORE, we should praise Him, Trust Him and Obey Him.

Therefore:

1. Praise Jesus

“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.” Colossians 1:21-22

It has been theoretical, now Paul makes it personal: **AND YOU**. Jesus is perfectly glorious. We were alienated, separated, distant from God. We were hostile to God and His Word, resistant, hard hearted, stubborn and proud. We were doing evil deeds and liking them. We were slaves to our sin, and blind to that reality.

The point of this whole exercise, and the purpose of our lives, is to glorify Jesus. Remember who you were apart from Jesus. Remember the price He paid to save you. **Consider the glory and grace of Jesus and let that move your heart to worship Him**. Praise Him. This is how to make worship “more than words,” and more than empty ritual - to begin to see how powerful and glorious and merciful Jesus is and how weak and wayward and wicked we were apart from Him. And this life is just the beginning. It will take all of eternity to enjoy and appreciate the glory of God. But we begin to glimpse it right now in Jesus.

This is why He came. This is the whole reason for history. God is making Himself known. Jesus is that revelation. He is the image of God. **What God wants is people to SINCERELY worship Him forever**. This life is the testing ground to see who will freely choose to go all in for the glory of God. If you don't love Jesus and love His holy nature and revel in His glory then you don't want to go to heaven - you won't like it there. Only those who have become holy in Christ, who have come to hate their old sinful ways and to delight in the glory of God will enjoy heaven.

Heaven will be an unending worship service. And if that sounds boring to you, then you still don't get it. You might think the coolest part of heaven will be climbing Mount Everest or swimming with Killer Whales or riding on the back of a Triceratops. No, the coolest part of heaven will be seeing God face to face - just being in the unimaginable splendor of His glorious presence. Then, and only then, will we know what worship really is. And we will fall on our faces!

Our worship services are the best we can do to lift our hearts and minds to the wonders of Jesus. They are, at best, a glimpse. But we pray that God will use these glimpses, enabled by His Word, to move us more and more to sincerely and joyfully worship Him.

Second, Trust Jesus.

Therefore:

1. Praise Jesus
2. **Trust Jesus**

“To present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you *continue in the faith, stable and steadfast*, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.”

Colossians 1:22-23

Feel the force of that **“if indeed.”** Jesus is working and is committed to this outcome. He **will** present you holy and blameless and above reproach - **IF** you continue in the faith. In the next chapter Paul says it like this, “As you received Christ Jesus as Lord continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith” (Col. 2:6-7). Jesus is our firm foundation. We must dig the roots of our faith deep into Him so we can be stable and steadfast. We must let His Word dwell in us richly and not shift our confidence to a different hope. Jesus is the only hope. Trust in Him alone.

Where do the roots of your faith reach? On what do you rely for strength and life day after day? Are you stable and steadfast through the storms of life because your heart and mind are fixed in Jesus? Are you like one of those palm trees we saw in hurricane season last year, bent over almost to the ground but holding on because of their strong root system?

Trust in Him and rest fully in His salvation. He did it all. He is the all sufficient Savior. Dig your roots into the truth of Jesus Christ. Weave your heart into the details of God’s Word. Hold fast in this faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting to any other hope but Jesus and only Jesus.

Beware, brothers and sisters, of shifting your hope from Jesus to yourself - to your impressive theological understanding or your diligent religious disciplines. In a minute I’ll challenge you to obey Jesus all the way, right away with a happy heart. But as you obey Him don’t for a second think that your obedience and effort has anything to do with your salvation. Trust completely in Him. Rest in Him. ***Delight in the fullness of His salvation*** and remember it was all Him and none you. Wrapping the roots of your life around Jesus is like a tree embedding itself in immovable bedrock. Trusting in yourself or anything else is like shifting your roots into sand - nothing can support you, nothing can keep you steadfast and steady but Jesus.

Praise Jesus. Trust Jesus and finally, Obey Jesus. It sounds simple and it is simple to understand but remarkable how difficult we make it in day to day life. Trust and obey. There is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

Therefore:

1. Praise Jesus
2. Trust Jesus
3. **Obey Jesus**

“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.** For this I toil, struggling with all his energy, that he powerfully works within me.” Colossians 1:28-29

The goal of our ministry is to present everyone mature and complete in Christ. This is discipleship - making disciples who increasingly think and act like Jesus. He is the image of God and we should be little images of Christ.

Faith in Jesus - **true faith always grows into obedience.** Always. Don't kid yourself into thinking that you believe in Jesus if you don't obey Him. Jesus said very plainly that “If you love me you will keep my commands” (John 14:15). He said that his true family members are those who know the Father's will and do it (Matt. 12:50). He said the wise man is the one who hears his words and puts them into practice. James later wrote, “Faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:14).

So don't be like the foolish man who only hears the words of Jesus but then walks away and ignores them all week long. Obey Jesus. Let the gospel move you to worship. Let the truth of the gospel fill you with grateful, joyful **faith in Jesus** that grows up into increasing **service to Jesus.** The New Testament always pivots on a THEREFORE as we saw last week in Colossians 3. Romans 12 says, “therefore, in view of God's mercy offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.”

Surrender yourself and your life to Jesus in total obedience. He is Lord. Two words that never go together are “No, Lord.” Two words that always go together are “Yes, Lord.” Yet how often do we hear from the Lord, reading something in His Word and knowing what the Spirit is leading us to do and say, “Nah. Not right now. Maybe later.” Delayed obedience is... disobedience. Our calling is to obey Jesus all the way, right away and with a happy heart. Listen to the old British preacher Roy Hession:

“People imagine that dying to self makes one miserable. But it is just the opposite. **It is the refusal to die to self that makes one miserable.**” Roy Hession, *The Calvary Road*

As we prepare to gather around the Lord's table, please watch this short video with more from Hession's *The Calvary Road*. **This is the pathway to revival** - to a fuller experience of the life of Christ. **Humility, repentance and surrender.** The proud, hard, unyielding self within us must be broken as we increasingly bow before Jesus at the cross. Let's invite the Holy Spirit to do that work in us today as we praise Him for His Lordship, as we trust Him for His Sacrifice and as we commit to obey Him in full surrender.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TcvKgVVBlw>

[Broken at the Cross]