

“Jesus Over Universalism”

COMPASS Sermon Series | Week Two | Newbreak Church

July 11th, 2021

This week is about the centrality of Jesus for salvation and redemption. This message answers the question: Why is Jesus the only way?

For more insights relating to this week’s sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/>. We post a new blog every Friday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

Start Here

- Do you prefer salty or sweet snacks? Name your favorite go-to snack of choice!
- Talk about a time you were convinced about something that you ended up being wrong about. What was it? What persuaded you to change your mind on the matter?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Read: John 14:6 & Colossians 1:15-17; 2:6-8

Point 1 – Jesus is the only one who can bring true purpose to our lives.

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—*everything* got started in him and finds its purpose in him. (Colossians 1:16, MSG)

It is amazing to think about all that an iPhone can do. It feels like there is an app for *almost* every need! But what if you tried using your iPhone as a screwdriver? You would be thoroughly disappointed as the screw would not go in and the iPhone might break. As amazing as iPhones are, there isn’t an app that converts it into a screwdriver (I did say they have apps for *almost* everything).

If understanding the design of an iPhone is intrinsic to understanding its purpose, how much more important for us is it to understand our design? Think about it this way, when we say that we have a Creator (God), we are saying that we have a Designer, which means there is a patterned way for us to live if we want to thrive. At the heart of it all,

beyond the “do’s and don’t’s,” is the call to live in a loving relationship with our Creator. Colossians 1:15-20 opens our eyes to see that Jesus is not only the one who reconciles us to God the Father but also is co-Creator with God (after all, Jesus is God, a member of the Trinity).

Read the **Additional Insight** (below) for more on how Jesus is portrayed in Colossians 1:16-17.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What happens to our relationship with God when we pursue finding purpose in life apart from Him? What happens to your relationship with God when we are living aligned to God’s purpose?
- Read the additional insight (below). How do these insights from the Greek prepositions enliven and expand our view of Jesus?

—ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

The following excerpt is taken from Newbreak’s blog post. To read the full blog post go to: newbreak.church/the-power-of-prepositions

THE POWER OF PREPOSITIONS

What if some of the Bible’s most concrete truths about Jesus were magnified by prepositions? (These are your words like “in,” “to,” “by,” “with,” “for,” and so on.)

Let’s take a look at [Colossians 1:16-17](#) as an example. I’ll provide a translation of the Greek with some transliterated (from Greek letters to English letters) Greek prepositions in *italics*.

→ 16 Because in (*en*) Him [Jesus] all things were created—the things in the heavens and on the earth—the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, authorities, rulers, or powers—all things through (*dia*) Him and to (*eis*) Him were created. 17 And He is before (*pro*) all things and all things in (*en*) Him are held together.

Just by slowing down to pay attention to the prepositions you are probably seeing more in the text than you would with a cursory read. What are some things you observe? Maybe one of the first is how diverse the prepositions are. With that, let’s briefly explore some of the powerful prepositions in this passage.

The first "in" (Greek: *en*) is translated in two main ways. It either can convey the instrument by which something is done ("by Him"), so the [CSB](#). Or it could be translated to emphasize the location of where something was done ("in Him"), so the [NIV](#). But note that this is an English translation issue, not a Greek syntax one. What do I mean? English forces us to parse out the intent of "in," whereas the Greek preposition can express both the instrumental and locative means. The Greek text is conveying something powerful...

All the creative energy necessary to bring about creation resided in Christ. The pre-existent one is the common source of all that has come into existence.

We have to remember that no one other than Yahweh, the God of Israel, can claim to be the Creator. He alone takes credit for the act of creation ([Genesis 1:1](#); [Nehemiah 9:6](#); [Isaiah 37:16](#); [40:26](#); [44:24](#); [45:18](#)). Therefore, Colossians is proclaiming Christ to be the cosmic Creator! And the prepositions *en* ("in/by") and *dia* ("through") help demonstrate the point.

Let's look at the preposition *eis* ("to") in verse 16. In context, the passage has just shown us that Jesus is the **source** of all creation, now, the text shows us that Jesus is also the **goal** of creation. One of the world's leading scholars on Greek prepositions, Murray J. Harris, comments on the use of *eis* in this passage:

Εἰς [*eis*] can also express metaphorical direction, i.e., goal or purpose... While εἰς here [in Colossians 1:16] may mean "for him," i.e., for his benefit or glory... more probably the sense is "to him [as their goal]." The whole universe has been created and now exists... with Christ as both its sole cause (διὰ) and its ultimate goal (εἰς). (Harris, *Prepositions and Theology*, 88)

With this reasoning, Harris chooses to translate the latter part of Colossians 1:16 as "All things have been created through him **and he is their goal.**"

This three-letter preposition, *eis*, shows how all of creation finds its convergence and coherence when directionally pointed toward Christ.

That is why some scholars even like the translation "towards him," which highlights how redemptive history is moving chronologically towards Christ becoming the reigning, enthroned king over everything.

The last preposition we will briefly look at is *pro* ("He is before all things") in verse 17. What kind of "before" is in view here? The Greek preposition can refer to a priority in time or a priority of position or rank. Temporal priority would communicate something like: "I was here *before* you." A good example of this is in 1 Corinthians 2:7, NIV:

→ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before (*pro*) time began.

Priority of rank or position says something to the effect of: "this is before all else, it is the most important thing!" A good example of this is found in 1 Peter 4:8, NIV:

→ Above all (*pro*), love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

So which use of *pro* ("before") is being deployed in Colossians 1:16? A priority of time or of status? Referring again to the scholarship of Murray J. Harris, and following his conclusion, *both* are at play, conveying the dual concept.

If two meanings of preposition are not contradictory, then they both can be infused in the preposition's meaning. So, here, *pro* ("before") refers to both Christ's *preexistence* and His *preeminence* over everything!

He—and no one else—is before (*pro*) everything in time and rank.

As we have seen, paying attention to prepositions enriches our reading and study of Scripture. So, as you read your Bible, pay attention to those prepositions. After all, they are pregnant with powerful meaning!

Read: Colossians 1:18-20; 2:20-23

Point 2 – Jesus is the only one who can bring peace and healing.

But all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross. (Colossians 1:20, MSG)

We all want peace in our lives. It doesn't matter if you are a follower of God or an atheist, all of us experience times of hardship. Anxious thoughts, fears of failure, and feeling lost can rob us of joy and steal our peace. Whether it's peace at the office, peace in the home, or peace in our own hearts, the human heart wants peace. The question always comes down to where do we find peace and how do we make it last?

If you reflect on our society as a whole, much of our time, energy, and money are spent trying to find peace. We look for peace in relationships, in financial security, or in our own personal success. We may even try to find peace in our efforts to be "good" people and earn God's favor through our hard work to be righteous. In the end, we will never experience peace if we are looking for it in the wrong place.

The Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the source of our peace. Through His work on the cross, Jesus brought us eternal peace with the Father (See Isaiah 53:5; Col 1:20). We not only have the assurance of eternal peace through faith in Jesus but we can also experience daily peace in Him. In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul encourages us: " **6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all**

understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Jesus invites us to release our fears and concerns to Him and in return, He will grant us His peace. For most of us, this will take effort to break bad habits of looking to other things to bring us internal peace. This moment-by-moment habit of turning to Jesus for peace and healing in prayer will change our lives.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What are the things that currently stress you out the most? How have you been dealing with the stress? Does the encouragement above change your perspective on the situation?
- How does the message of Jesus being our peace speak to the lack of peace in our world? Do you know anyone that you could share about the peace of Jesus?

—PRAYER ACTIVITY—

The Prayer of Release to God

Releasing our stress and anxious thoughts to the Lord is a daily discipline as believers. One way to help you practice this is to use your hands as a symbolic act of releasing your stress and receiving the peace of God. Try this practice by yourself or as a group:

1. Place your palms down and prayerfully release your worries to God. Call out whatever is stressing you out at the moment and robbing you of your peace. Be specific before the Lord. It could be an upcoming parent-teacher conference, a big project at work, etc. Whatever it is, name it before the Lord and release it to God. Having your palms open and down before the Lord will symbolize for you that you have given it to the Lord and you are not withholding it from Him. Once you release it to the Lord, you have also given up the right to worry about it.

2. Turn your hands over and receive the peace and faithfulness of God. After giving the Lord your worries in the first step, now is the time to receive from the Lord His love and care for you. This step is a great reminder that the Lord desires to give you His peace and that you have nothing to fear. He will give you everything you need to face whatever is currently stressing you out.

Read: Colossians 1:21-23

Point 3 – Jesus is the only one who can keep my life whole and holy.

Colossians 1:22-23a ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

It's surprisingly easy as a follower of Jesus to fall into a "sin management" kind of relationship with God. We work hard to try and please God and do our best to avoid the big sins. We try to do right and then we fail. The next time we assure ourselves that we will try harder only to find our best efforts fall flat. The desire to remain good is a godly desire. The problem comes down to the means by which we avoid sin and choose God's way. How then do we live a holy and pleasing life before God? Paul tells us in Colossians 1:22-23.

One wonderful thing about our relationship with Jesus is that He alone has the power to present us holy to God. Where our human strength fails, Jesus' power prevails. As referenced in Paul's prayer of Colossians 1:10-11, we are able to live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him, bearing fruit, growing in the knowledge of God, by the strength and power provided by "His glorious might." This enables us to have endurance in our faith. **Trying to live a holy life apart from the sustaining strength, power, and help of Jesus is like trying to run a vacuum without electricity. You may run the vacuum over a dirty spot all day but without power, you won't get anywhere.**

The longer we are Christians, the more we learn how much we need His help to live a holy life. We must learn to look to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith for His strength to fight our daily battles and give us victory over the sinful nature. In the hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing," Robert Robinson so perfectly reminds us how much we need to rely on the Lord for the help we need every day.

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let Thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above*

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- “One wonderful thing about our relationship with Jesus is that He alone has the power to present us holy to God.” How does this truth impact your daily walk with God? Does it make you feel freer or less burdened?
- Have you ever experienced the power of God to fight temptation in your life? Do you ever pray for God’s strength?

—SUMMARY—

Why is Jesus the only way?

- 1) Jesus is the only one who can bring true purpose to our lives.
- 2) Jesus is the only one who can bring peace and healing.
- 3) Jesus is the only one who can keep my life whole and holy.

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

1. How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
2. What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?
3. BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?