

Lesson 3 – Colossians 1:12b-17

Introduction

In this week's lesson you will study Colossians 1:12b-17. The theology that Paul presented in Colossians 1 is very important to the Christian faith and because of this the lesson is extended for an in-depth look at this portion of Paul's epistle. Ask the Lord to renew your mind this week as you spend time with Him in His holy word. May you be blessed by the important doctrines that are found in Colossians 1.

Did you memorize a verse last week as you began Colossians 1? You can review your verse or verses and write the Scripture here.

The memory verse you worked on while doing Lesson 2:

Days 1, 2, and 3 - Colossians 1:12b-14

1. When Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia he told them (in Galatians 1:11-2:1) about spending time with the Lord and learning directly what he needed to know about Christ so that he could serve as an apostle. I join with many others who would have loved to have overheard those conversations! Paul was a Pharisee serving among the nation of Israel and in that role he had an intimate understanding of the sacred writings from the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible included the Old Testament that the protestant faith uses, plus the writings of the "intertestament" times, some which came to be know as the apocrypha, from the Greek word that means unveiling. These writings made up the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures that was translated in the third century B.C. Paul, a Pharisee in the first century Hebrew church knew the Septuagint, and then he met Jesus!

My prayer is that spending time in this part of Colossians will give you a deeper understanding about the person of Christ and what He did on your behalf, so that this truth will bring nourishment to your spirit. Open by **asking** the Holy Spirit to minister to you through the truths of this portion of Colossians, that it might truly permeate your thinking and help you share your faith in Jesus with others that God will certainly bring into your life. Read the first three **observation questions** based on Colossians 1:12b-20 and then spend some time focusing on Jesus Christ, your Savior.

- How does Paul describe or identify Jesus in Colossians 1:12-20?

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- What does Paul say that God accomplished through Christ in the past?

- What does Paul say about Christ at the present time?

2. Please examine these word studies of some of the **key words** used for this lesson.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance unless written <i>in italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
2427 hikanoo hikanoósanti Colossians 1:12	Enabled , i.e. qualify: make able (meet)	Used twice in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 3:6
3310 meris merída Colossians 1:12	Share , a portion, i.e. province, share or (abstractly) participation: part (-takers)	Used five times in the New Testament. Luke 10:42
2819 kleros kleérou Colossians 1:12	Inheritance , a die (for drawing chances); by implication a portion (as if so secured); by extension an acquisition, ... heritage, lot, part	1 Peter 5:3
5457 phos phootí Colossians 1:12	Light , from <i>phao</i> (to shine or make manifest, especially by rays; luminousness (in the widest application, natural or artificial, abstract or concrete, literal or figurative): fire	John 8:12 (Mark this for later.)
4506 rhoumai errúsato Colossians 1:13	Rescued , to rush or draw (for oneself), i.e.: deliver (-er); <i>deliver KJV. "To draw out of danger or calamity and to liberate."</i> ¹	Romans 7:24
4655 skotos skótous Colossians 1:13	Darkness , shadiness, i.e. obscurity (literally or figuratively)	1 Peter 2:9 (Mark this for later.)

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament*, Chattanooga, AMG Publishers, 1991, 954.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance unless written <i>in italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
932 basileia basileian Colossians 1:13	Kingdom , properly, royalty, i.e. (abstractly) rule, or (concretely) a realm (literally or figuratively): reign	Matthew 4:17
5207 huios huiou Colossians 1:13	Son , a "son" (sometimes of animals), used very widely of immediate, remote or figuratively, kinship: child, ...	Mark 9:7
5337 natsal wayatsileeniy Exodus 18:4	Delivered , to snatch away, whether in a good or a bad sense: ... defend, escape, without fail, rescue, ... save	Exodus 18:8, 9, 10
6299 padah p ^a deeniy Psalm 26:11	Redeemer , to sever, i.e. ransom; generally, to release, preserve: at all, deliver, by any means, ransom, (that are to be, let be) redeem (-ed), rescue, surely	Psalms 71:23
629 apolutrosis apolútroosin Colossians 1:14	Redemption , (the act) ransom in full, i.e. (figuratively) riddance, or (specially) Christian salvation: deliverance. <i>This word means "emancipation from slavery."</i> ²	Romans 3:24
859 aphasis aphesin Colossians 1:14	Forgiveness , freedom, pardon, deliverance, liberty, remission. <i>"The putting away of sin and the deliverance of the sinner from the power of sin although not from the presence of sin."</i> ³	Hebrews 9:22
266 hamartia hamartion Colossians 1:14	Sin , offense, sin (-ful). <i>"Missing the true goal and scope of life; offense in relation to God..."</i> ⁴	John 1:29

3. What are the two contrasting words that Paul used in verses 12 and 13 and what does he say about each of these?

a.

b.

Look at 1 Peter 2:9 where the Apostle Peter shared using the same contrast. As Paul introduced his passage with the word "saints," Peter says what it means to be a follower of Christ. Who are you according to Peter's teaching and what are you called to do?

² Richard R. Melick, *The New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Nashville, Broadman Press, 1991, 208.

³ Zodhiates, *Ibid.*, 894.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 884.

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Read Jesus' words about His identity in John 8:12. What did Jesus say about Himself and what does this mean to His followers?

Read what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 5:6-14 to see how this important teaching confirms what Paul wrote in Colossians 1:12b, 13. What instructions did Paul give to believers in Ephesus? Ask the Lord to help you as you make choices everyday.

4. Paul said that God "rescued us from the power of darkness" in Colossians 1:13 and this was an attribute of God known to ancient Israel, as He was called the Deliverer who rescued His children from their enemies. The phrase about being "rescued" from the darkness was Israel's perspective on God's miraculous rescuing of His people from the bondage of Egypt. The Hebrew word for deliver (*natsal*, see Question 2) was used five times in Exodus 18:4-10. What was said about God in this passage?

(The study of Colossians 2 will investigate what Paul meant by the source of "the power of darkness" as well as the spiritual/heavenly realm he introduced in Colossians 1.)

The nation of Israel understood the Hebrew word *padah*, that is translated into English as redeem and/or rescue (see in Question 2). Israel's freedom (redemption) from the Egyptians cost the Egyptians their first born, among both humanity and animal. Because the first born of the Israelites were spared, they were asked to consecrate their first born unto the Lord as it is recorded in Exodus 13:11-16.

The Pharaoh of Egypt hardened his heart concerning the Israelites being allowed to go free from their bondage to his grand building projects. It was not until the Pharaoh's first born son was killed and then the Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to go from his control. The redemption of Israel in Egypt cost the Pharaoh his son's life. Centuries later, another first born Son died so God's children would be set free from their bondage to sin that had previously ensnared them. As children of God, our freedom was bought with the life of Jesus Christ. This redemption is a key doctrine in the New Testament. Please read these Scriptures listed below to see how God redeemed those who believe in Him.

What you have in Christ:	How is this possible?
Ephesians 1:3-8	

What you have in Christ:	How is this possible?
Hebrews 9:11-15	

When we end this part of the lesson we will look at Psalm 18 where David wrote about God his Deliverer. For now, look at another place Paul used a form of the word *rhōmai* (rescued, in Colossians 1:13). How did Paul use the word in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11?

5. Matthew 3:2 says that when John the Baptist began his teaching he announced to Israel that they needed to “Repent, for kingdom of heaven is near!” Matthew 4:17 records that “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’” Matthew was a Hebrew man who had been taught that it was irreverent to speak the name of God, and in his Gospel written to his own people, he wrote the “kingdom of heaven” rather than the kingdom of God. Look at the verses written by Paul to see what you learn about the kingdom of God.

a. Romans 14:17

b. 1 Corinthians 4:20

6. Praise the Lord that God rescued you from darkness because He loves you. John 3:16 says that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life,” *NASB*. Two different times God’s voice came out of heaven while Jesus was on earth. Look at these two places and then record what was said about Jesus.

a. Mark 1:9-11

b. Mark 9:2-7

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7. To understand what is meant by “the forgiveness of sins” we must consider what the Bible teaches about sin. A thorough study on sin would require the diligent Bible student to look at the many words used for sin in Scripture (such as iniquity, transgression, rebellion, and treachery), and there are hundreds of verses where these words are used. The following reflects a study on the “theology of sin” based on biblical evidence, addressing the question “What is God’s perspective on sin?”

The Bible reveals the nature of sin that is made known in a variety of ways. One characteristic of sin includes the concept of *missing the mark*, a common narrative metaphor for sin, as used in Judges 20:16. Consider an archer who stands before a target that is clearly designated with rings to aid in hitting the center of the target with an arrow. A variety of reasons can cause someone to miss the mark. In weakness one’s efforts can fall short. In haste or carelessness, one’s arrow can wildly fall round about the target, or perhaps someone deliberately follows the wrong path (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). Without help the individual does not know how to hit the target. When one misses it is not because the target was moved; God is steadfast and faithful to His word and His way.⁵

Sin’s nature also includes unrighteousness as an *impiety* or irreverence toward God and His righteousness in the breaking of His law (Colossians 3:25). Sin also includes the concept of *transgressions* whereby one goes beyond God’s established limit (Numbers 14:41, 42). Sin involves a *lack of integrity* (Leviticus 19:15) as well as *rebellion* and disobedience toward God (Isaiah 1:2). The nature of sin is also seen as humanity’s *treachery* toward God (Jeremiah 3:10) and in one’s *perversion* or warped perspective (Isaiah 21:3). Some sins are considered to be an *abomination* to God (Deuteronomy 7:25, 26; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

Through Adam we were born into sin, death, judgment, and condemnation. By Adam sin entered the world and death entered the world by sin, and so death reigned upon all humanity (Romans 5:12, 17). Through Adam’s transgression came the condemnation of humanity (Romans 5:16, 18) and through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners (Romans 5:19). The result is that in Adam all of humanity are dead to God and alive to sin (Ephesians 2:1) and separated from God by this position. By Adam came death and in Adam all die (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22) physically, spiritually, and eternally. In Adam we are children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3) separated from God by our nature. That which is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6) and self-centered, and set on the flesh (Romans 8:6), as all have sinned, fall under its power, and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:9, 10, 23). Original sin expresses the universal depravity and inherited sinfulness of humanity since the fall of Adam and Eve. From conception humanity has a corrupted nature and the inherited inclination to sin (as through one man’s sin all sin) and are guilty in God’s sight facing condemnation.

God established the standard of righteousness and yet gave humanity freewill. An individual’s sin breaks their relationship with God and they become God’s enemy (Romans 5:10). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and eternal separation from God. Humanity is (spiritually) dead in its trespasses and sin, and this brings eternal separation from God (Matthew 25:41-46). The wrath of God is evidenced by His response to sin, as those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8). Scripture tells us that God hates sin (Proverbs 6:16, 17) and looks at all sin with disfavor. Whether sins were committed out of ignorance or in willful disobedience, sin is sin, and God is the God of justice who condemns sinfulness.

⁵ Jan Wells, *Joshua and the Call to Live Victoriously by Faith*, Sebastopol, Sunergos Bible Studies, 2006, 103, 104.

There seem to be degrees of sin as God shared with Ezekiel that he would see still “greater” abomination in Ezekiel 8:6. Jesus referred to the “least” of these commandments (in Matthew 5:19), and (in John 19:11) to a “greater” sin.

When someone sins there are consequences that will affect themselves as well as others. God ordained that humanity would face the consequences for their sin. Sin results in enslavement as it reigns within one’s spirit (Romans 5:17, 18). A sinner cannot bear fruit as sin has separated one from Christ (John 15:4) and they become enslaved to sin (Romans 6:16), finding true peace illusive. A pattern of sin leads to denial of the seriousness of sin and callousness, as the conscience is seared by sin (1 Timothy 4:2). Those who sin will suffer the loss of heavenly reward (according to 1 Corinthians 3:12, 15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10). In truth, a pattern of sinful disobedience might mean that one is not actually a Christian (1 John 2:4; Matthew 7:23). Sinning against others leads to selfish ambition, disrespect, and competitive interactions with people.

What is your response to the Bible’s teaching that in Christ you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins?

8. Several years before Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colossae, he stood in Caesarea along the Mediterranean coast of Israel before Rome’s leader in Israel, King Agrippa. Luke recorded Paul’s account of his “calling” in Acts 26, and this provides information about Paul, his ministry, and his heart for the unsaved. Read this and notice the “darkness” from which the Lord rescued Paul. What does Paul say it means to be a follower of Christ in Acts 26?

To those in the Christian faith, the Greek word *hamartia* became one’s lack of commitment to the kingdom or community of God. The root of the word is *martia* which means witness. In the Greek culture, a citizen’s participation (in something) would be their *martia*. If they did not participate they were *amartia*, without witness. From those who follow Christ, we are called to be a witness for the Almighty Holy God and our Savior Jesus. When we are not a witness for our Lord, we are sinning. Look at Paul’s teaching about sin in Romans 5:12.

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Paul wrote to the members of the Christian church in Rome who were very familiar with the word redemption as those who lived during the time of the Roman Empire. One way the word redemption was used in the first century A.D. was in relationship to the slave market. Within the Roman Empire, between 20 to 30 percent of the residents were enslaved to someone, or to the Roman Empire itself. To be redeemed was to be “bought,” as this took place in the Roman slave market, so that a price was paid for one’s life.

One of the clearest explanations of our redemption is written in Romans 3:21-31 when Paul used three words very well known to those living in Rome in the first century. Within the legal system of Rome, to be justified meant that someone who was guilty of wrong doing would stand before a judge who declared that the individual was not guilty, but in fact, innocent. The second term was redemption, associated with the slave market as we have already seen. The third word Paul used was atonement, understood by Jew and Gentile alike as the wrath removing sacrifice an individual made before their god or as in Israel’s case before God who would then forgive the one who brought a sincere offering. Please read Paul’s explanation in Romans 3:21-31 and allow these words to minister to the very depth of your spirit. How has God accomplished your justification, redemption, and atonement?

I cannot think of going on from the truths in Romans 3 without bowing before Almighty God and praising Him, and thanking Him for His goodness and mercy to us, His children. What is your personal response to your redemption?

Who would God want you to share these truths with in the near future? Ask Him, and then earnestly pray for opportunities to share of your own redemption and what that means to you.

Record on the sheet entitled “The Person and Work of Christ Jesus” in the Appendix what you have learned about Jesus from this lesson.

Close by reading Psalm 18 to see how David understood God to be his Deliverer. Allow these words to minister to your own spirit as you read. Thank the Lord for the provision He made for you to be rescued from the power of darkness.

Days 4 and 5 - Colossians 1:15-17

1. Colossians 1:15 opens a passage that came to be known as a “Hymn to Christ” and this “reflects the worship of the early church.”⁶ The hymns of the early church were “poetic, lyrical presentations of theology.”⁷ Some passages of the New Testament appear in the original language of Koine Greek as poetic, although these hymns were teaching significant truths in ways that would help followers of Christ to remember doctrines essential of their faith. You might open by **praying** through the truths of Colossians 1:12-20, first by thanking God for what He has done for you through Jesus, and then by praising your Savior Jesus Christ for who He is according to Paul’s hymn found in verses 15-20. One way to pray Scripture is to say something like, “Thank You Lord that you have enabled me to share with the saints’ inheritance of the light, that You have rescued me from the power of darkness, and that You have brought me into the kingdom of Your Son whom You love...” In this way you are praying biblical truths and voicing the words used in the biblical texts to help you learn these truths. After your prayer, open with these **observation questions**.

- On pages 29 and 30 you answered **observation questions** for Paul’s hymn. Look back at the three questions you answered and read those again. Make sure you have marked the verse number after each verse that you recorded.
- Read verses 14-20 again and mark in some way these **key words**: “is,” “all,” “over,” “by,” “through,” “existed,” “everything,” “in” (in verses 14 and 19), and “of” (in verse 20). I circled the words “is” and “existed” with the same red as I marked the pronoun Him that stands for Jesus’ name. I underlined in red the prepositions “over,” “by,” “through,” “in,” and “of” to connect these words with what follows. I always underline the words “all” or “everything” with two parallel pencil lines. Paul uses the word “all” frequently in his writings. After your time of marking these words, read the verses again and allow these truths to minister to your spirit concerning your Savior and your redemption, the forgiveness of your sins.
- Over the centuries the Christian church has discovered the many ways that those who follow Christ can grow in their faith. One way is to study the Bible, another is to pray, and another is to meditate on the word. Some have found that to write out Scripture helps them study Scripture. Since the Apostle Paul wrote his hymn to the church in Colossae as a means of teaching about Christ, please write out verses 15-17, meditating on what the Holy Spirit had the Apostle Paul write for you.

⁶ Melick, *Ibid.*, 210.

⁷ *Ibid.*

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2. Please examine these word studies of some of the **key words** used for this lesson.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance unless written <i>in italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
1504 eikon eikoón Colossians 1:15	Image , a likeness, i.e. (literally) statue, profile, or (figuratively) representation, resemblance. <i>The English word icon comes from this Greek word.</i>	Colossians 3:10
517 aoratos aorátou Colossians 1:15, 16	Invisible , invisible (thing)	Used five times in the New Testament. Romans 1:20
4416 protokos prootótokos Colossians 1:15, 18	Firstborn , (... literally <i>as with one's firstborn child</i> or figuratively <i>as in relationship with God</i>): first begotten	Romans 8:29 (Mark this for later.)
2937 ktisis ktíseos Colossians 1:15, 23	Creation , original formation (properly, the act; by implication, the thing, literally or figuratively): building, creature	Mark 10:6
3772 ouranos ouranois Colossians 1:16	Heaven , the sky, by extension heaven (as the abode of God); by implication happiness, power, eternity, specifically, the Gospel, air, heaven (-ly)	Colossians 1:20, 23
2936 ktizo ektísthee Colossians 1:16	Created <i>ISV</i> , to fabricate, i.e. found (form, originally): Creator, make	Hebrews 4:13
1849 exousia exousíai Colossians 1:16	Powers <i>ISV</i> , privilege, (subjectively) force, capacity, competency, ... or (objectively) mastery (concretely, magistrate, superhuman, potentate, ...), delegated influence: authority, ... strength	Colossians 2:10, 15 (authority/ies)
4921 sunistemi sunésteeken Colossians 1:17	Hold together <i>ISV</i> , to set together, ... to stand near, or (figuratively) to constitute: approve, commend, consist, make, stand (with)	2 Peter 3:5 (formed)

3. The lesson will look at what is taught in Colossians 1:15-17 concerning Christ by studying other teaching in Scripture. What is meant by the phrase "He is the image of the invisible God"? As you read these other references, allow these verses to feed your spirit and fill you with the very Spirit of God.

What is said about Christ's image?

a. 2 Corinthians 4:4

What is said about God being invisible?

d. John 1:18

b. Hebrews 1:3 (Mark this for later.)

e. John 6:46

c. Philippians 2:6

f. Exodus 33:18-23

4. Paul said that Jesus was “the firstborn of all creation” in verse 15 and understanding this phrase is absolutely essential for believers. In the 4th century a council of church leaders met under the approval and authority of the Emperor Constantine at Nicea to debate and solidify the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. After the “Nicean Creed” was written (see in the Appendix), a battle ensued concerning whether Jesus, called the Word of God was co-eternal with God. One of those who dissented from the orthodox beliefs of the Creed was Arius, a church leader from Alexandria, Egypt. Arius’ motto was “there was when He was not...” as to say that there was a time when Jesus was not, as He was created by the Father, and not eternal with the Father.⁸ Arius taught that Jesus was “greater than the rest of the creation but lesser than God Himself.”⁹ This “heresy” opened a great debate in the early church and church leaders were willing to put their lives on the line to guarantee that the truth of Jesus’ identity would be known to His followers. Athanasius, who was also from Alexandria, Egypt, was a strong defender of the Christian faith who proclaimed the identity of Christ wherever he went. Athanasius was exiled many times by several of the Roman Emperors who came after Constantine denying the teaching of the Nicean Council, basing their faith on the Arians, those who followed Arius. “Even so, Arius’s position has refused to die and lives on in several sectarian groups”¹⁰ into the 21st century.

(For those who want to help young people find heroes of the Christian faith, I would suggest you look into the lives of several of the early church leaders. Athanasius’ commitment to Christ and his commitment to orthodoxy is indeed inspirational. Following the death of Athanasius, a young woman named Macrina who was from Cappadocia, an ancient city in modern day Turkey, was concerned about who would “pick up the mantle” of the faith and carry on after Athanasius’ death. Macrina was thoroughly committed to Christ Jesus and she urged her brothers to commit to the cause of truth. Macrina’s brothers Basil and Gregory of Cappadocia became leaders of the church and they are also very noteworthy to study.)

Part of the “confusion” about the word firstborn was how it was used in other Scriptures. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew writings) it was used 130 times, mainly in a literal sense, as one’s offspring that had the special place of the first to be born. The word firstborn was only used eight times in the New Testament, and only twice with a literal meaning, in Luke 2:7 and Hebrews 11:28.

Look at the places where the word firstborn was used in the New Testament (besides Colossians 1:15 and 18) to help you understand what is meant by this.

a. Romans 8:29

b. Hebrews 1:6

⁸ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1984, 161.

⁹ Melick, *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

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c. Hebrews 12:23

d. Revelation 1:5

In the cultures of the Ancient Near East (ANE) the privileged position of the birthright went to the firstborn, and yet in God's sovereignty, He sometimes intervened and the birthright went to the ones God Himself chose rather than the one born first. Biblical scholar J.B. Lightfoot writes that the Jewish understanding of firstborn influences how the word is used in Scripture and the "word lost the meaning of the first in time and developed the meaning of first in priority."¹¹ C. Vaughan suggests that Paul wrote that Jesus "is His Father's representative and heir and has the management of the divine household (all creation) committed to Him."¹² R. Melick points out that in Colossians 1:15 "birth and creation are not to be equated here. The point of the metaphor is to distinguish Jesus from creation, not to tie him to it by placing him within it."¹³

God ordained that the Messiah would come through Judah, the fourth born son of Leah and Jacob. David, from the tribe of Judah, held a privileged place in Israel, and Psalm 89 reminded Israel of the covenant God made with David, as Psalm 89:27 records that God said of David "I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."

5. In Question 1 you were asked to mark how Paul used prepositions in his "Hymn to Christ," and in Colossians 1:15 the *ISV* and *NIV* have translated the preposition *pases* as "over" while other translations have translated this as "of." Using the word over in verse 15 is a better translation and Colossians 1:16, 17 explains how Jesus is "over" all creation.

Please read what the Apostle John wrote about Jesus at the opening of his Gospel, in John 1:1-3 and write what John said that confirms Paul's writing in Colossians 1:16. John's Gospel was written in the last decade of the first century, many years after Paul's writings. (Keep this chapter marked for a later question.)

Now read what the Apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Rome and Corinth that helps us understand Colossians 1:15-17.

a. Romans 11:36

b. 1 Corinthians 8:6

¹¹ Melick, *Ibid.*, 216.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

Based on the Scriptures you have looked at today (John 1:1-3; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:2), how would you describe Christ's role in creation?

6. In the creation account in Genesis we read about the creation of the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:26 uses the Hebrew word for God in the plural (*Elohim*) and Christians point to this verse confirming Christ's presence and contribution in creation, as the biblical text says "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." Genesis 1:2 says that "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters," and the Hebrew word used for Spirit (*ruach*) is also used for breath, so some question the role of the Holy Spirit in creation. Because of the Apostle John's introduction to his Gospel where he called Jesus the Word, some interpret the references to God speaking ("God said," in Genesis 1:3) as "Jesus said..." meaning that it was Jesus who spoke the world into existence.

Colossians 1:16 teaches about different dimensions that were involved in the creation of heaven. Some understand heaven as "the timeless future destination of believers. Others see it as an unending time, an eternal realm..." however "Paul used the word for another dimension: the unseen but created reality."¹⁴ Look ahead to Colossians 2:13-19 and consider what Paul wrote that relates to his statement about Christ's relationship with what He created. When we study Colossians 2 we will study what Paul meant by Christ's triumph over rulers and authorities, and the lesson will study this as well as angels, mentioned in Colossians 2:18.

In Colossians 1:17 Paul said that by Christ "all things hold together," and this is a statement of the "scientific" dimension of Christ's role in creation. The age of enlightenment led many people away from a belief in God as both the creator and sustainer of the universe. The "religion" of Deism (at the end of eighteenth century) initially claimed that God created the world and then He left it on its own, so people would take care of what He created, denying God's on-going involvement in the world. To the Deist, "God is viewed as a divine clock maker who wound up the 'clock' of creation at the beginning but then left it to run on its own."¹⁵ Rationalism and the scientific method brought doubt to people's minds, as they contended that for something to be "true" it had to be "provable." Many Bible critics began to teach that it is impossible to "prove" that God created the world, and performed the miracles recorded in the Bible, claiming instead that the Bible is merely a work of literature, rather than the inspired God breathed word. As those who follow Christ, our faith is based on the Bible's record of creation and the Bible's

Continued on the next page.

¹⁴ Melick, *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, 270.

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description of deity. It is by faith that we believe. Revelation 4:11 tells us about the elders who bow down in front of the throne in heaven saying, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory, honor, and power, because You created all things, and they came into existence and were created because of Your will.” Many biblical scholars conclude from this verse that “the purpose of God’s plan is His glory,”¹⁶

Read what Paul said to the Greek people who assembled at Mars Hill in Athens in Acts 17:16-34. What did Paul say about creation to his Greek audience in Athens?

A book has been written to help people share their faith called *Share Jesus Without Fear* which suggests that the first question you ask someone who does not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior is “To you, who is Jesus?” The second question is “If what you believed was not true would you want to know?” Knowing who Jesus is is so important for each of those who follow Him. Record on the sheet entitled “The Person and Work of Christ Jesus” in the Appendix what you have learned about Jesus from this lesson.

Several psalms proclaim God as the creator of the universe. Read Psalm 33 as an act of worship before the Lord and notice what this psalm says about God, the Creator.

You might close by singing the song “My Redeemer” as an act of worship before Jesus, your Redeemer.

“My Redeemer”

I will sing of my Redeemer, and His wondrous love to me; on the cruel cross He suffered, from the curse to set me free.

Refrain: Sing, O sing of my Redeemer, with His blood He purchased me; on the cross He sealed my pardon, paid the debt and made me free.

I will tell the wondrous story, how my lost estate to save, in His boundless love and mercy, He the ransom freely gave.

Refrain:

I will praise my dear Redeemer, His triumphant power I’ll tell, how the victory He giveth over sin, and death, and hell.

Refrain:

By Philip P. Bliss and James Mc Granahan

¹⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2003, 379.

