

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth message in the series from Colossians I’m calling, “Life Overflowing.” Today, we’re going to talk about “The Autobiography of Jesus.” As I mentioned earlier, the first section of this wonderful book is full of doctrinal teachings. In the first half of his letter, Paul writes to teach us what to believe, and in the second half, he teaches us how to behave based on what we believe.

You’ve probably heard the word *theology*, which means “the study of God.” It comes from two words, *theos*, meaning “God” and *logos*, meaning “word” or “concept.” Seminaries, which are schools for pastors, teach theology. They usually have that word in their name, like Dallas Theological Seminary. But under the larger umbrella of theology, there are many other important “ologies.” Eschatology is the study of end times, from the word *escaton*, which means “last.” Ecclesiology is the study of the church, from the word for church, *ecclesia*. But the most important topic to study under the larger heading of theology is Christology. It is the theological study of Jesus Christ. It addresses the question, “Who is Jesus Christ?” The benchmark for all Christology is this: Jesus is God. If your Christology is not correct, then the rest of your theology will be suspect. Paul wrote this letter to correct the false teachings about Jesus beginning to circulate in the church. As a result, this section of Colossians contains the strongest Christological statements found anywhere in the Bible.

I like the story about the pastor who taught a children’s sermon every Sunday morning. He used this as a time to teach the children a simple lesson about Jesus. On this particular Sunday he wanted to use a squirrel as an example of industry and preparation. So, as the kids gathered around him, he asked, “Kids, do any of you know what’s little and brown and has a bushy tail?” None of the kids answered. He said, “You know, it scurries around, collecting acorns...and it climbs trees. What am I talking about?” The kids were looking at each other but nobody answered. Finally, an older girl held up her hand and with a sigh of relief the pastor called on her. She said, “Pastor, I know the answer is supposed to be ‘Jesus’ but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me!” Jesus really is the right answer for most of life’s questions, but not all.

Colossians 1:15-17. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

An autobiography is a life story written by the person whose life is described and a biography is a book about a famous person written by a third party. Through the years I’ve enjoyed reading the biographies of great men, including John Paul Jones, Marquis de Lafayette, Armand Hammer, and Eddie Rickenbaker. Over the past year I’ve read two excellent biographies, both by Edmund Morris. One was about Theodore Roosevelt entitled, *Theodore Rex*, and the other was about Ronald Reagan entitled *Dutch*.

There aren’t many good autobiographies out there, because the people who are famous enough to be written about are often so modest, they would never write about themselves. As we read that passage about Jesus you might have thought I misnamed the title of this message. Since Paul

wrote these words, maybe it should be the "Biography of Jesus." But I intentionally called it "The Autobiography of Jesus," because all scripture is written by God, and the focus of this message is to show you that Jesus is God. So, as we shall see, these descriptions about Jesus are His autobiography. Jesus was not merely a religious teacher who taught a moral system. He made some outrageous claims about being God. Let's consider five of these outrageous claims.

1. JESUS CLAIMS: I AM...THE IMAGE OF GOD

Under the inspiration of the Spirit of Jesus, Paul wrote, "He is the image of the invisible God." (vs. 15) The Greek word for image is *eikon*. We all have icons on our computer screen. They are little pictures representing something else.

A picture may not always give us an accurate likeness. I remember hearing a story about an unattractive lady who went to a photography studio to have some pictures made. When she got the proofs, she didn't like any of them. She stormed back into the studio and said to the photographer, "I don't like these pictures, they don't do me justice!" To which the photographer said, "Lady, you don't need justice, you need mercy!"

God is Spirit, and therefore, He is invisible to the human eye. But God chose to reveal Himself to us, and He did it by putting on flesh and walking in our midst. No man has ever seen God, but many people saw Jesus Christ. But when men looked at Jesus, they saw a good representation of God.

Supporting Testimony: Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

Jesus provided some supporting testimony for this truth when He said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9) The only picture you need of God is Jesus. He wasn't just an icon of God, He is God.

2. JESUS CLAIMS: I AM ... THE RULER OF THE UNIVERSE

"the firstborn over all creation" (vs. 15)

At the time Paul wrote this letter, there were heretics teaching that Jesus was not God, but merely a super-human created being. Those kinds of heretics are still around today; and one group of them is called Jehovah's Witnesses. There's a good chance that at some time, you've had a couple of these friendly people knock on your door. They call themselves Christians, and they want to teach you the "real truth" about Jesus, and even give you a copy of their translation of the Bible. But they are heretics, because they do not believe Jesus is God.

I bring them up, because this verse, Colossians 1:15 is the main bullet they load into their false doctrine gun. They ask you get your Bible and turn to Colossians 1:15. Then they say something like, "See? It says doesn't mean that Jesus IS God. It says He was the image of God." Then they may show you a photograph of a person and ask, "Is that the person, or just an image of that person?" Then they have you read those words, "firstborn over all creation," and then they say,

“See, that proves Jesus can’t be God. It says he was the firstborn over all creation; that proves he was created and if he was created, then God created Him which means he can’t be God.” “Jesus was the image of God, just like we were created in the image of God, and he was a created man just like we are.” And a lot of scripturally ignorant church members say, “Hmmm, you may be right.” Come on, church! All you have to do is read the next seven words and their false doctrine about Jesus crumbles like a house of cards. It says, “For by him all things were created.”

No, the word “firstborn” has nothing to do with act of being born—it’s all about *position* and *privilege*. The firstborn in a Jewish family received the inheritance. When Paul wrote that Jesus was the firstborn, he meant Jesus has the right to claim everything that belongs to the Father—even His deity! He is the firstborn OVER all creation. That means He’s the boss, the ruler, the king.

**Supporting Testimony: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.”
(Matthew 28:18)**

Jesus agrees with this position. His supporting testimony can be found in Matthew 28:18, where he said, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18) In America, we have a system of government with checks and balances so nobody has too much authority. This doctrine called “the limitation of powers” has handicapped us from understanding how to worship a king.

230 years ago, when we declared independence from England, we lost a relationship with a king. I’m certainly not saying we should be a monarchy, but it means we have to try a little harder to understand the royalty of Jesus Christ. The Bible says Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Revelation 17:14)

I love the worship song, “Majesty” written by Pastor Jack Hayford. Did you know what motivated him to write it? He was visiting England once, and he was so impressed with Buckingham Palace, the changing of the guards, the crown jewels, and the other trappings of royalty that he was moved to write these words about Jesus: Majesty! Worship His majesty. Unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise! Majesty, kingdom authority, Flow from His throne, unto His own; His anthem raise! He is RULER over all creation—He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Worship Him!

3. JESUS CLAIMS: I AM...THE CREATOR

“by him all things were created ... by him and for him.” (vs. 16)

Jesus was present and participating at the Creation of the universe. For years I missed the point that Genesis records God as saying, “Let US make man in our own image.” (Genesis 1:26). I think God was speaking to the Son and the Spirit.

I love the way the early Church Father, Irenaeus, expressed it: “Jesus Christ is the glove that the Father puts on when He creates the world.”

Supporting Testimony: "Through him (Jesus) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:3)

We find supporting testimony for this is the first words of the Gospel of John: "Through him (Jesus) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:3)

Last year, I was invited by Fred Smith to participate in an open forum with a Jewish Rabbi and a Muslim imman to discuss the distinctive points of our beliefs. I was not able to participate because I was out of town, and I don't know how the forum went. But I began to think, "If I had sixty seconds or less to describe who Jesus is, what would I say?" I would simply say, "He is the Creator." The Bible makes that claim about Him. To follow the classic logic of C.S. Lewis, either He IS God or He was a lunatic or a liar. There is no other viable position you can hold. He claimed to be God in the flesh, the Creator of the heavens and earth.

4. JESUS CLAIMS: I AM ... BEFORE ALL THINGS

The Bible says in Colossians 1:17, "He is before all things." Does the tense of that verb sound wrong to you? Since we're looking back into the past, you may think it would be more correct to say that Jesus *was* before all things. But, no, this is the correct tense. Jesus IS...He always IS.

If I were to ask you what you were doing last year, you may try to remember. At least that would be a valid question, because you *were* doing something a year ago. But if I asked you what you were doing a thousand years ago, you couldn't answer that. You weren't doing anything because you didn't exist!

Supporting Testimony: "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58)

Jesus was in existence long before the world came to be. We find His own supporting testimony of this when He said, "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58)

Long before our world came into existence, Jesus existed with the Father. With the launch of the Hubble Telescope orbiting the earth, astronomers have been receiving amazing pictures from far out in space. I love science and I think man should explore as much of the universe as we can. Some scientists think by studying the stars we will learn how our world came into existence. I'm fully convinced that the more we learn about the Universe, the more we will come to believe there is a God who created this.

As you know there's an ongoing debate about Intelligent Design and the Big Bang theory. Some scientists say the universe was created with a big bang. As far as I'm concerned, it's settled. God created the heavens and the earth. And I wouldn't be supposed that when he did it, "Bang, there was a lot of noise!" I like what Louie Giglio says about this. One day God just said, "I think I'm going to make me a universe. I can do this. Check this out: UNIVERSE!" And BANG! There it was.

The more we learn about the universe, the more we learn how big it is and how small we are. The Bible says, “The heavens declare the greatness of God.” The more we discover, the more we see the greatness of God. For instance, the Hubble Telescope has allowed us to observe a beautiful galaxy called the whirlpool galaxy, designated as M51. It is 37,000 light years away. That means the light we see now started traveling toward us 37,000 years ago at the speed of 186,324 miles per second. The width of the whirlpool galaxy is over 100,000 light years across.

When NASA scientists used a wide screen planetary camera to take a photo of the center of M51, they discovered a shape that looks strangely like a cross. You can see the picture on the Hubble telescope site. (http://hubblesite.org/gallery/album/entire_collection/pr1992017a/) The scientists were baffled by the shape and simply called it the X-structure. But remember, the image of that picture originated at least 37,000 years ago. I don't call it an X-structure. I call it a cross. And I'm reminded that the Bible says Jesus is “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8). God had the cross in His heart long before earth came into existence. Could it be He sent us a heavenly sign to confirm the power of the message of the cross?

5. JESUS CLAIMS: I AM...THE FORCE THAT SUSTAINS LIFE

Not only is Jesus before all things and over all things, and the creator of all things, the Bible also says, “in him all things hold together” (vs. 17) The word is *sunestimei*, which means “to stick together; to cohere.” It means Jesus is the super glue of all matter. He is the duct tape of the Universe.

Have you ever wondered what keeps the universe together? Why doesn't the earth go spinning off into space, or why doesn't the moon crash into the earth? Why doesn't all of matter just explode or implode into some black hole?

That's a question scientists have been studying for many years. They claim all matter large and small is composed of particles, atoms, which are broken down into smaller particles called neutrons, protons, electrons and...croutons (just to see if you were paying attention). Nuclear physicists have discovered even smaller particles called quarks. These quarks provide the cohesion for the atomic structure. Fundamental particles bind together to form structures on all scales, from the proton built from three quarks, through atoms and molecules, liquids and solids, to the huge conglomerations of matter in stars and galaxies.

Scientists suggest there are four forces at work to maintain this cohesion: (1) gravity; (2) electromagnetism; (3) the weak force; and (4) the strong force. Those last two forces (weak and strong) don't sound very scientific.

One of the most brilliant men on the planet is British physicist Stephen Hawking. He is a Professor of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University in England. When I was there last May I kept looking around hoping to see him navigating the sidewalks in his motorized wheelchair. He suffers from ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), but that doesn't stop him from traveling around the world and lecturing on theoretical physics. He has written many essays including, “A Brief History of Time” and “Black Holes and Baby Universes.” Dr. Hawking has written: “The eventual goal of Science is to provide a single theory that describes the

cohesiveness of the whole universe.”

Of these four fundamental forces, the strong force is the most mysterious. It is billions of times more powerful than either gravity or electromagnetism.

Nuclear physicists say: “The strong force holds quarks together within protons, neutrons and prevents the protons in the nucleus from flying apart under the influence of the repulsive electrical force between them. As quarks within particles are drawn apart the force becomes stronger. This is the opposite effect of gravity and electromagnetism, where the forces become weaker with distance.” (Source: www.cern.ch The European Organization for Nuclear Research)

Scientists recognize the presence of this so-called strong force, but they don’t really know what it is or how it works. I know what it is: It’s Jesus. The Bible says, “In him all things hold together.”

Not only did He create it all, He sustains it all. The reason the planets don’t go spinning out of their orbits is because He holds the universe together. The reason the atomic particles in this pulpit, or in your body don’t just explode or collapse inwardly is because of Jesus: He holds it all together.

And if Jesus can hold the universe together in perfect balance, He can also bring perfect balance and cohesion to your broken and confused mind. Most of us aren’t really concerned about why the planets keep spinning or why the molecules in our bodies are intact—we are more interested in worrying about whether we can keep our minds or families from breaking apart.

Supporting Testimony: Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest ... you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)

He can hold it all together for you. This is how He supports this claim. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29) Jesus claims to possess power to be able to calm the most troubled heart. Science or philosophy will never invite you to come to them to find rest for your souls. Only Jesus can do that.

When you read these verses, you don’t just discover doctrines about Jesus. You meet someone who has unlimited power. There is nothing too hard for Him. That means you can come to Him with your most difficult problem, and He will never say, “Sorry, I can’t help you.” He knows everything. That means you will never come to Him and confess and hear Him say, “You did WHAT?” You will never hear Him say, “Uh oh.” You discover a Savior who can heal your broken heart. You meet the Creator who can bring order out of your chaos. You discover a ruler who is worthy to be praised. You encounter a God who has been around longer than time, so He is never surprised by what happens. Jesus will never say, “Uh oh.” You find a loving friend who holds the universe together and who can hold your life together when you think everything is falling apart.

CONCLUSION

Years ago at Morehouse University, a young freshman named Alvin attended his first philosophy class. The professor began to explain the course of study and to preview some of the great individuals from history that they would discuss over the course of the semester. In this discussion, the professor mentioned they would also be talking about Jesus. He said, "But you must know that what you've heard about Jesus in Sunday School or at your church is wrong. Jesus was a great teacher, and a wise man. He did many good things, but he was Not the Son of God."

Then he paused as if he was waiting for any student to challenge him. But then a hand shot up from the back of the classroom and when the professor called on him, Alvin said, "Yes, he is!" The professor said, "Young man I know what you've been taught about Jesus, but I will prove to you that He is merely a good man. Class dismissed."

As they walked out, one of Alvin's friends said, "What are you doing? This man is the professor, and you're just a student. Don't ruin this class for yourself and the rest of us, just shut up and do your work." Alvin said, "This man is smart, and he knows a lot about philosophy, but I can't just sit back while he tries to convince everyone that Jesus is less than He really was. I'm going to speak up."

The next time the class met, the professor started his tirade about Jesus again. He claimed the Bible was written by misled individuals and there had been other people who claimed to be born of a virgin and to perform miracles. The he said, "Jesus was NOT the Son of God." Alvin's hand shot up immediately. The professor tried to ignore him, but Alvin persisted. Finally the professor called on him and said, "Yes, Mr. Jackson, do you have another sermon for us today?" Alvin said, "Yes, he is!" Throughout that entire semester Alvin continued to speak up whenever Jesus was mocked. For every time the professor said Jesus was not the Son of God, Alvin said, "Yes, he is!"

Years later, Alvin Jackson, the Pastor of Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church in Memphis was speaking at the General Assembly of the Christian Church. At the conclusion of his message, many people gathered around him to tell him what a powerful message he had preached. After the crowd dispersed, there was one man who stood before Alvin—his old philosophy professor. With tears in his eyes, the old man walked up to Alvin, hugged him and said, "Yes, He is!"

I'm here to tell you YES HE IS! He is the image of the invisible God! He is the ruler of the Universe! He IS the Creator. He IS before all things! And He IS the force that sustains life! He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He is the Lily of the valley and the Bright and Morning Star. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is God!

OUTLINE

JESUS' "OUTRAGEOUS" CLAIMS:

I AM...

1. THE IMAGE OF GOD

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

Supporting Testimony: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." *John 14:9*

2. THE RULER OF THE UNIVERSE

"the firstborn over all creation" *Colossians 1:15*

Supporting Testimony: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." *Matthew 28:18*

3. THE CREATOR

"by him all things were created...by him and for him." *Colossians 1:16*

Supporting Testimony: "Through him (Jesus) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." *John 1:3*

4. BEFORE ALL THINGS

"He is before all things" *Colossians 1:17*

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5. THE FORCE THAT SUSTAINS LIFE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes