

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA.55:10    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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### FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATION

In Colossians 1:15 we are told that Jesus Christ is "**the Firstborn of every creation,**" a statement that reveals positive truth of great importance, being a part of the record God has given of His Son. It reveals a truth that we need to know and believe if we expect to qualify as a believer in this record. However, we need to know and understand what the truth is that is declared in this statement, since some are reading into it ideas that are not there. Thus, they use a passage to deny the Deity of Jesus Christ even though this passage teaches it explicitly.

By some we are told that the declaration, "**Firstborn of every creation**" is a revelation of the origin of Christ, a disclosure concerning His place in the order of created things; that before anything else came into existence, he was created and then became the Creator of all created beings, excepting, of course, Himself.

The amazing factor is that those who are now setting forth these ideas are acting as if they have suddenly uncovered some new information as to the origin and nature of the Son of God. They ignore the fact that these ideas were first set forth by one named Arius almost 1700 years ago (about 300 A.D.), and that his doctrines have appeared again and again under different guises during the history of Christendom. Arius taught that while the Son of God may be designated as God in some sense, He is not God in the same sense as the Father. This he based mostly upon his idea that the Son of God is not eternal, and there was, therefore, a time when He did not exist. Various forms of the Arian doctrine are constantly being revived, in which Jesus Christ is made to be a sort of supreme angel, the first creature brought forth by God, His instrument in the creation of the world.

Thus, a very lofty and supernatural dignity is assigned to the Lord Jesus, but he is made to be only an exceedingly fabulous creature, a created god rather than God the Creator. They suppose this to be the truth set forth by Paul in Colossians 1:15 when he declared Jesus Christ to be "the firstborn of every creature," as the King James Version has it. They interpret "firstborn" to mean "first of a kind," and say that He was the first creature to be created. And while **prototokos** (firstborn) can have this meaning in certain passages (as in Matt.1:25), a meaning such as this is not in harmony with the theme or context of Col. 1:15.

There is one rule of interpretation which might well be written at the top of every page of our Bibles. It is, Consider the Context. If we have not considered the context we can be deceived as to the meaning of any statement in Scripture. Every Bible student knows that many passages are used to prove the very opposite of what God intended to teach by them. A clear example of such wresting of Scripture is seen in the use made of the words of Co!. 1:15. An idea is inferred, hinted, or declared (such as Christ is a created being), and then a passage or portion is brought out to confirm it, so, the idea becomes the context instead of the Scripture in which God placed it.

A fundamental rule in dealing with any passage that is being set forth as a witness to or in proof of a proposition is to ask certain questions such as: What is the subject of the portion from which this verse was taken; does this portion deal with the proposition being set forth? If the subject of the context is not the same as the idea being advanced, then we know that a fragment of Scripture has been separated from its context and is being used to support some idea that is not found in the Word of God.

In Colossians 1:15-19 Paul is setting forth the transcendent excellence and unparalleled glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sets these forth by declaring seven superiorities, of which "Firstborn of every creation" is one. Thus, "Firstborn of every creation" cannot be a simple statement setting forth either the origin or the nature of Jesus Christ. There is no superiority or supremacy set forth in the word "firstborn" if it means nothing more than an earlier birthday, or as Arius taught "the first of a kind." But if we take this word in its general acceptance among Eastern nations it signifies sovereignty, lordship, excellence, dignity, and as such the clause might well be translated here: "*The Sovereign of every creation.*"

Therefore, if the word "firstborn" is used to set forth preeminence, superiority, and sovereignty, then it is fitting that it be included in a list that sets forth such things. That it does mean far more than simple primogeniture (the fact of being the firstborn of the same parents) is a fact that can be firmly established by its use in Scripture.

It should be carefully noted that the declaration made in Col. 1:15 is that Jesus Christ is "**Firstborn of every creation,**" and that it does **not** say firstborn of everyone born," **or** "first created of all created." If it had said either of these then it would be

probable that Paul was setting forth Christ's precedence in time over all things born or created. He says that Christ is "**the FIRSTBORN of every CREATION.**" Consequently, we need to understand what this statement tells us about Him. Does it tell us He was BORN, or does it tell us He was CREATED. My answer is that the Son of God, by Whom all things came into existence, was **neither** born nor created. He existed eternally with God and as God.

In the first chapter of Colossians we find the word "firstborn" (*prototokos*) twice. This provides a most positive clue to its higher meaning. Jesus Christ is called in 1:15 "**Firstborn of every creation,**" and in 1:18 He is called, "**Firstborn from the dead.**" Thus we see two different companies over which Christ is Firstborn. This alone is sufficient to show that "Firstborn" is the **title of a high office**, and it absorbs into its meaning such concepts as dominion over, responsibility for, and the disposer of whatever men or matters come under this office.

Of the nation of Israel God has said: "**Israel is My Son, even My Firstborn**" (Exodus 4:22). She is called this, not because she was the first nation to come into existence, but because of the exalted position she has been promised among other nations. Note this in Deu. 15:6: "**For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as He has promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign (be dominant) over many nations, but they shall not reign over (dominate) thee.**"

In Deuteronomy 21: 15-17 we find an illuminating passage that sheds much light on the primary meaning and the extended meaning of firstborn. "**If a man have two wives, one beloved and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: then it shall be when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn; but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all he hath; for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.**"

In this passage we have indisputable proof that the word "firstborn" has a twofold meaning. This commandment forbade a man taking his second son and making him his firstborn - a ridiculous prohibition if firstborn means only the order in which a man's sons were produced. No power on earth could reverse this order of birth once it was established. However, if the word denotes certain rights, privileges, and positions, then an earthly father could take a second son and make him his firstborn by giving him these things. Since this is forbidden here, we have positive proof that "firstborn" means something far beyond the numerical order of generation.

The entire passage of Colossians 1: 13-19 has long been misunderstood because interpreters from the very start have refused to recognize the various subjects with which it deals, and have applied what it says to almost anything that suited their fancies. To avoid doing this we should establish the primary subject, watch carefully as secondary subjects are brought in by the inspired writer, and turn all pronouns into their antecedents.

The main subject of this portion is established when Paul speaks of "**The Son of His love**" in verse 13. And since the next passage unquestionably identifies this One as being the Lord Jesus we can begin our free translation at this point.

**1:14. In Jesus Christ we have redemption through Jesus Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of sins:**

**1:15. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of every creation** (the subject changes).

**1:16. For in Jesus Christ were all these (ta panta; see Issue No. SB098) creations created, creations that are in heaven, and creations that are on earth, visible creations and invisible creations, whether these creations be thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all these (panta) creations were created through Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ.**

**1:17. And Jesus Christ takes precedence over all (panta) and all these (ta punta) creations have their sustenance in Him** (Christ Jesus).

**1:18. And Jesus Christ is Head** (outflowing source) **of the substance of the outcalled ones, Jesus Christ is Sovereign, Jesus Christ is the Firstborn from among the dead, that in every respect He might have the preeminence.**

**1:19. For in Jesus Christ the entire complement delights to dwell.**

Did Jesus Christ reach the exalted office of Firstborn of every creation because He was born first or created first? No, for He was neither born nor created. He was this because in Him (that is in His sphere) were all these creations created. He was the One who in every respect was to have the preeminence, He was the Son that all should honor even as they honor the Father.

In view of the truth declared in the passages cited above, is there anyone anywhere who would rebuke those who believe if we repose our absolute dependence and supreme confidence in Him Who is our God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)? Would anyone warn us against loving Him with every affection of our being?

Can you not see that in Jesus Christ the Bible brings before us a being of such Divine perfections, that if He is not God, not the object of our supreme allegiance, we would need to have a caveat, a warning telling us to beware, to take heed lest we make too much of Christ?

**End Issue No. SB190**