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Colossians 1:15–18

### A Tale of Two Sundays

Earlier this week, I was talking with one of my Jewish friends named Rachel, and she was telling me about how she was celebrating Passover with her family this week. She then asked about my plans for Easter, and I was explaining to her that I was going to this thing called a sunrise service – at 6 AM on Sunday morning. So she asked me a good question – Why early Sunday morning? This might be a question that some of you are asking yourselves right now as well – why in the world am I here and not in bed right now?! So, why Sunday morning? The answer has two levels. At one level, we are here at the crack of dawn this morning because Jesus’s resurrection was discovered early on a Sunday morning nearly 2000 years ago. This, however, raises a question of its own that leads us to our second level answer. Why did God the Father choose to resurrect his Son on a Sunday morning?

To understand the answer to this question, we need to know a little bit about the origin of Sunday and the ancient conception of the week. This is because for us Sunday is part of a two-day period that we call the weekend. However, within Ancient Israel and in Ancient Judaism the conception of the week is based on the 7 days of creation in Genesis 1. In this scheme, there is only one day to the weekend – the Sabbath, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week, which we call Saturday. Thus, Sunday is not part of the weekend but is rather the weekstart, the first day of the week which corresponds to the first day of creation in which God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. In fact, in ancient Aramaic, Sunday is called *chad beshabah*, which could be translated as “the first of the week.”

This brings us now to the words of the apostle Paul in Colossians 1. Paul has just been writing about how believers in Jesus have been transferred from the domain of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God’s beloved son – Jesus. Paul then launches into a song of praise to this Jesus in v. 15. *Read vv. 15–17.* These verses describe where Jesus was on the very first Sunday. You, see, Jesus did not begin to exist in Mary’s womb. No – he is fully God and is therefore eternal. He was present with God the Father and the Holy Spirit when the universe came to be. Paul here tells us that he was not only present when the universe was created but that the universe was actually created through Jesus – thus we might say that Jesus was the agent of creation. Verse 16, then, states that all things have been created through Jesus and that they, therefore, exist for his sake – all things were created through him and for him. So, Jesus is the Lord of creation, as v. 15 says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”

Now, the universe that you and I live in is not the same as it was when God completed his work of creation and rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. This is because through Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God, sin, death, and evil have come to rule in the world we live in. And, most tragically of all, our relationship with our creator has been severed. This is why our existence is marred by injustice, suffering, and a lack of peace. However, the good news is that God has not given up on either people or the rest of his creation. Instead, the Bible is the story of how God is seeking to rescue humanity and all of creation along with us. The Bible is ultimately a story of redemption. So, coming back now to Colossians 1, just as vv. 15–17 tell us of how the universe was created through Christ, so vv. 18–19 tell us of how the universe is being redeemed through Jesus. We are going to look specifically at the second half of v. 18. *Read v. 18.*

I want to point out 3 details here in v. 18. First, Jesus is the beginning. Why is “beginning” an important word in the Bible? Well, it’s practically the first word in the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It’s interesting that 3 of the 4 gospels begin with a reference to Genesis 1:1. John: In the beginning was the word; Mark: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why is this? There is a certain symmetry between God’s work of creation through Christ and God’s work of redemption through

Christ. This symmetry is so strong, that redemption in Christ can be called a new creation. In Christ, God is making all things new. So, Jesus is the beginning as the one through whom the universe was created so long ago, and he is also the beginning in that it is through him that God is redeeming or remaking all things.

So, what is the trigger that sets this new beginning in motion? “He is the firstborn from the dead.” His resurrection from the dead. You see, all of history can be boiled down to a tale of two Sundays. On the first Sunday ever, God said “Let there be light” and there was light. On the morning of the second great Sunday, the sun rose on an empty tomb. The first Sunday means creation; the second Sunday means redemption. The first Sunday means all things are made; the second Sunday means all things are made new. The first thing I want you to see in Colossians 1:18 is that Jesus’s resurrection signals a new beginning – he is the agent of both the creation and the new creation.

Second, Jesus is called the “firstborn from the dead.” Notice that he is called “firstborn” not “only-born.” Firstborn here implies that there are other resurrections to follow. Jesus’s resurrection is the first of its kind but will not be the only of its kind. For those of us who have faith in Christ, this is our ultimate hope – that death is not a dead end but is instead a door through which we enter paradise. When Jesus returns, we will be physically raised from the dead, just as Christ was, to live with God forever in the new heavens and the new earth.

Third, this verse says that Jesus has been raised from the dead “so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” Recall that all things were created through Jesus and for Jesus. So also, all things are redeemed through Jesus and for Jesus – for the sake of his glory. Since we have been going through Exodus as a church, remember the beginning of the 10 commandments: I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, [so] you shall have no other gods before me. I have saved you; therefore, I deserve your exclusive and highest worship. So, it is with Christ. He is our creator; he is our redeemer; he is deserving of our exclusive and highest worship.

So, on this early Sunday morning, I want you to see the Christ of the two Sundays – the Christ of the first Sunday, the Christ of creation; and the risen Christ of the second Sunday, the Christ of the new creation (the Christ of redemption). And I want to call you to do two things this morning in response to this vision of Christ. First, reckon with Jesus as both creator and redeemer. For those of you who do not have a relationship with Jesus, know that he made you and that he came to die and be raised from the dead in order to save you. Redemption is available for you but it is not automatic – my call to you is to receive salvation by repenting of your sins and believing in Jesus. For those of you who do have a relationship with Christ, does he have the supremacy in your heart that he demands and deserves? Second, this Sunday morning, rejoice in the risen Christ as both your creator and your redeemer.