



SERIES OVERVIEW

This is a special series created to respond to the extreme chaos and vitriol of our current national moment. With so many in our congregation experiencing raw, exposed emotional nerves right now (and responding in kind – with anger, fear, and demonization of others) this series will be an attempt to focus our attention on what really matters: Christ and Christ alone. We will address the hate and dehumanization which is mixing in with the gospel in so much of the Church today and call our people to rise above it by focusing on the supremacy of Christ.

WEEK 1 - THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVERVIEW

Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colossae because they were mixing pagan elements into their Christian faith (i.e. worshipping Jesus as well as some of the elemental powers of this world). His aim in the letter was to help them understand that Christ is supreme *over* the powers, and that their mixing is not only muddying the gospel, but downright *dangerous* to their faith.

In the American Church today we are *also* prone to mixing our faith with the powers of this world, combining our love for Jesus with the powers of domination, hatred, violence, and selfishness. Our algorithms have herded us into vitriolic tribes and turned our “enemies” into vile, subhuman monsters in our minds. Like in Colossae, this mixing is not only muddying the gospel, but downright *dangerous* to our faith. As Paul says in Colossians 2:20, “You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world?”

To begin crawling out of this hate-filled pit, we are going to start by meditating on Paul’s transcendent Christological hymn in Colossians 1:15-20, using a piece of contemplative art – the Anastasis Fresco from Chora Church in Constantinople – as a guide. As we will see, Christ is supreme over the powers of this world, and we can find common ground in our combined helplessness to overcome the power of death ourselves. Let us all experience the power of Christ’s incredible sacrifice and the unbelievable love he has for each of us as we are ripped from the grave by his victory over the powers. If we do, perhaps we can begin to see our “enemies” as broken, helpless image-bearers of God just like ourselves, and find ourselves unified in the love God has for us all.

God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself.

Colossians 1:19-20

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the current state of the American Church?
2. Read Colossians 1:9-14. What is syncretism, and why was it a problem in Colossae?
3. How do *what you believe* and *how you behave* define your religion?
4. Would you agree with Phil Vischer that maybe we are “giving ourselves permission to hate those whom God loves”? Why or why not?
5. How would it be possible to have unity with our “enemies”?
6. Read Colossians 1:15-20. Why does Paul feel the need to hammer home this idea of Christ as supreme?
7. What would it look like if people were bowing down to the god of self? to the god of domination? Do you think this is happening to Christians?
8. Read Colossians 1:21-22 and Colossians 2:20. How can Christ-followers stop bowing to the powers of this world?
9. Describe your experience of reflecting on the Anastasis Fresco.