A little over 125 years ago, the famous Chicago World’s Fair was open for 6 months. It was
officially called “World’s Columbian Exposition” because it celebrated the 400th anniversary
of Christopher Colombus’ arrival in the new world. In a time before cars – 26 million people
visited those buildings, grounds & exhibits in just 6 months. It is hard for us to imagine the
scale, effort and importance of these world fairs! It was like putting up a massive Disney park
out of nothing in a short period including lakes, canals, 200 new buildings and 14 major
buildings designed by the leading architects of the day. All of these buildings were intentionally
made as temporarily buildings – to get an idea of the scale & design of the major buildings, just
picture that current massive Science & Industry building in Chicago which was rebuilt in 1933
with permanent materials. The fair grounds were 630 acres in size. 46 countries and many
corporations put on exhibits there showing either the latest innovations, what will make life
better or the special heritage & unique aspects of cultures. The first Ferris wheel was built here
to rival the Eifel Tower which was made for the World’s Fair in Paris 5 years before. This is
where the first moving walkway was open to the public, the first commercial movie theater, the
"hootchy-kootchy" belly dance was introduced from Egypt, and the first area time an area in a
fair was devoted solely to amusement rides, side shows and carnival games separate from
exhibitions and halls – they called it “the midway”. Juicy Fruit chewing gum, Créme of Wheat,
and the first Brownie debuted here and all are still going today. The first printer to do Braille
books, the first fully electric kitchen including automatic dishwasher, the third rail on train
tracks to allow elevated electric trains, elonged coins (smashed pennies with a design) were also
introduced as well as the precursors to the fluorescent light bulb, the zipper, & aerosol spray.
We just don’t have anything like this in our day today.

So it is not surprising that the many religions in the world didn’t want to be left out – so for a 2
week period in September, representatives of the world’s religions met for the first time in a
“World Parliament of Religions”. They met to share their faith’s best points and perhaps come
up with a new world religion.

A well-known evangelist at the time, D. L. Moody, saw this World’s Fair in Chicago as a great
chance for evangelism. Moody commissioned evangelists and assigned them to “preaching
posts” throughout the city. He used churches and rented theaters. He even rented a circus tent to
preach the Bible. Now a number of Moody’s friends wanted him to focus specifically on
attacking the upcoming “Parliament of Religions,” and its potential to make a new religion. But
Moody refused, saying, “I am going to make Jesus Christ so attractive that men will turn to
him.” D. L. Moody knew that preaching the awesomeness of Jesus - the preeminent, peerless,
supreme, all-sufficient Christ—would accomplish much. And indeed it did. The “Chicago
Campaign” of 1893 is considered to be the greatest evangelistic work of Moody’s celebrated
life, and many came to Christ.

Moody’s approach was not new, in fact it is what God is doing here in the book of Colossians
so that His people will be faithful, encouraged overcomers in Jesus despite all of the trials and
turbulence they were going through in their lives. Let's look at some of Jesus' awesomeness. In older times, this would have been called Jesus' preeminence or His supremacy or His incomparability. Jesus is simply superior to anyone and anything else, including the entire physical Universe and all the spiritual beings who have ever existed. Neither Thanos nor the Avengers could even put up a good fight! When we understand this then we realize why Jesus is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all! Let's start back at v 13. READ v 13-15.

PROPOSITION: Jesus is awesome – far above anyone or anything in the Universe as He created and sustains all!

I. Jesus is God incarnate

Colossians 1:15, 17a

A. God in visible form (Heb 1:3; John 1:18; John 14:9)

In v 13, the first pronoun “he” refers to God the Father – He is the One who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the Kingdom of light! Continuing, “For He”, that is God the Father, “has rescued us from the dominion (or the control) of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.” Then v 14 tells us that it is Jesus’s work, God’s Son, particularly Jesus’ dying on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins so our sins can be forgiven and our lives can be redeemed to a new eternal life. Having finally finished the sentence begun in v 9, we now focus on more of what Jesus has, is and will do. READ v 15.

That is an interesting way to think about Jesus – the visible image of the invisible God and as the firstborn OVER all creation. What do those pictures mean?

The first key word, image, is the word “eikŏn” in the original Greek, and it is where we get the English word “icon”. eikŏn means the very substance or essential embodiment of something or someone. So it refers either to the representation of someone (Jesus exactly symbolized God – represented God) or the manifestation of someone (this is more than a symbol but that the visible expression of someone – Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God). Both these elements, representation and manifestation, were always present in the use of the word eikŏn, but one tended to dominate the other. The context here and other NT verses make it clear that in this section Jesus is more than a representation or reflection of God the Father, but the clear manifestation of God.

- Hebrews 1:3: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” Jesus is the exact representation of God’s essence – the only one that can be the exact representation of God is God.
- John 1:18: “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”
Anyone who saw Jesus, the visible manifestation of the invisible God, has “seen” God. And Jesus, the Son of God, is not just another name for God, but there is this relationship within the One True God. As Jesus Himself says …

- John 14:9: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” All of these powerfully confirm …

- Col 1:15a “The Son is the image of the invisible God

Jesus not only is a visible portrait of the invisible God, but He is that God in human form. Jesus is supreme – He is unique – Jesus is in a category of His own – He is God! The true God totally forbids any human from designing a likeness of God and using that image in worship. God is bigger than any physical form. But now we are told by 3 inspired writers of the New Testament and Jesus Himself that the physical Jesus is the unique image of the invisible God. That is why we say Jesus is fully God AND fully man. He is not ½ god & ½ man or a man with supernatural powers. Jesus is God come down in human form.

B. Above all things

The second picture of Jesus, God’s One and Only Son, given to us here is “firstborn”. READ v 15. When we read “firstborn” we naturally think of the oldest child in a family – that is the one “first in time” in a group. But here Jesus is called “firstborn OVER all creation” not the firstborn of creation or the first one created. That is because, Biblically, “firstborn” can also be a term for “first in rank or honor”. That is clearly what is focused on here as Jesus, that unique Son of God, is separate from all creation and above all creation because He created all of it. Now the false teacher, Arius, in the 300’s and the Jehovah Witnesses today, insist that the word “firstborn” must be taken as first in time here rather than first in rank or honor. Their conclusion is wrong and conflicts with 5 clear observations from just the context.

1. The whole point of this passage is to show Christ’s superiority over all things & all beings, not that He is part of them. That would “mix metaphors”. Birth and creation are not equated here. The point of the metaphor is to distinguish Jesus from creation, not place Him within creation.

2. The other statements about Jesus in this passage (like creator of all in v 16 and the sustainer of all in v 17) clearly point to Jesus’ rank or honor (that is His priority and superiority over all creation) rather than time (that is being first one created).

3. The “Firstborn” cannot be part of creation if He created “all things.” One cannot create himself. In fact, the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ have to add the word “other” 6 times in their translation of this passage to make it fit their interpretation, but the word “other” is not in any of the original wording!
4. In another passage where Jesus is called the “Firstborn” (Hebrews 1:6), it also calls all angelic beings to worship this “firstborn”. But God consistently tells us creatures – or created beings – should never be worshipped (Ex. 20:4–5).

5. The Greek word for “Firstborn” is prōtōtōkos. If Christ were the “first-created,” that is a different Greek word (prōtōktisis).

Compared to God the Father, Jesus is in direct close relationship with Him and they are of the very same essence. Compared to the creation, Jesus is superior to, supreme over, unique from, and in a position that only God can be in! So Jesus clearly reveals God to us in a way nothing or no one else can do. Jesus is awesome. We are wise to make Jesus Lord of all in our lives.

C. Before all things

Besides creating all things, the first part of v 17 reminds us that He is BEFORE all things. Jesus is before the world was. Jesus is eternal. The Son of God was not “created” but all that God made, He made by means of Jesus.

II. Jesus is creator of all

Colossians 1:16

Jesus is the creator of ALL. READ v 16. Jesus is creator of all. This includes “all” things in heaven & on earth, all things visible and invisible.

A. Created all physical things including the universe

Jesus did this creation before there was anything except God Himself. That is, Jesus created something out of nothing – He created ex nihilo. That is amazing!

It reminds me of the secular scientist who went to God and said, “Listen God, we’ve decided we don’t need you anymore. These days we can clone, transplant organs and do all sorts of things that used to be considered miraculous.” God listened patiently then said, “Let’s test your statement – let’s both make a human just like I did in the beginning.” So the scientist agrees and reaches down to scoop up a handful of dirt.” “What a minute” God says, “Get your own dirt!” We actually can’t conceive of making something from nothing because that is not even remotely possible for us.

When you think about the immensity of the Universe – add to that Jesus created it out of absolutely nothing! That is mind boggling. Jesus is awesome! Picture all the variety around us – how many different living creatures there are; the endless multitude of colors; or the variety of sounds! Jesus created that diversity! Jesus is awesome! Or tap your hand and try to imagine how small those tiny neutrons, electrons and protons in each atom in your hand. Then picture how most of an atom is just space! How can that be? Jesus is awesome. Despite the brokenness of this physical world that has come through sin & rebellion, the awesomeness of our Creator is evident to all! We are wise to make Jesus Lord of all in our lives.

B. Created all spiritual things including heaven & spirit beings
We’ve only consider physical things & beings. What about heaven and all the spiritual beings around us? READ v 11a Jesus created heaven and the invisible creatures around us. We can’t see anything in heaven, but it is always portrayed as more marvelous than anything here in our Universe. And “thrones ... powers ... rulers ... authorities” refer to four classes of spiritual beings, like angels, which are invisible to us. There are probably hundreds with us right now. And that spiritual world has a more complicated order than we can imagine! Jesus created all of that and is supreme over all of them! And that Jesus knows us and loves us enough to come down to this earth and die on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins, then proved it all by physically rising from the dead. Jesus is awesome! We are wise to make Jesus Lord of all in our lives.

C. All created through Him and for Him (John 1:3; Heb 1:2)

READ v 16b Not only is everything – visible and invisible – whether in heaven or on earth created by Jesus – but everything is created for Him. Jesus, the eternal Son of God is the goal of all creation. Everything began with him and everything will end with him. All things sprang forth at Jesus’ command, and all things will return to Him at His command. Jesus is the beginning and He is the end—the Alpha and Omega. Jesus is awesome. We are wise to make Jesus Lord of all in our lives.

III. Jesus is the sustainer of all Colossians 1:17b

Christ is not only the One through whom all things came to be, but also the One by whom they continue to exist. Jesus sustains everything in heaven and in our physical universe. Without Jesus’ constant work, all would disintegrate. Jesus is awesome. We are wise to make Jesus Lord of all in our lives.

A. Physical: Physical things naturally decay

Take our physical world – all physical things naturally decay whether it is our cars rusting out, our bodies wearing out or our favorite fishing lure wearing out! If Jesus is the One who not only creates but sustains all – then that means He is more powerful than anything that decays in this world. When fear, worry, frustration and discouragement arise because things or health are falling apart – we have Jesus who is more powerful than those loses! Bring those concerns to Jesus because He cares for you!

B. Relational: Relationships & harmony naturally decay

Physical things and our bodies are the only thing that decays in this broken world – relationships and harmony also does. There is no point in any human relationship where it is “happily ever after”. We have to constantly put time and sacrificial effort into relationships or they will decay. We have to put time and sacrificial effort into any area that is going well or the harmony there will decay. Since Jesus is more powerful than relationships, we can bring ALL our fears & pains to Jesus as conflict arises, misunderstandings get worse or injustice comes into our lives! Jesus actively works in our day to sustain us.
C. Moral: Positive virtues/commitment naturally decay

Another area that our culture is currently struggling in is moral. Possible embezzlement by an area official was the top article in yesterday’s paper. Positive virtues and commitment don’t naturally get stronger – they actually naturally decay. Unless you put concerted effort into moral areas like honesty, your level of honesty will actually decline. In moral areas we are all being tempted to compromise regularly! And every one of us gives into some compromise somewhere in their lives. If we repent & believe in Jesus alone, He has initiated a personal relationship with each of us, given us the Holy Spirit inside us, sent His angels to help us, given us His word in the Bible. We are wise to make use of these to strengthen more virtues and commitment to God and others in our lives.

When we truly understand what is being said here, it is amazing that we should ever look anywhere else for meaning and purpose in life. Jesus is awesome – far above anyone or anything in the Universe as He created and sustains all! May we continually surrender our lives to Him as Lord!