



## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION FOR WEEK OF OCTOBER 10-16

SERIES TITLE: JESUS IS

MESSAGE TITLE: JESUS IS GOD

### INTRODUCTION:

This week we begin our series called, “Jesus is \_\_\_\_.” In Matthew 16 Jesus asks his disciples the following question, “Who do you say I am?” The passage goes on to share Peter’s powerful confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. But what about you? How would you answer this question? What word or phrase would you use to fill in the blank? We define a disciple as someone who is forming their life around Jesus and helping others do the same. If you choose or how you choose to form your life around Jesus depends on how you answer that question. As one author states, “What we believe about Jesus, who he is and what he did, will greatly shape the rest of our theology—what we believe about the Bible, God, humanity, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the church.” In this series we will take a deep dive into who Jesus is and our desire is for you to have a clearer understanding of his deity and his humanity as you continue to form your life around the one whose death, burial, and resurrection reconciled us back to our Heavenly Father.

Before Your Small Group Meeting:

- Watch Pastor John’s Message
- Read Matthew 16:13-16 and Colossians 1:15-23
- For additional study see John 1:1-18 and Hebrews 1:1-4

### DISCUSSION

1. What challenged you the most from Pastor John’s message this weekend? Why?
2. What have you learned about Jesus from Colossians 1:15-23. How has what you’ve learned going to affect your walk with Jesus going forward?
3. What does reconciliation mean? How are you reconciled with God?
4. Why is it a must for our salvation that Jesus is God?

### RESPOND IN PRAYER

Spend time reading, reflecting, and praying on Colossians 1:15-23 and John 1:1-18.

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

### Commentary on Colossians 1:15-23

**1:15.** When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he was countering a clever company of false teachers who sought to replace the Colossians' enthusiastic devotion to Christ with only a mild approval of him. They didn't encourage anyone to forget Jesus altogether; they just said he wasn't the only show in town. According to these false teachers, Jesus got equal billing with a vast number of emanating spirits flowing out of God. They said Jesus could be prominent, but he certainly wasn't preeminent. In contrast, Paul—along with telling believers the truth about the gospel and pleasing God—tells us the truth about Jesus.

Jesus is the image of God. The word for image was used in Paul's time for likenesses placed on coins, portraits, and for statues. It carries the idea of correspondence to the original. It is the nearest equivalent in ancient Greek to our modern photograph. Jesus is the perfect representation of God. This verse and others (John 1:18; 1 Tim. 1:17) tell us that God is invisible. J. B. Phillips translates verse 15, "Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God." Hebrews 1:3 tells us that the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

Not only is Jesus the perfect picture of God, but he also holds the highest rank in the universe. Jesus is the firstborn over all creation. Firstborn is a term of rank more than it is a word of time (see Ps. 89:27). The right of the firstborn was the right of privilege and priority. It was the honored position in the family. In the case of the patriarchs, we know that the honored position didn't always go to the first son born in time. Jesus is the firstborn—the highest rank—in all of creation.

**1:16.** Jesus holds the highest rank in creation because he is the Creator of all things. There is nothing in the created order that Jesus did not create (see also John 1:3). Because he is the Creator, Jesus has absolute supremacy over all creation, including any spirit beings who were being worshiped by the local heretics. Since only God can be the Creator, this means that Jesus, the perfect image of God, is even more than an image. He is divine. He is God.

**1:17.** Jesus is eternally existent (an attribute that can only be true of God) because he is before all things. Jesus is also the powerful sustainer of the universe. Because of him all things hold together. His power guarantees that the universe is under control and not chaotic.

**1:18.** Jesus is sovereign over creation. He is also sovereign over the church, the new creation. Jesus is sovereign over the church because he is the head. While scholars debate whether head should be understood as "origin" or "authority," both are certainly true of Jesus in relationship to the church. Jesus began his church, and HE is its source of life and vitality. Jesus is also sovereign over his church. The church takes its direction from Jesus and is under his authority. While both concepts are true, the context of supremacy certainly lends itself to the idea of authority.

The church is the body of believers who owe their allegiance to Jesus. The position of supremacy in everything (and particularly the church) belongs to Jesus because of his resurrection and work of reconciliation. He is the firstborn from among the dead. Again, firstborn here has nothing to do with time. Others preceded Jesus in rising from the dead. Lazarus is one example (John 11:38–44). Jesus is first in rank. Others were raised only to die again. Jesus was the first person to rise, never to die again. He is the first person to conquer death, and all other resurrections are based on his.

The glorious truth for us is this: because of his resurrection, we are assured of our own resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20–23).

**1:19–20.** Jesus has supremacy over all things because all of God's fullness resides in Jesus: He is the full embodiment of God's attributes and saving grace. Through Jesus, God is able to reconcile to himself all things.

Reconciliation is the removal of hostility and the restoring of friendly relations to parties who have been at war. Paul also calls reconciliation making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. What God has done is to move toward us to restore harmony, patch things up, cease hostilities, bury the hatchet, smoke the peace pipe, and heal the breach.

**1:21–22.** This concept of reconciliation is not just a universal theory; it is a personal truth. Jesus' death allows God's enemy to become God's friend. Before the miracle of reconciliation, the Colossians, and all unbelievers, were at odds with God. We were alienated, that is we were separated, estranged. We were alone, an outsider, exiled, shut out, cut off, locked out. Ephesians 2:11–12 gives us another sad perspective on our estranged position before reconciliation.

Paul then tells us we were once God's enemies in two ways. First, we were enemies in [our] minds. Our thoughts and our attitudes were hostile to God. Before we trusted Christ, our entire way of thinking was contrary to God's. For us, and for those who have yet to be reconciled, the problem was and is simple. We refused to accept God's evaluation of us as being sinners. We would also not accept God's remedy for the situation—dependence on Christ.

Second, we were enemies in [our deeds], because of [our] evil behavior. It's not just that we thought wrong; we also acted wrong. Despite our active opposition to God, he reconciled us through the death of Jesus. Jesus died for a race of rebels to offer them a chance to become his allies.

The outcome of this reconciliation is present peace and a future presentation of ourselves before God. The slate of sin has been wiped clean, and we look forward to the day we will stand before God holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

**1:23.** The if of verse 23 should not be misunderstood. This verse is not saying that we will be presented holy and blameless if we remain faithful, as if our eternal salvation depends on our performance. The Greek construction of the if is not an expression of doubt but an expression of confidence and is better translated as since. Paul is not in doubt about whether the Colossians will remain faithful (see Col. 2:5). He is confident that because they have understood what it means to be reconciled they will remain faithful to the gospel that reconciled them. He writes this as an expression of confidence and as a warning to avoid the religious fads of the false teachers of Colosse.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anders, M. (1999). [\*Galatians-Colossians\*](#) (Vol. 8, pp. 282–284). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.