

Jesus is the Firstborn

In Colossians 1:15, Jesus is called “the firstborn of all creation.” Does that mean, as some suggest, that Jesus was the first thing God created? Not at all.

The firstborn concept is rooted in ancient cultures in which the oldest son had a special place. It was a position of honor and privilege. The oldest son typically became the next family head. He inherited his father’s position, such as becoming king in his father’s place (e.g., 2 Chronicles 21:3). Among the Hebrews, he received a double portion of material inheritance.

One who was not literally the first one born might nevertheless be put in that honored position. God did that for Israel. They were His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22) though they were by no means the oldest of nations. God did that for David as well (Psalm 89:27). David was the youngest of eight siblings and the second king of Israel, yet God honored him above all, especially by the place he was given in the Messianic lineage and covenant.

Jesus was no created being. He was I AM (John 8:58). He was God (John 1:1). In our text, Paul goes on to explain what *the firstborn of creation* means: “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Jesus has the place of honor with reference to creation, not because He was the first thing created, but because He is the creator!

- by Frank Himmel

Chance or Providence?

There are some things we clearly know from Scriptures because God has chosen to reveal them to us. We know exactly what God would have us to do to be saved because He has clearly told us through His word. We know that God hates divorce, a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood and many other sins that we might commit against each other (Malachi 2:16; Proverbs 6:16-19).

But when it comes to knowing how God interacts in our every day life, we cannot be as sure. Things happen in our lives and in the lives of others that cause us to wonder, is this God’s providence or just something that is happening by chance? The wise man made this observation in Ecclesiastes 9:11-12, *“I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.”*

God not only has spiritual laws through Christ which are always true but He also has natural laws which are always true. Heat will burn you, electricity can kill you and gravity will bring you back to earth. Often a person’s interaction with these laws brings about serious harm or even death. Sometimes this occurs because of our own actions and we suffer the consequences. But at other times we suffer the consequences of the decisions of others who violate God’s laws of nature.

But herein lays our uncertainty. Are there times when God’s providence enables us to avoid situations that could have terrible consequences? Yet when tragic things happen we can’t help but second guess our own actions and maybe even ask God, “why?” The wise man, by inspiration said *“For man also does not know his time:”* (Ecclesiastes 9:12). To these questions we simply do not have the answers to the “why”.

Let us not forget some other great truths that we know about our great God. Hear Peter’s words in 1 Peter 3:12, *“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”* The conclusion is this: it doesn’t really matter whether things happen by chance or through God’s providence. You see, our God is able to help us through anything this life can bring our way. *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you...”* (2 Cor. 9:8). Paul reminds us in Romans 8:28 that *“...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

While we aren't given to know all the "why's" we can be assured that God works in the lives of His children. He will not allow more to be demanded of us than we can endure. Not even "chance" will be allowed to do so. God's providence and promises will see to that. *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor. 10:13).

- by **Ben May**

Armageddon At Hand?

Many so-called 'prophecy experts' are convinced that political developments in the world today are indicators that the great Battle of Armageddon is about to take place. Armageddon, of course, is described in the Book of Revelation. Many think the description there is of a literal battle between the forces of evil and good. Their thinking is that it will usher in the millennial kingdom of Christ. This is becoming an increasingly popular view.

What about Armageddon? The only place the word is found in the Bible is in Revelation 16:16. It refers to Megiddo, a large hill near the plain of Jezreel. It was well known to inhabitants of the region because of the many battles that had been fought there throughout history. The context has absolutely no reference to an actual future assembly of nations or armies to fight a literal war.

Is the end near? Those who are making predictions about the return of Christ and the end of the world are doing so in direct contradiction to what the Bible says. The Scriptures teach that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. 3:10), implying that there will be no sign or advanced warning.

What should we do? Considering the present political turmoil in the world, Paul's instructions seem appropriate: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1,2). And, of course, constant and faithful service to the Lord is essential so that, whenever the Lord returns, "that day should (not) overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:4).

- by **Greg Gwin**