LESSON 8 *February 14–20

(page 60 of Standard Edition)

The Preeminence *of* Christ



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 1:26, 27; Col. 1:13–19; John 1:1–3; Eph. 1:22; 1 Cor. 12:12–27; 1 Cor. 4:9; Rom. 6:3, 4.*

Memory Text: **"He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist"** *(Colossians 1:15–17, NKJV)***.**

With this week's lesson, we resume our consideration of Colossians *(see Lessons 1 and 2)*. In Lesson 2, Thursday, we saw that in Colossians 1:9–12, Paul prays for believers in Colossae, asking that they may live in a way pleasing to God. In verses 12 and 13, he contrasts two realms: that of light and of darkness, "the kingdom of light" *(Col. 1:12, NIV)* and "the dominion of darkness" *(Col. 1:13, NIV)*. God the Father has qualified us to share in the eternal inheritance of the realm of light, delivered us from the power of darkness, and "transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" *(Col. 1:13, 14, ESV)*.

In other words, it is in Jesus, the person of Jesus, who is also God our Creator, that we have redemption. He worked out our redemption for us, and by faith in Him we have been moved from the realm of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

This week we will look at one of the most comprehensive and sublime statements about Jesus in the New Testament. What does it mean that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God," yet also "the firstborn over all creation" *(Col. 1:15, NIV)*?

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 21.*

Image of the Invisible God

When we look in the mirror or at a photograph, we see an image of ourselves, but it is a flat, two-dimensional portrayal. In some respects, a sculpture gives a clearer idea yet still falls far short of the living, breathing, animated reality. The biblical concept of image, while sometimes referring to these lesser representations, suggests something broader still.

Read Genesis 1:26, 27; Genesis 5:3; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and Hebrews 10:1. Summarize the various meanings of "image" in these passages. How might they differ from the description of Jesus as the image of God?

Human beings were created to be as much like God as possible—physically, spiritually, relationally, and functionally. Still, they reflect God's image in certain aspects only, and sin has damaged even that. But Jesus enables us to "see" the invisible God. "He who has seen Me," Jesus said, "has seen the Father" *(John 14:9, NKJV)*. He is "the exact imprint" of God's nature *(Heb. 1:3, ESV)*. He is God's thought made audible and God's character made visible.

Read Matthew 11:27 and John 1:1, 2, 14, 18. Why is Jesus uniquely able to reveal the Father?

Note other ways in which Jesus described His relation to God the Father:

- "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" *(John 5:17, NKJV)*.
- "I and My Father are one" *(John 10:30, NKJV)*.
- "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (*John 14:6, NKJV)*.

Jesus also repeatedly described Himself in an absolute sense in terms of God's name: "I AM" *(see Exod. 3:14)*; "I am the bread of life" *(John 6:35)*; "I am the light of the world" *(John 8:12)*; "I am the good shepherd" *(John 10:11, 14)*; "I am the resurrection, and the life" *(John 11:25)*; "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" *(John 14:11)*; and "Before Abraham was, I am" *(John 8:58)*.

If Jesus were anyone other than God Himself, what would it mean except that the Father sent some created being to die for us? Why is that so radically, and crucially, different from God Himself, in the Person of Christ, dying for us?

Firstborn Over All Creation

In the New Testament, the terms "firstborn" and "first begotten" almost always refer to Jesus *(see Luke 2:7, Rom. 8:29, Heb. 1:6, Rev. 1:5)*, including both occurrences in Colossians. But even when it refers to others, it does not necessarily mean the one born chronologically first. The biblical concept of the "firstborn" emphasizes the special relationship a son bears to his father, regardless of birth order. Also, there are instances of younger sons being more prominent: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, to name a few.

David, though the youngest of eight sons, is anointed king *(1 Sam. 16:10–13)*, and through the psalmist God said, "I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" *(Ps. 89:27, NKJV)*. He also tells Moses, "Israel is my firstborn son" *(Exod. 4:22, ESV)*. In this sense, then, the term connotes first in terms of preeminence.

Read Colossians 1:15–17. What reasons does Paul give for Jesus being called "the firstborn over all creation" *(NKJV)***?**

_____

_____

Clearly, Paul does not mean to suggest that Jesus was the first being created. In fact, he categorically excludes that possibility. Twice, in two different ways, he says Jesus created all things. They were created by Him and for Him *(Col. 1:16)*. In both cases, Jesus is indicated as the personal agent through whom God carried out the process of Creation *(see also Eph. 3:9, John 1:1–3, Rev. 4:11)*.

Paul's statement is as comprehensive as possible. All means all—spatially (heaven and earth), ontologically (visible and invisible), and functionally (thrones, dominions, principalities, powers). The latter terms normally refer to angelic beings *(see Eph. 3:10, Eph. 6:12)*. As if to make sure he cannot be misunderstood, Paul also indicates that Jesus existed "before all things" *(Col. 1:17)*. The Greek expression can mean precedence in rank as well as in time, but in every other instance in Paul's writings, it refers to time *(see, for example, 1 Cor. 2:7, Gal. 1:17, Eph. 1:4)*.

Another reason Paul gives for Jesus' preeminence is that "all things are held together in him" *(Col. 1:17, NET)*. The Greek word *(synistēmi)* literally means "bring together" or "unite." Jesus is the unifying factor of the universe, not only because of His role as Creator but also because He is the Redeemer.

God, the Creator, died for us. What could our works add to that? Why is the idea that our works could add to what Christ has done already for us blasphemous?

Head of the Body (the Church)

Read Ephesians 1:22 and Colossians 2:10. What does "head" mean in these passages? What does Paul mean when he calls Jesus the "head of the church" *(Eph. 5:23)*?

_____

_____

It is natural to speak of the head in a metaphorical sense in reference to a leadership position, as reflected in countless languages across the globe. We find similar use throughout the Old and New Testaments. Notice how "head" is used in the following verses:

1. Exodus 18:25—Moses chose "able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."
2. Numbers 31:26—"the heads of the fathers' houses" *(ESV)*.
3. Deuteronomy 28:13—God will make Israel "the head, and not the tail" if they will obey Him.
4. Isaiah 7:8—"For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin."
5. Hosea 1:11—"The children of Judah and the children of Israel shall . . . appoint for themselves one head" *(NKJV)*.
6. Micah 3:9—"You heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel" *(NKJV)*.
7. 1 Corinthians 11:3—"The head of every man is Christ."

Thus, Christ as the head of the church provides leadership, guidance, and nourishment for the church's unity and growth *(see Col. 2:19)*.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. Here also Paul describes the church as a "body." What other aspects of the church are conveyed by this metaphor?

_____

_____

Just as the body cannot live without the head, when a part of the body is lost or injured, life can be much more difficult. We often don't recognize how important something is until we lose it.

If you had to give up a limb or an eye, what would you choose? What does this tell you about how vital each person is as a member of the church?

The "Beginning" (and Initiator)

Read Colossians 1:18. What is the connection between the idea of Christ as the head and Him as the "beginning"?

_____

_____

In Hebrew the words for head *(roʾš)* and beginning *(rēʾšît)* are related. The first instance of the latter word in Scripture is in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning *[rēʾšît]* God created the heaven and the earth." Jesus is head of humanity and of the church, not only because of the Incarnation but also because He is the Creator.

In Greek, the word for beginning *(archē)* has a broad meaning. Here, "beginning" refers to Jesus as the source or initiator of the church *(Col. 1:18)*, and therefore its Head, just as He is the "beginning" or initiator of Creation.

Jesus is not only the initiator in terms of Creation and the church, He is also—through His resurrection from the dead *(Rom. 6:3, 4)*—the initiator of the new creation. Because the wages of sin is death, His victory over death also shows His victory over sin and His power to re-create us in His image. All this demonstrates why He is "the firstborn from the dead" (on the meaning of "firstborn," see Monday's study). His is the preeminent resurrection, even though not the first (Moses was the first, which is why the dispute with the devil ensued over his body *[Jude 9]*). Without Christ's resurrection, no one else could be raised from the dead.

It's helpful at this point to review briefly all the reasons Paul has given for Jesus having preeminence:

1. He is the perfect manifestation of the invisible God.
2. He is the agent by whom all things were created.
3. He existed before all things, and all things are brought together in Him.
4. He is the head of the church, which is His body.
5. He is the initiator of Creation and the re-creation.
6. He has conquered sin and death and thus earned the right to resurrect all who put their trust in Him as Savior.
7. Jesus has always existed, but now, by virtue of all this, He has come to have the preeminence as Head of humanity and Head of the church.

What must you change so that you can better experience Christ's preeminence in your own life?

_____

To Reconcile All Things

Read Colossians 1:19, 20. What is this reconciliation that comes through the Cross, and how comprehensive is it?

_____

_____

Paul uses a very interesting expression in Greek to culminate his description of Jesus, obliquely pointing back to the Father, who was mentioned in Colossians 1:12. It is His fullness that the Father was pleased to have dwell in Jesus *(compare Col. 2:9)*. What is this "fullness"? John refers to it as being the Father's glory, "full of grace and truth" *(John 1:14)*.

But, based on this passage, that "fullness" encompasses a lot. It embraces God's eternity and self-existence and His power to create and re-create. Most important, it underscores His wisdom in conquering sin and death through the most unimaginable means—the Cross. And thus, He transformed that most inglorious object into a testimony of His eternal love for every created being. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" *(John 3:16)*.

The only way sin could really be defeated forever, and all things be reconciled that could be reconciled, is summed up in that one glorious truth: God loved—He loved the universe, and He loved us so much that He risked everything to save us through Christ's death on the cross. The Greek word for "world" is *kosmos*, which can encompass the whole universe. Paul refers to this universal demonstration in the context of following Christ: "We have been made a spectacle to the world [*kosmos*, universe], both to angels and to men" *(1 Cor. 4:9, NKJV)*.

"Heaven viewed with grief and amazement Christ hanging upon the cross. . . . By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. . . .

"But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. . . .

"Well, then, might the angels rejoice as they looked upon the Saviour's cross. . . . Christ Himself fully comprehended the results of the sacrifice made upon Calvary. To all these He looked forward when upon the cross He cried out, 'It is finished.' "—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 760, 764.

Further Thought: "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, Collier Books, 1952), p. 41.

"The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight.

"The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be 'the express image of His person.' "—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 614.

"Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. . . .

"He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. . . . He is the eternal, self-existent Son."—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 615.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Dwell more on the question of the eternal deity of Jesus. Think through the implications of the entire plan of salvation and the meaning of the sacrifice at the cross if Jesus had been anything other than the eternal God, One who had never been created but had always, from eternity past, existed. Why is that teaching so important? In class, talk about what it would mean if, in fact, Jesus were not eternal but, in some fashion, had been created. Again, what is lost in that kind of thinking?

❷ When we think about Jesus, the gospel, and the plan of salvation, why must we keep the concept of the entire universe's involvement and interest in what Jesus has done here as part of our thinking? What must have gone on in their minds when they saw their Creator, their eternal Creator, on the cross? It's one thing for us to be awed by it, but the unfallen universe knew Him in His eternal glory. What must have gone through their minds as they witnessed the One whom they had worshiped in heaven die on the cross?

❸ What would you say to someone who does not believe that the Father and the Son have always coexisted? Why is this such an important truth? How would you explain that there has never been a time when the Father was without the Son, except at the cross, when there was a temporary "sundering of the divine powers"? (See Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 924.)

INSIDE *Story*

Losing Two Jobs Over Faith

Rodel won Rene to Christ by taking him fishing.

Ellen White says, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me' " (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143). Rodel practiced Christ's method: spending time with Rene, ministering to his needs, and winning his confidence. Then Rene followed Jesus.

After Rene returned to Christ, Rodel asked if he could stay at Rene's house. Rene's parents weren't thrilled about having the young Seventh-day Adventist living in their home in the Philippines, but they didn't say anything. Rodel also encouraged Rene to go back to school, and Rene did.

"I'm waiting for you to graduate, and then I'll take you to Manila to become a missionary in the 1000 Missionary Movement," Rodel said.

Rodel had served as a missionary with the 1000 Missionary Movement, an organization that is part of the Adventist Church's Southern Asia-Pacific Division, when he had first met Rene about a year and a half earlier.

While Rene studied, Rodel lived with him and helped pay for his studies by working together in the rice fields. Rene graduated when he was 23.

Rodel made good on his promise and brought Rene to the headquarters of the 1000 Missionary Movement in Silang, near the Philippine capital, Manila.

But then he had another idea. He said Rene should further his education before becoming a missionary. The two young men enrolled in the Adventist University of the Philippines in Silang. Rene majored in accounting, and Rodel in theology.

It took six years for Rene to graduate. He didn't receive any support from home. During that time, he married Love Jhoie.

After graduating, he worked as a company accountant for three months. Then he was fired for not working on a Friday night. He claimed the promise of Jeremiah 29:11, " 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' " *(NIV)*. He prayed, "God, I know that You have a plan for me."



Months passed, and a hospital hired him as an accountant. But then he learned that he could not become a regular employee unless he was baptized into the denomination that owned the hospital. He resigned.

Rene Tucaldo is chief financial officer of the 1000 Missionary Movement, whose headquarters in Silang, Philippines, were constructed with the help of a 1996 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Read more next week.

Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

Part I: Overview

Key Text: *Colossians 1:15–17*

Study Focus: *Col. 1:15–20*

The Bible says that Jesus has the preeminence in all things *(Col. 1:18)*. But what does that idea mean? Many English versions render the Greek word *prōteuō* as "first place" rather than as "preeminence" *(see, for instance, the NRSV, NASB, CSB, CEB, etc.)*. The verb *prōteuō* occurs only in this passage in the New Testament, suggesting that it was carefully selected for a reason. It emphasizes Jesus' unique and unsurpassed position. The original text implies that Jesus' resurrection grants Him the authority to become Lord of all things: "He is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place** in everything" *(Col. 1:18, NRSV; emphasis added)*. In other words, Jesus was Lord by right; now He becomes Lord in fact! Universal supremacy and sovereignty are the expected results of His victory over death. John the revelator also highlights this notion when affirming that Jesus is "**the firstborn from the dead**, and **the ruler** over the kings of the earth" *(Rev. 1:5, NKJV; emphasis added)*. Jesus' death and resurrection inevitably lead to His rulership over all things.

This week's lesson emphasizes two major themes:

1. Jesus' titles, as presented in Colossians 1:15–20, emphasize His redemptive work on behalf of the human race. He is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn over all creation, the Head of the body, and the Beginning.
2. Jesus came into this world to perform reconciliation between God and humanity, in a particular sense, but also between God and the whole creation, in a broader sense.

Part II: Commentary

Illustration

"A pastor of a church in Boston met a young boy in front of the sanctuary, carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. The pastor inquired, 'Son, where did you get those birds?'

" 'I trapped them out in the field,' the boy replied.

" 'What are you going to do with them?'

" 'I'm going to play with them, and then I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have at home.'

"When the pastor offered to buy them, the lad exclaimed, 'Mister, you don't want them, they're just little old wild birds and can't sing very well.'

"The pastor replied, 'I'll give you two dollars for the cage and the birds.'

" 'Okay, it's a deal, but you're making a bad bargain.'

"The exchange was made, and the boy went away whistling, happy with his shiny coins. The pastor walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire cage, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue.

"The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate Christ's coming to seek and to save those who—like the birds—were destined for destruction. The difference was that Christ had to purchase our freedom with his own life."—Michael P. Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), pp. 297, 298.

As we will see further on, Paul's portrayal of Christ in Colossians 1:15–20 is a poem that extols His role as Creator *(Col. 1:15–17)* and Redeemer *(Col. 1:18–20)*. In these few verses, the story of redemption is told with an incredible economy of words.

Jesus' Titles and His Redemptive Work

Colossians 1:15–20 is a hymn in praise to Christ for His work of redemption. In applying several titles to Jesus, Paul resorts to the Old Testament, so as to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament covenants.

Image of the Invisible God *(Col. 1:15).* The phrase "the image of the invisible God" points to the true humanity of Jesus, thereby referring to His incarnation. The Greek word translated as "image" is *eikōn*, which is frequently used in the biblical record in order to indicate that something is a representation of something else. Thus, for instance, the statue of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:31–3:18 is called *eikōn* various times in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. Obviously, the concept of representation can be traced back to Genesis 1:26, 27, where Adam is referred to as created in the image of God. Jesus came into the world as the Second Adam to represent and reveal God. This idea means that if God the Father had come into the world instead of Jesus, He would have been like Jesus.

The Firstborn Over All Creation *(Col. 1:15)*. All the titles ascribed to Jesus in Colossians 1:15–18 serve to highlight His preeminence, each calling attention to different aspects of His redemptive work. The

title "firstborn over all creation" in Colossians 1:15 *(NKJV)* foreshadows the similar title in Colossians 1:18, "firstborn from the dead," and is related to it. Paul's usage of the term "firstborn" is rooted in the Old Testament. Usually, the title "firstborn over all creation" is interpreted in two ways: (1) it portrays Jesus as ruler over all creation and, hence, His uniqueness and superiority; (2) it portrays Jesus as eternally preexistent and the Creator of all things. After all, "by Him all things were created. . . . All things were created through Him and for Him" *(Col. 1:16, NKJV)*, and "He is before all things" *(Col. 1:17, NKJV)*. It is unnecessary to take one view at the expense of the other, as they complement each other.

The Head of the Body *(Col. 1:18)*. As other metaphors applied to Jesus in the New Testament, the phrase "the head of the body" suggests Jesus' authority over the church but also His tender care for her. Thus, as the Head of the church, Jesus provides for her growth *(Eph. 4:15)* by nourishing her *(Col. 2:19; Eph. 5:29, 30)*. Most important, He saves her *(Eph. 5:23)* because He loves her *(Eph. 5:2, 25)*. In a sense, the metaphor of the Head is quite similar to the image of the Shepherd. As such, Jesus leads the church "to living fountains of waters" *(Rev. 7:17, NKJV)*; knows her and is known by her *(John 10:14)*; and loves her to the point of giving His life for her *(John 10:11, 15)*, with the purpose of granting her eternal life *(John 10:28)*.

The Beginning *(Col. 1:18)*. The image of Jesus as the Beginning of all things is not uncommon in the New Testament. To a greater or lesser degree, all instances of this image build upon Genesis 1:1. Thus, while the initial statement in Matthew 1:1 does not apply the term "beginning," the phrase "book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ" is an allusion to the book of Genesis *(see Gen. 5:1; also Gen. 2:4)*. The Gospel of Mark opens with the statement, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" *(Mark 1:1, NKJV)*, which, for many scholars, is reminiscent of Genesis 1:1. The Gospel of John opens with the statement, "In the beginning was the Word" *(John 1:1, NKJV)*, and continues, "He was in the beginning with God" *(John 1:2, NKJV)*. Similarly, John begins his first letter by alluding to both his Gospel and the book of Genesis *(1 John 1:1)*. Further on, he states, "You have known him who is from the beginning" *(1 John 2:13, 14, NKJV)*. Finally, in the Apocalypse, John ascribes to Jesus the title, "the Beginning of the creation of God" *(Rev. 3:14, NKJV)*. Thus, the title "the beginning" *(Col. 1:18)* points to Jesus' role as our Creator and Redeemer.

Firstborn From the Dead *(Col. 1:18)*. Paul's use of the title "firstborn from the dead" *(Col. 1:18)* is very similar to John's use of the same title in Revelation 1:5, NKJV. Both authors likely have Psalm 89:27 in mind: "I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" *(NKJV)*.

In a sense, Psalm 89 is a sort of commentary on 2 Samuel 7:8–16, which details God's covenant with David. A close reading of Psalm 89, however, will show that, ultimately, the text is talking about One greater than a human figure *(see, for instance, Psalm 89:29, 36)*. The New Testament indicates that Jesus is the eschatological Son of David *(see, for instance, Matt. 1:1)*. When applying the title "firstborn" to Jesus *(Col. 1:18)*, Paul is referring to Him as the fulfillment of God's covenantal promise to David.

Jesus' Work of Reconciliation. All that Jesus did *(Col. 1:15–18)* results in His having the first place in everything *(Col. 1:18)*. According to Paul, Christ is all those things because "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" *(Col. 1:19, ESV)*. In other words, Jesus was fully God at the same time that He was fully man. As such, He fulfilled the prerequisites necessary for reconciling man to God *(Col. 1:20–22)*. In Ephesians 2:14–17, Paul uses reconciliation language in connection with the idea that Jesus came into the world to be our peace *(Eph. 2:14)*, thus both making peace *(Eph. 2:15)* and preaching peace *(Eph. 2:17)*. Not only man but "all of God's creation will be pacified and reconciled, and full harmony will be restored."—Grant R. Osborne, *Colossians & Philemon: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), p. 46.

Part III: Life Application

Meditate upon the following themes. Then ask your students to answer the questions at the end of this section.

In Colossians 1:15–20, Jesus is presented as the exalted Lord of all creation. He is our Lord! Jesus' lordship is based on the fact that He rose from the dead victorious to be our King and Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary. We can trust Him and surrender ourselves to Him completely, trusting that He will restore us to His image. Paul says that God "predestined" us "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" *(Rom. 8:29, NKJV)*.

In Christ, we have the promise of all-inclusive restoration. "Through the blood of His cross," we now have peace with God *(Col. 1:20, NKJV)*. As Isaiah had prophesied centuries ago, Jesus came to be the Prince of Peace *(Isa. 9:6; compare with Eph. 2:14)*. Further on, Isaiah says, "the chastisement for our peace was upon Him" *(Isa. 53:5, NKJV)*. In Romans 5:10, Paul affirms that "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" *(NKJV)*.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus is our Creator and Redeemer. He came into this world and died on the cross to purchase us back to Himself. The One who created us *(John 1:1–3)* is the same One who came in the flesh *(John 1:14)* " 'to give His life as a ransom for many' " *(Matt. 20:28, NKJV)*. Through His death and resurrection, He conquered sin and death and attained the preeminence over all things in heaven and on earth. Thus, because "of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen" *(Rom. 11:36, NKJV)*.

Questions:

1. **What does it mean to be conformed to the image of Jesus? In what practical ways do you see that work of transformation, by God's grace, happening in your life?**

2. **How is Jesus the Lord of your life? What does His preeminence over all things mean for you? How does His preeminence give you hope?**

Notes