

The background of the slide is a sepia-toned, blurred photograph of a church interior. It shows a group of people, likely a congregation, gathered for a service. The focus is soft, with the people appearing as indistinct shapes and colors, creating a sense of a busy, historical scene. The lighting is warm and somewhat dim, typical of an indoor church setting.

The Early Church, Our Church

A seven-week worship series

2. The Centrality and Supremacy of Christ



The Colossians

- Colosse (or Colossae) was a small market town
- Nearest neighbor was Laodicea
- No mention of church in Acts
- Probably evangelized during Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:10)
- Paul is writing from prison (4:18)
- Major concern is heretical teaching that in some way was dethroning Christ
- False teaching was syncretistic in nature (Jewish?, Greek (pagan), & Christian)

Did Jesus really claim to be the eternal “only begotten” Son sent by God the Father?

In our pluralistic world today, on what basis can we claim that Jesus is the exclusive way to God?

How can we affirm the supremacy of Christ in love as we proclaim and live out the gospel of peace?

Dallas Willard, "Being a Christian in a Pluralistic Society"

"Pluralism simply means that social or political force is not to be used to suppress the freedom of thought and expression of any citizen, or even the practice that flows from it, insofar as that practice is not morally wrong.

Pluralism does not mean that everyone is equally right in what they think and do. It does not mean that we must agree with the views or adopt the practices of those of other persuasions. It does not mean that we must like those views or practices. It does not mean that we will not appropriately express our disagreement or dislike for other viewpoints."

“Pluralism should, precisely, secure a social context in which full and free interchange of different views on life and reality can be conducted to the greatest advantage of all. Thin-skinned and narrow-minded people may not particularly enjoy a pluralistic society, but their discomfort is vastly outweighed by the benefits to all of open and free interchange of information and ideas. The Christian, perhaps more than anyone else, has reason to favor such interchange and be confident about its outcome.”

The Identity & Mission of Jesus

- John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world...”
- Matthew 21:33-46 – Parable of the Tenants
- Mark 6:30-44; John 11 – Performed Miracles
- Mark 5:1-20; 9:14-29 – Cast Out Demons
- Mark 4:35-41; 6:45-52 – Power Over Nature
- Matthew 16:16 “You are the Messiah...”
- Luke 5:20:22 “Only God can forgive sins!”
- Matthew 26:63-64 “Are you the Son of God?”
- John 20:28 “My Lord and my God!”

John 10: 24-30 NIV

24 The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

25 Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. **27** My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. **30** I and the Father are one.”

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

Jesus, Gospel of John 8:58

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say.

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 the 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 patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Paul, Colossians 1:15-16 NLT

15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,

16 for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him.

Col 1:17-18 NLT

17 He existed before anything else,
and he holds all creation together.

18 Christ is also the head of the church,
which is his body.

He is the beginning,
supreme over all who rise from the dead.
So he is first in everything.

Col 1:19-20 NLT

19 For God in all his fullness
was pleased to live in Christ,

20 and through him God reconciled
everything to himself.

He made peace with everything in heaven and on
earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

Col 1:21-22 NLT

21 This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions.

22 Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

Col 1:23 NLT

23 But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it.

Col 2:1-3 NLT

1 I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. **2** I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. **3** In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Col 2:4-5 NLT

4 I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. **5** For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.

Col 2:6-7 NLT

6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. **7** Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Col 2:8-10 NLT

8 Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. **9** For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. **10** So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

“Empty Philosophy & High-Sounding Nonsense”

- Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who attempted to reform Judaism. He wasn't God. Early Christians made him divine much later.
- Jesus didn't physically rise from the dead. “Resurrection” is merely a spiritual metaphor.
- Jesus shows us *one* way to God, but he can't be the only way. It is arrogant and rude to say such a thing in our inclusive, tolerant age.

λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ· οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ.

“I (myself) am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Jesus, Gospel of John 14:6

1 John 2:22-25 NLT

22 And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. **23** Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. **24** So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. **25** And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

A sepia-toned, blurred photograph of a church interior. In the foreground, a person is kneeling in prayer, their hands clasped. In the background, a congregation is seated in pews, some looking towards the front. The overall atmosphere is solemn and reverent.

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