

Who's On First? *Colossians 1:15-20*

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello formed a popular comedy team between 1929 and 1957. They were probably best known for their farcical baseball commentary entitled “Who’s on First?” Though that question was asked and answered several times in the course of their little skit, somehow the same question kept popping up: “Who’s on first?” meaning, “What is the name of the man on first base?”

No matter how many times we think we’ve settled the issue, or how firmly we believe it has been established, still the question keeps popping up in our lives: “Who’s on First?” Except in this case we mean, “Who is it that is in first place in my life?” Just about the time we finally decide to fully, completely, surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, and put Him on the throne of our hearts, all of a sudden there occurs in our hearts a mutiny; an attempt is made to put self back on the throne. So the question comes up again, as sharply as ever: “Who’s on First?”

Colossians 1:18 is probably the most beautiful verse in the New Testament which describes the purpose of God in Christ. E. Y. Mullins has called verses 15-20 “the most comprehensive and exhaustive statement of Paul’s estimate of Jesus Christ to be found anywhere in his Epistles.” God’s purpose in His Son was not some mystical, mysterious plan beyond our reach or comprehension. This verse lets us know that God’s plan in Christ was that in everything—absolutely everything—He might have the place of preeminence, that in all things Jesus might be the One who is “on first.”

It is good for us to know, as we read in verse 15, that Jesus is the “*image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*” But how does that affect my life? What difference does it make to me? It is encouraging to read in verse 16 that “*by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.*” But what does all that have to do with *me*?

The thrust of these verses is to tell us in a way we could never forget that Jesus is the One intended by God to be First in our lives, and indeed, in the entire universe. Verse 18 tells us in three different ways why Jesus should be first in our lives. Hear this word from God today as a word to you personally: Why should Jesus be first in *my* life?

1 Jesus should be first in our lives because He is Lord.

Verse 18 begins by stating, “*He is the head of the Body, the church.*” As the Head of the church, Jesus is Lord over the church, in the same way that the head controls the body.

But there is only one way Jesus can become Head of the church, and that is by becoming Head of the lives of the individual members.

Think about your head and its relationship to the rest of your body. If your body is healthy, and the connections are working properly, then your brain, contained in your head, controls everything else your body does. We could not even move our little fingers or lower an eyelid unless the body and the head are working together in perfect cooperation and unity. The same is true in the church, but before us today is the issue of how this all affects our lives as individuals.

Do you know why Jesus should be first in your life? If Jesus is the Head of the Body, that means that we, as the Body, are powerless without Christ. Our heads guide and control our bodies; Jesus as our Head must guide and control us. If Jesus is not Lord in your life, then you can have no guidance, and sometimes your life can get out of control. If Jesus is not the Head of your life, then you cannot properly comprehend the truth about God *or* about yourself. You will not be able to correctly conduct yourself in matters of the Kingdom of God.

We humans take so many functions of our human bodies for granted. We pay little attention to those little details about our bodies until something goes wrong with them. God has created us so that we may be able to get away with ignoring the details for a while. But it doesn't work that way in the spiritual realm. David Noonan quoted in the May 1986 edition of *Reader's Digest*, writes:

“In the end, it is attention to detail that makes all the difference. It's the center fielder's extra two steps to the left, the salesman's memory of names, the lover's phone call, the soldier's clean weapon. It is the thing that separates the winners from the losers, the men from the boys and very often, the living from the dead.”

If you have never paid much attention to the detail of who's on first in your life, who it is who will be the Head of your life, then I want to encourage you to stop maintaining a haphazard kind of spiritual existence, to stop being slipshod in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus should be first in our lives because He is Lord, the Head of the Body.

2 Jesus should be first in our lives because He is Lord.

Verse 18 continues speaking about Jesus: “*He is the beginning.*” Now the Greek word for “beginning” is a word that has a double meaning. **In the first place**, it could refer to something that is first in the sense of time and order, or what is at the top of a list, as in the letter “A” being the beginning of the alphabet.

As the beginning, Jesus should be first in your life in terms of what is most important to you. Stop and think about it carefully: who's on first in your life? What is at the head of your list?

What place have you given God in your Bible Study and prayer? What place have you given God in your worship of Him? What place have you given God in the way you spend your time on Sunday and Wednesday nights? What place have you given God in the stewardship of your possessions? If we were honest, we might have to admit that we have relegated the Lord Jesus Christ to fourth or fifth on the list, when God demands that He be at the beginning, at the head of the list. That is why God's Word proclaims that Jesus is "*the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End*" (Rev 22:13).

Second, this word means first in the sense of being the source from which something comes. Jesus should be first in our lives because He is the Lord, and He is Lord because He is the beginning, the source of our lives. Everything we are we owe to the accomplished work of Jesus Christ. We owe what we are to His glorious victory over death. We owe what we are to His interceding before the throne of the Father in Heaven on our behalf.

Colossians 1:18 is not the only place we see this truth. Paul told the church in Corinth that other people may have many false gods they worship, "*yet for us, there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came, and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live*" (1 Cor. 8:6). Jesus is the Source; He is the very Beginning! Here is a familiar passage: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*" (John 1:1-3). Again, Jesus is the Source; He is the very Beginning!

Have you been born again? Do you know the joy and peace that comes from knowing that the Only One who could forgive you *has* forgiven you? Has your soul been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb of God? If so, then Jesus is the beginning of your new life. He is the source of your spiritual existence. He is the beginning and sustainer of your joy. There is no other. Jesus should be first in our lives because He is Lord.

3 Jesus should be first in our lives because He is Lord.

Again, we see in verse 18 another reason why Jesus should be first in our lives: "*He is the firstborn from among the dead.*" That, too, says that God's purpose in His Son Jesus was that He might be Lord. But Jesus was certainly not the first to ever be raised back to life from the dead. So what does the phrase "*firstborn from among the dead*" actually mean?

The nation of Israel was sometimes called God's "firstborn." For example, when God told Moses to go to Pharaoh to ask that the Hebrew people be set free, He told Moses to say, "*This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son*" (Exodus 4:22). You can find the word about 130 times in the Old Testament in various genealogies and other places, and the idea when the

word “firstborn” is used is that this is a person who has priority in inheritance and in family matters. To put it another way, the firstborn son “outranked” any other children there might be.

That Jesus is the Firstborn of the Father is something we accept almost without question. But we have overlooked what it means when the Bible says that Jesus is the “*firstborn from among the dead.*” Those others who were raised back to life prior to the resurrection of Jesus could never make it possible for anyone after them to know victory over death. Their coming back to life was something which happened *to* them; they had no control over the situation. But Jesus not only worked the victory Himself, He also made it possible for all those who follow Him to know personal victory over death as well! His resurrection marked the beginning of a new relationship between God and man. His resurrection is the down payment which guarantees the resurrection of all those who believe in His Name.

If you have accepted that “down payment” towards your eternal life, then you know in your heart that Jesus is the “*firstborn from among the dead.*” There’s no question in your mind that Jesus is going to provide for you a victory over death, which no one and nothing can take away from you. The question remains, however: “**Who’s on First?**” Who is it that is first in your life? If Jesus is the One who is the firstborn from among the dead, then He is also the One who deserves our absolute and total surrender and allegiance. He is the One Who in God’s plan and purpose should be Lord of your life, even as He has become Lord of the universe.

Maybe you’ve not decided who’s on first in your life. Maybe you’re trying to please everybody, serving God and man. One man stood in the middle of a narrow plank which had been placed across a small, rushing stream. All of a sudden he felt that makeshift bridge begin to give way beneath him. He raised his eyes and arms to the skies and said, “God is good!” as if that would convince God to take care of him. But thinking that he certainly did not want to offend Satan, he added, “And the Devil isn’t bad, either!”

Can you picture yourself standing on that narrow plank? When it comes down to it, that’s where all of us are. Who’s on first in your life?

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the One who should be First. He should be First because He is Lord. **He is the Head of the Body, the Church, and because of that He is Lord. He is the Beginning, and because of that He is Lord. He is the Firstborn from among the dead, and because of that, He is Lord.** The purpose of all this, as we read at the end of verse 18, is “*that in everything He might have the supremacy.*”

That is God’s purpose in creation. It is His purpose also in our lives. So when you get right down to it, when you strip away all the trappings and finery and pretense, who’s really on first in your life?