



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Joy

Presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 44
Issue 1100

Firstborn: Exposing the Myth of Pre-existence

(A Synoptical Examination)

by – Steve Martin, Compilation Editor

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Chapter 5 (of 10): Reinterpreting Colossians – Rank and Exaltation, Not Creation

Colossians 1:15-18 is one of the go-to passages people use to defend the idea that Jesus pre-existed and helped create the universe. But if we slow down and actually look at the words, the context, and the flow of Scripture, something else emerges. Paul isn't talking about Jesus building galaxies before Bethlehem. He's declaring Christ's supreme rank – His exalted position over all creation, a position that God gave to Him as the reward for His faithful obedience, death and resurrection.



This reading not only fits the immediate context, but it also harmonizes with the rest of the Bible, instead of creating contradictions.

The Firstborn of Every Creature (Colossians 1:15).

Paul calls Jesus "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." At first glance, some assume that this means that Jesus was the first being created. But that completely misses how the Bible uses the word "firstborn" (Greek, *prototokos*).

- **Rank, Not Birth Order:** In Jewish thought, "firstborn" is about rank, authority and inheritance – not necessarily about who came first.

- **Israel was God's "firstborn" nation** (Exodus 4:22), though not the first nation to exist.

- **Ephraim was called "firstborn,"** even though he was younger than Manasseh (Jeremiah 31:9).

- **David was the youngest of Jesse's sons,** yet God made him His "firstborn, the highest of the kings of the Earth" (Psalm 89:27).

- **God's Word Choice:** If God wanted Paul to say, "first created," there was a Greek word for that (*protochistos*). He didn't use it. He chose *prototokos*, which speaks of *status*, not order of origin.

- **Clarified by Verse 18:** A few lines later, Paul spells it out: Jesus is the "firstborn from among the

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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dead.” That’s about resurrection and exaltation – NOT about being created long ago.

So Paul’s point is clear: Jesus is not firstborn in time, but firstborn in rank – the one exalted above all others.

“For in Him All Is Created” (Colossians 1:16).

This verse is often mistranslated as “by Him” to suggest that Jesus did the creating. But the Greek word is *en*, meaning “in.”

- **Centered in Christ:** Everything was created in Him – meaning He is the reason and purpose behind creation, not the active builder. God designed everything with Christ in view as the eventual ruler.
- **God Alone as Creator:** The Old Testament is emphatic: Yahweh alone created the Heavens and the Earth (Isaiah 44:24; Psalm 33:6). To sneak in a co-creator contradicts God’s own repeated declarations.
- **What Was Created:** Paul specifies “*thrones, lord-*

ships, sovereignties, authorities.” He’s talking about structures of power – spiritual and earthly – that will one day all bow to Christ. This isn’t about planets and stars – it’s about rule and rank.

“All Is Created Through Him and for Him”

The phrases “*through Him*” and “*for Him*” describe purpose, not participation.

- **Through Him:** God’s plan would unfold through Christ’s obedience, death and resurrection.
- **For Him:** Everything is heading toward Christ as its rightful King.

Think of a kingdom designed for a future king. The king doesn’t lay a single brick, but the entire palace is built with him in mind. Or think of a nursery prepared for a baby. The baby doesn’t help, but everything is created “through” and “for” that child.

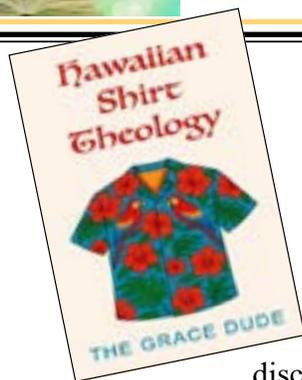
That’s Paul’s meaning. Christ didn’t build creation – but creation was built for Him, with Him as its goal.

“He Is Before All” (Colossians 1:17)

(see [FIRSTBORN](#), last page)



Check out a **NEW BOOK!**



Hawaiian Shirt Theology

by — Steve Martin

Steve Martin – the Grace Dude – wears a Hawaiian shirt every day, not because he lives on the beach (he doesn’t), but because it reminds him of what life is really about: love, joy, grace and freedom.

This isn’t a book about rules, guilt or trying harder. It’s a book about discovering that grace is louder than shame, brighter than fear, and way more fun than religion ever told you it could be. Inside, you’ll find bold reminders that:

- ▶ Grace isn’t “undeserved favor” – it’s joy, delight and freedom.
- ▶ God doesn’t tolerate you – He celebrates you.
- ▶ Love doesn’t come with fine print.
- ▶ You can live in full color, even in hard times.

With a mix of story, humor and unapologetic truth, Steve invites you to trade in the stiff suit of religion for the bright, relaxed, joy-filled shirt of grace. No guilt trips. No fear tactics. Just freedom, love, and maybe a few parrots and hibiscus flowers along the way.

If you’ve ever felt weighed down by religion, pressured to perform, or afraid you don’t measure up – this book is your invitation to breathe again.

Grace isn’t something you earn. It’s something you wear. Boldly. Every day.

The Bloody Truth

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Chapter 15 – The Champion Who Fulfills All

by – Stephen Hill

From the moment sin and death entered the human story, God's promise of a Deliverer was woven into the fabric of Scripture. Every shadow, every symbol, every prophecy pointed forward to One Who would step onto the field – not as a substitute to absorb punishment, but as the Champion who would face our enemies head-on and *win*.



FORESHADOWS IN ISRAEL'S STORY

The history of Israel is rich with portraits of the Messiah to come. David facing Goliath is perhaps the most vivid. The entire army of Israel stood paralyzed, unable to overcome their enemy, until one man stepped forward. David didn't fight as a substitute for the army – he fought as their representative champion. His victory was theirs, because *he was one of them*.

THE EDEN PROMISE

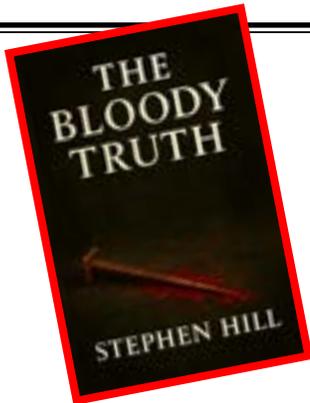
In Genesis 3:15, God speaks of the Seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head. That prophecy is not about a legal settlement; it is about a decisive act of conquest. The serpent would strike the heel of the Champion, but in doing so would seal his own defeat.

Likewise, Christ enters the arena of our mortal condition. He is not an outsider sent in to take a blow for us; He is flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, born of a woman, living in our weakness, facing every temptation we face – and overcoming them all.

From the beginning, the promised victory is framed in terms of combat, not courtroom proceedings. The enemy is not the Father's justice – it is sin and death.

THE NECESSITY OF FULL HUMANITY

For this representation to be genuine, Christ had to be fully human in every respect. Hebrews 2:17 states



The Bloody Truth

(Pre-publication notice)

by — Stephen Hill

Blood runs like a crimson thread through the pages of Scripture – from the first sacrifice in Eden to the death of Christ. But what if its purpose has been misunderstood for centuries? What if blood was never about appeasing a wrathful God, but about healing, cleansing and reversing the curse of sin and death?

The Bloody Truth uncovers one of the Bible's most profound and shocking reversals: that God Himself supplied the antidote to humanity's greatest disease.

Through vivid storytelling and careful attention to Scripture, this book reveals how the sacrifices of old pointed, not to divine anger, but to a divine cure.

It shows why Christ's blood was poured out, not to satisfy vengeance, but to restore life, reconcile creation, and draw us near to God.

This is not another book of theological jargon. It is a bold journey into the heart of God's plan—a plan that overturns human assumptions about punishment, atonement, and the very nature of salvation. If you've ever wrestled with questions about why blood is so central in the Bible, or if you've longed for a picture of God that is consistent with love, justice, and grace, this book will open your eyes to a truth both ancient and revolutionary.

Pre-Publication Sale

✦ *Sin is essentially outside of and alien to human nature. Humanity is not essentially sinful, but subject to sin.* – A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

this clearly, and that means no pre-existence as a celestial being with foreknowledge or immunity from our struggles. If He had walked through life with that kind of advantage, the victory would have been hollow – a foregone conclusion, not a real contest.

By living without sin in the same fragile frame we inhabit, the Man Christ Jesus proved that the human race could, in Him, conquer the greatest enemies.

A TRANSFER OF HEADSHIP

Paul's revelation in I Corinthians 15 cements this truth: "For as in Adam all are dying, so also in Christ shall all be vivified." The comparison is critical. Adam is the first specimen of humanity; Christ is the last Adam. He is not a hybrid of celestial and human – He is the perfected human.

Just as Adam's act affected all who came after him, Christ's act affects all who are in Him. And the same "all" condemned in Adam are saved and made alive in Christ – the Last Adam and the Firstborn from among the dead (Colossians 1:18). This is not a legal imputation; it is a transfer of headship. Our first head brought death; our new Head brings life.

Chapter 15 Key Takeaways

- *From Eden onward, Scripture foreshadowed a Savior, not a substitute.*
- *Israel's stories reveal Christ as the representative Head of a new humanity.*
- *His full humanity secures our inclusion in His triumph.*

TOPICS:

Major: Champion; Death; Sin; Substitution

Minor: Firstborn; Headship; New Humanity

The Bloody Truth

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Chapter 16 – From Estrangement to Embrace

by – Stephen Hill

The blood of Christ is more than a cure for sin and death; it is the means by which God closes the distance between Himself and His creation. The antidote doesn't just cleanse – it draws near.

through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them ...

CONCILIATION: GOD'S MOVE TOWARD US

In II Corinthians 5:18-19, Paul explains:

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself

Conciliation is God's action to remove hostility and repair a damaged relationship. It is one-sided in its initiation – God moves first. The estrangement between God and man is not something we bridge by choice or effort; it is something God resolves by His Own will and action.



No Equals!

Reasons Why Our Heavenly Father Has NO Equals or Co-Equals, & Why "the Holy Spirit" Is Not a "Person" Separate from the Only True God, the Father

by — Christian Educational Services

Two powerful titles in one book, both exposing the critical error of the traditional orthodox position of the Trinity. This very simple and clear presentation is a must-read.

This is critical: the Father did not need to be persuaded to love us. He has always been propitious toward His creation. The barrier was on our side – sin and death had warped our perception and chained us to alienation. Christ's sacrifice is the decisive act that breaks those chains, and His resurrection is the proof of power in which our glorious expectation is now based.

RECONCILIATION: MUTUAL RESTORATION

Once conciliation is complete – once God has acted to remove the hostility – reconciliation can occur. This is the two-sided restoration, where both parties are brought into unity.

The sequence matters: conciliation happens first, reconciliation follows. And both are rooted in the same act – the shedding of Christ's blood.

NO ROOM FOR PUNITIVE THEORIES

Penal substitutionary atonement collapses both concepts into a crude transaction, imagining the Father's wrath being satisfied by punishment. But Paul's language is relational, not transactional. God is not a judge appeased by a payment – He is a Father Who removes enmity and restores His family.

If the antidote were about paying off a penalty, it could have been done without full humanity, without a life of temptation, without decades of obedience. But conciliation required more – it required a Champion Who truly stood among us, living our life without sin, and then pouring out His life to bring us home.

THE COSMIC SCOPE

Reconciliation's scope is breathtaking. It is not limited to human believers – it extends to all beings throughout the entire Universe. The Adversary, the spiritual principalities, the estranged celestial hosts – every sphere of creation is touched by this peace-making act.

Through the blood of the cross, the human Hero secures a future where every knee bows and every tongue confesses His lordship – not in fear, but in awe-struck recognition of the love that overcame all.

THE EMBRACE THAT AWAITS

The antidote heals, conciliation removes the dis-

tance, and reconciliation brings the embrace. This is where the story is headed – not to a divided eternity, but to a universe gathered together under the headship of Christ.

In the Champion, the cure is complete. The enemies are defeated. The estrangement is over. And the embrace is certain.

Chapter 16 Key Takeaways

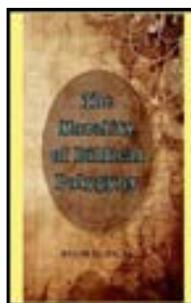
- ▶ *Conciliation is God's act to remove estrangement; reconciliation follows.*
- ▶ *The cross shows God moving toward us, not against us.*
- ▶ *The end goal is not division, but the Father's full embrace of creation.*

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: Antidote; Conciliation; Substitution

Minor: Blood; Champion; Love



The Morality of Biblical Polygyny

by – William F. Luck, Sr.

This is an amazing, courageous, contemporary work. William Luck is the son of Moody Bible Institute's Dr. G. Coleman Luck, Sr., Chairman of the Department of Theology, and a capable biblical scholar in his own right.

"God didn't ask me my opinion about the issue. He expected me to represent His. I've tried. If you can prove I'm mistaken, I'll be the first to thank you. But I'm not holding my breath in the meanwhile." – the Author, from the Introduction

"To date [over twenty years after its original publication], I find the arguments 'pro' quite superior to those 'con.'" – the Author, from the Conclusion

- The Background
- Laws That Imply the Moral Propriety of Polygyny
- Passages That Appear To Prohibit Polygyny
- The Association of Polygyny with Other Evils
- Alleged Prohibitions of Polygyny
- The Implications of "Adultery" in the "Vice Lists"
- Questions Concerning the Possibility of Moral Polygyny

The Bloody Truth

Chapter 17 – Once for All

by – Stephen Hill

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

The sacrifices of Israel's priests were never-ending. Day after day, year after year, the altar ran red. Each animal offered bought another brief reprieve from ritual impurity, another temporary shield from the consequences of sin. But the shadow could not last forever – only the substance could end the cycle.

THE ENDLESS SHADOW

Hebrews 10:11 describes it plainly:

Every priest, indeed, stands daily doing the service and offering often the same sacrifices, which never are able to take away sins ...

Those sacrifices worked like patching an old roof in a storm – water still got in, and the repairs had to be repeated.

They were never meant to solve the problem, only to point toward the One Who would.

THE SINGLE, PERFECT OFFERING

The perfect Lamb's sacrifice is not one more link in an endless chain. It is the final act – the cure that never needs repeating. Once His blood was poured out, the antidote was complete. No further payment, no ritual repetition, no supplement is required.

This is why Hebrews 9:26-28 stresses that Christ did not need to suffer repeatedly. He “*was manifested once, for the repudiation of sin through His sacrifice,*” and “*will be seen a second time ... apart from sin, to those awaiting Him.*”

THE PERMANENCE OF THE CURE

If the blood of Christ is the antidote, then the cure is permanent. You don't need to be “re-dosed” every time you falter. You don't fall in and out of God's fa-

vor with every success or failure. The cure is written into your very identity, secured by the perfect Human's own life.

This reality is liberating. It frees you from fear-driven religion and calls you into grateful trust. You don't strive to earn God's approval – you live in the light of the approval He has already secured for you in His Son.

LIVING IN THE “ONCE”

The once-for-all nature of Christ's offering should shape how we see ourselves and how we see others. If His blood was enough for you, it was enough for them. If His work cannot be undone in your case, it cannot be undone in theirs.

Our Champion didn't simply win the victory – He ended the war. The battlefield may still echo with skirmishes, but the outcome is sealed.

UNTIL HE APPEARS AGAIN

Now we wait – not for the cure, but for its full unveiling. The day is coming when what is true in spirit will be seen in fullness, when the antidote's effect is visible in every corner of creation. Until then, we walk in the confidence of a finished work, trusting the One Who gave His life to make it so. **BSN**

Chapter 17 Key Takeaways

- *Old sacrifices had to be repeated endlessly.*
- *Christ's blood applied the permanent cure, once for all.*
- *The outcome is secure, and the war is over.*

TOPICS:

Major: Antidote; Blood; Offering; Sacrifice; Substitution
Minor: Sin; Victory

FIRSTBORN (continued from page 9225)

This is another phrase that sounds like pre-existence. But “before” can mean rank, not time.

- A general is “before” a private. A boss is “before” an employee. It’s about status.
- The whole context of Colossians 1 is supremacy, not chronology. Jesus is first in rank, not first in existence.

“In Him All Things Hold Together”

Some take this to mean that Jesus literally keeps atoms from flying apart. But Paul’s point is about meaning and purpose, not physics.

- Creation finds its harmony, cohesion and purpose in Christ. He’s the conductor who brings God’s composition into unity.
- If Jesus literally held the Universe together, what happened during the three days He was dead? Did everything fall apart? Of course not. God Himself is the sustainer of life (Nehemiah 9:6). Christ holds things together by giving them their destiny and direction.

The Big Picture: Exaltation, Not Pre-existence

Colossians 1 isn’t about a pre-existent being helping God create. It’s about God rewarding the man Christ Jesus – resurrected and glorified – with supreme rank.

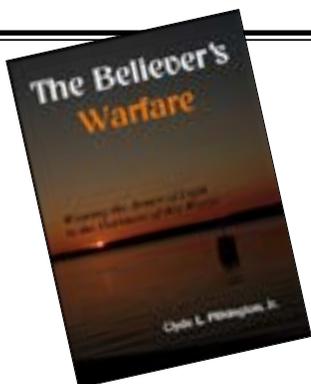
- **Reward, Not Return:** Philippians 2:9 says that God “highly exalted Him.” That exaltation was new. It wasn’t a return to some prior state.
- **Head of the New Creation:** Jesus is the “First-born” from the dead, the “Head” of the body, the Leader of God’s new humanity.
- **Coherent with All Scripture:** This understanding makes Colossians fit perfectly with Matthew’s “genesis of Jesus Christ” (Matthew 1:1), Luke’s account of His conception, and the Old Testament’s unshakable claim that God alone created all things.

Colossians 1 is not proof of pre-existence. It’s proof of exaltation – the crowning of the faithful man Jesus as Lord of all. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Colossians 1:15-18; Firstborn; God; Christ, Preexistence of
Minor: Christ’s Faith; Exaltation; Resurrection

NO TRUTH IS
EVER RECOVERED
FROM THE WORD
WITHOUT PERSISTENT
OPPOSITION ON THE PART
OF THOSE WHO THINK THAT
WHAT THEY BELIEVE
IS “TRUTH.”
– A.E. KNOCH (1874-1965)



The Believer's Warfare

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The believer is in the middle of an ancient spiritual warfare that is as old as mankind. The battle itself, although intense, is not complicated. It is not a process of spiritual hoop-jumping. Indeed it is simple. *The Believer's Warfare* surveys a few key passages of Scripture to reveal God’s sure plan of victory in the life of His saints.

“I have really enjoyed *The Believer's Warfare*. For years I have struggled with my walk with Christ, bouncing ‘in and out of fellowship’; using some human effort to try and control the flesh. It seems as though I still have a lot of legalistic and guilt-ridden programming in my brain.” – **OH**