

Colossians 1:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Analysis

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. The preposition en (ἐν, "in") indicates Christ as the sphere or agent of creation; dia (διά, "through") in some translations emphasizes mediation. Either reading affirms Christ's creative role, fulfilling Old Testament Wisdom personified (Proverbs 8:22-31).

"All things" (ta panta, τὰ πάντα) appears emphatically—nothing exists outside Christ's creative work. The comprehensive list spans "heaven and earth, visible and invisible," including spiritual hierarchies: thrones, dominions, principalities, powers. The Colossian heretics apparently taught worship of angelic beings; Paul declares Christ created these beings, eliminating any basis for angel worship. Created beings cannot mediate between God and man when Christ, their Creator, performs this role.

"All things were created by him, and for him" (ta panta di' autou kai eis auton ektistai, τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτισται) reveals Christ as both agent and goal of creation. The universe exists for His glory, not ours; He is creation's purpose and destiny. This cosmic Christology demolishes any system that marginalizes Christ or treats Him as one being among many.

Historical Context

Jewish monotheism strictly opposed worshiping created beings, yet Hellenistic Judaism sometimes speculated about angelic intermediaries. Greco-Roman paganism populated the cosmos with various divine and semi-divine entities. The Colossian syncretism apparently blended these ideas, creating a complex spiritual hierarchy that diminished Christ's uniqueness. Paul's response is unambiguous: Christ created every spiritual being and therefore infinitely surpasses them all.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing Christ as Creator of all things—including angels— affect your view of spiritual warfare and authority?
2. In what ways do modern Christians subtly diminish Christ by elevating other spiritual interests (angels, experiences, techniques)?
3. How should the truth that all things were created 'for Him' reorient your life's purpose and priorities?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι ἐν αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· τὰ πάντα τὰ ἐν τοῖς
For by him created G3588 all things G3588 by G3588
G3754 G1722 G846 G2936 G3956 G3588 G1722 G3588

οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ
heaven and G3588 that are in G3588 earth G3588 visible and G3588
G3772 G2532 G1909 G1093 G3707 G2532

ἀόρατα εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ
invisible or they be thrones or dominions or principalities
G517 G1535 G2362 G1535 G2963 G1535 G746

εἴτε ἔξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτὸν καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν
or powers G3588 all things by him and for him
G1535 G1849 G3956 G1223 G846 G2532 G1519 G846

ἔκτισται·
created G2936

Additional Cross-References

Romans 11:36 (Parallel theme): For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

John 1:3 (Creation): All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

1 Corinthians 8:6 (Parallel theme): But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Hebrews 2:10 (Parallel theme): For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

1 Chronicles 29:11 (Parallel theme): Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven

and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Hebrews 1:2 (Creation): Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Ephesians 1:10 (Parallel theme): That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

Isaiah 44:24 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Proverbs 16:4 (Creation): The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Colossians 1:15 (Parallel theme): Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

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