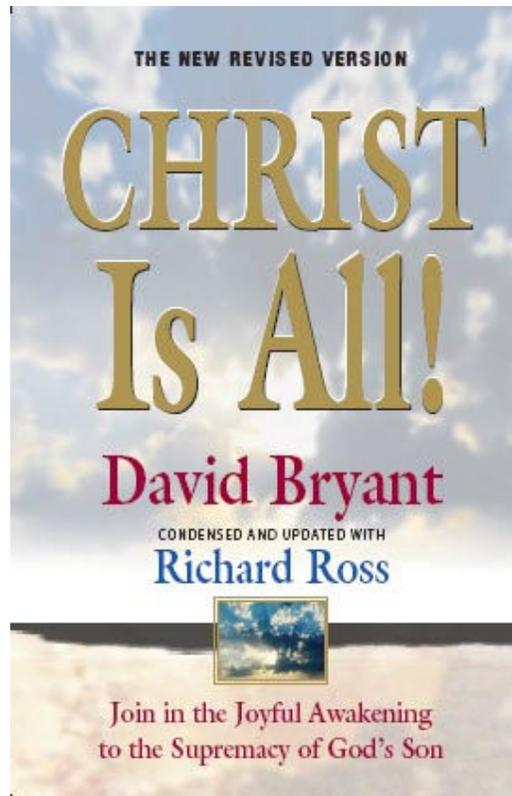


# **This material is designed to help you introduce a special distribution of**



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## **Jesus Christ: Meet Him Again, for the First Time!**

**A one-session teaching outline on Colossians  
to help prepare a class, small group, or entire congregation  
for the distribution and study of the newly revised version of *Christ Is All!***

**NOTE:** The following pages make a number of suggestions on how to develop a single message on the supremacy of Christ, drawn from Paul's letter to the Colossians. The presentation is designed to help leaders introduce everyone in attendance to a special distribution of David Bryant's newly condensed, revised and updated *Christ Is All!* (CIA).

Obviously, there's more material here than can be effectively incorporated into one presentation. Some of it simply provides background and commentary. Feel free to pick and choose what is finally shared in your session.

This message from Colossians might be given to a Sunday school class, a home Bible study group, or an entire congregation on a Sunday morning. Whatever the setting, presenting its truths about Christ's supremacy will help listeners appreciate the opportunity CIA offers them to "meet Jesus Christ again, for the first time."

To pastors or teachers: When preparing your talk or sermon, you may find it helpful to skim through the book to familiarize yourself with its major themes (all of which are touched on in this outline). You also might want to read the whole of chapter one, which provides an overview of the themes.

# Jesus Christ: Meet Him Again for the First Time!

[suggested message title]

## Texts used in the teaching:

Colossians 1:15-20; 1:23-29; 3:1-4; 3:15-17; conclude with 3:11

## MESSAGE OUTLINE

Meet Him again for the first time!

What is the greatest crisis facing many Christians today?

How did Colossian Christians face the same kind of crisis?

What does a “Christ Awakening” involve?

Reintroduces us to Christ as the *focus* of God’s person

Reintroduces us to Christ as the *fulfillment* of God’s purposes

Reintroduces us to Christ as the *fullness* of God’s promises

Reintroduces us to Christ as the *fervency* of God’s people

How do *we* need to see and speak of God’s Son in new ways?

How one little book can help reintroduce us to Christ for all He is?

It’s time to consume Christ and be consumed with Him!

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## Meet Him again for the first time!

[suggested introduction]

When they saw sales dropping off, a leading U.S. cereal company championed their primary product, available in grocery stores everywhere for over one hundred years, with a catchy new slogan. It was designed to challenge consumers to reevaluate what many had taken for granted. The challenge caught on and sent sales through the roof:

“KELLOGG’S CORNFLAKES: Taste them again, for the first time!”

Not to be trite, but many of us sitting here today may need to be similarly called back to where we started—back to the Centerpiece of our faith, the Savior so familiar to us who may have for all practical purposes been relegated more to the fringes of our lives. A slogan for such a spiritual campaign might go like this:

“JESUS CHRIST: Meet Him again, for the first time!”

Actually, that is the title of the study today. At the end you will receive a gift to help you turn this message into a life-changing experience in your walk with the Lord Jesus.

## What is the greatest crisis facing many Christians today?

[suggested ways to present the issue]

*We are facing an emergency.* It is a crisis *inside* our churches. As a number of chapters in a new book titled *Christ Is All!* documents, a host of believers are already caught in its grip. Some call it a “crisis of Christology.” The author, David Bryant, calls it a *crisis of supremacy*. Either way, it signals a serious *shortfall* in how we see, seek, and speak about Christ for all He is. For many believers, it feels like an aching absence of the dynamic relationship with the Lord Jesus we thought the Scriptures promised us—like a forfeiture of the holy, happy hope in Jesus and His Kingdom we thought we were meant to have.

To be blunt, many of us as Christians need to see God’s Son in fresh, new ways, to once again experience the wonder of His glory and greatness, to be reintroduced to God’s Son again in the fullness of who He is right now,

ruling from the throne of heaven. As we do, we may feel as if it were happening to us for the first time because of how far from the true nature of His supremacy we have wandered.

*Listen to what some leaders are telling us about this crisis.* Addressing readers of *Christianity Today*, the evangelical Anglican theologian John R. W. Stott urged them to confront actively all “fuzzy, fallow thinking about our Savior” by insisting on, at every turn, “the *uniqueness* of Jesus (he has no competitors) and his *finality* (he has no successors) because nobody else has his qualifications.”

Dr. Timothy George, dean of Beeson School of Theology, warns, “The erosion of Christ-centered faith threatens to undermine the identity of evangelical Christianity. Real revival and genuine reformation will not be built on flimsy foundations.”

In his book *American Jesus*, Stephen Prothero of Boston University observes: “In the United States, Jesus is widely hailed as the ‘King of kings.’ But it is a strange sort of sovereign who is so slavishly responsive to his subjects. . . . The American Jesus is more a pawn than a king, pushed around in a complex game of cultural (and countercultural) chess, sacrificed here for this cause and there for another.”

Former Dallas Seminary president, Dr. Charles Swindoll, identifies the crisis another way in his book *The Grace Awakening*. He suggests that the greatest heresy shadowing the evangelical movement may be our overemphasis on what we should be doing for God rather than on what God has done and is getting ready to do for us in Jesus Christ.

Premiere reformed theologian, Dr. J. I. Packer, has likened the modern Church’s vision of Christ to “Humpty-Dumpty”—broken into a hundred fragments! Everyone has a piece of the truth of who He is. But few are trying to put all the pieces back together so as to give God’s people a comprehensive message about His Son, to reintroduce them to Christ for all He is, a vision sufficient to revitalize congregations and their mission to the world.

### **How did Colossian Christians face the same kind of crisis?** [suggested background points]

The little church in Colossae was caught in a crisis of supremacy! False teachers were attacking their vision of Christ, each insisting that the Savior was not sufficient for all their spiritual needs. By implication, however, this meant He was not supreme; He was not “all” for them.

Today we might call some of these troublemakers *Gnostics*. They boasted deeper spiritual mysteries that might start to unfold with Christ but extend far beyond Christ to higher forces and powers. Others were known as *Judaizers* who taught that it was good to come to Christ but that there were many prior steps to be taken in keeping the law of Moses before Christ would do them any good. Both teachings called into question various aspects of Jesus’ lordship over all things. In both cases Paul knew the Colossians believers must hold to the grand themes he explores in this little letter, doing so without compromise in order to confront and replace these destructive teachings.

Throughout Colossians, Paul presents a compelling vision of the person of Christ. His snapshots of the reigning Jesus were posted to give these new Christians (and us) increased assurance that everything the Father had prepared for His people could be found, in totality, in His dear Son. Christ was sufficient. He was enough. He was supreme (1:18). He was all (3:11).

As Colossians confirms, when God’s full glory is finally revealed in the consummation of everything, we will discover to our great joy that all Divine magnificence dwelt in Jesus all along. In fact, Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:4: “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (NIV). The glory for which we hope is inherent in the Son *now*. That’s what makes Him our “all in all” *right now!*

The implications of the Colossian vision are absolutely thrilling. Christ Himself at this moment encompasses the *future* of God’s triumphs. Furthermore, He does so as He comes among us, ministering to us foretastes of ultimate victories. What He will be Lord of *ultimately*, He is Lord of *already*. Ten thousand years from today, who He is as

the Son of God—as well as where He leads, what He imparts, and what He receives—will remain exactly the same as it is today. His glory will be no different at *that* point from what is true of our Savior at *this* point.

Accordingly, as Colossians 1:18 claims, supremacy belongs to Him alone. Nor does this supremacy develop in degrees or go through stages. For our Lord, His supremacy displays a sovereignty and sufficiency without exceptions and without parallel. He is our all *now* because He is all supreme *now*. That makes Him our one great hope—*now*—just as fully as He will be at the end. To our happy surprise the everlasting destination of our lives throughout all ages to come is linked inseparably to the Person who actively reigns in our lives *today*. (Consider Phillips’ paraphrase for Paul’s message in Colossians 1:27: “Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come”)

Thus, the apostle exclaims in Colossians 1: “We proclaim *Him*” (v. 28). Heralding Christ to *Christians*, as God’s all-encompassing hope for them, was Paul’s priority ministry with believers everywhere (in vv. 24-26 he calls it his “commission”). Of one thing he was convinced: The strongest evidence Christians could provide to show they had thoroughly engaged with Christ as Lord of all was the prevalence in their hearts of *an abounding hope* toward Him (see also Rom. 15:13). From the outset, Paul preached hope in Christ not only to pagans but also to every *Christian* he met (as his other epistles verify). In fact, Colossians 1:23-25 suggests that doing so with fellow believers held highest priority for him, especially for the church in Colossae. Nothing was more important than *reintroducing* them to Christ for ALL He is!

He wanted believers to become *complete* in Christ (v. 28). To paraphrase his claim in Colossians 1:28: “Him we proclaim, teaching every person and warning every person, that we might present every person complete in Christ”. What did that mean? Paul realized that for Christians to impact their cities and their world for the Kingdom, they must be fully engaged with the Lord of their lives in the light of His increasing reign. No mission to the nations could be *completed*, he knew, unless those sent to the nations were themselves, first of all, *completed*—in Christ.

Primarily Christians become complete (or mature) to the degree they are possessed of (and obedient to) a comprehensive vision of Christ and His supremacy, with eyes fixed on the glorious destiny He offers them (v. 27). Whenever convictions concerning Christ’s preeminence produce in Christians eager expectations for Kingdom advance, along with the passion to pursue that agenda, those disciples have become “complete in Christ.” They aren’t perfect, or sinless, or infallible, but they are *complete*.

Paul concludes Colossians 1 by rejoicing in how the Spirit energized him daily for this one specific objective: to bring believers to a decisive devotion to their reigning, active, redeeming, triumphant King (v. 29). The same joy can be ours, as well.

*One last point on background:* Scholars believe this congregation may have been the smallest of all those documented in the New Testament. Why? Because the town of Colossae had the smallest population of any town where we know a church was planted; so the congregation was probably few in number. And yet, most agree, Colossians paints the grandest portrait of the majesty, centrality, and supremacy of God’s Son found anywhere in Scripture. What does this tell us? Simply this:

**NOTE:** As far as Paul was concerned, the impact of a church in advancing Christ’s Kingdom was not dependent on the size of their *membership* but rather on the size of their *vision* of the One ruling over them and moving among them as the Head of the church. Not the size of the numbers but the size of the vision.

This is the challenge and the hope set before every congregation today. The book *Christ Is All!* defines this *Christ Awakening* as “*God’s Spirit using God’s Word to reintroduce God’s people to God’s Son for all He is.*” Nothing could be more strategic or more filled with promise for Christ’s global cause than this: for believers to experience a genuine, God-given, sustained Christ Awakening movement in their midst. In other words, to meet Him again, in a way that may almost feel like the first time they met Him. Accounts of mighty revivals in Scripture and church history assure us, the impact of this Christological revolution will be felt not only right where we live but also beyond us, even to the ends of the earth.

## What does a Christ Awakening involve for believers?

[suggested insights to share from Colossians as a quick overview]

1. **It reintroduces us to Christ as the FOCUS of God's person.** Summarize a few key insights from Colossians 1:15-18 (image of God/ Source and Sustainer of creation/beginning of the new creation by the resurrection/the Father wants the Son to have all supremacy and preeminence—the ultimate focus).
2. **It reintroduces us to Christ as the FULFILLMENT of God's purposes.** Summarize a few key insights from Colossians 1:19-20 and 3:1-4. (His cross reconciles all things, in heaven and earth, back to the Father. He is reigning right now. One day He will return in glory to bring everything to Consummation. This will fulfill God's purpose for each of us as we appear with Him in glory.)
3. **It reintroduces us to Christ as the FULLNESS of God's promises.** Summarize a few key insights from Colossians 1:23-27 and again from 3:1-4. (He embodies the riches God has for us. Christ, the supreme Son, dwells in the midst of God's people. Christ is our assurance of even more glorious things to come. Our life is hidden with Christ in God; thus all the promises of God are assured to us because of our union with Him.)
4. **It reintroduces us to Christ as the FERVENCY of God's people.** Summarize a few key insights from Colossians 3:16-18. (Actively and constantly, Christians must share with one another the word of who Christ is and of all He is in His supremacy so that this vision saturates our life together. Then we must seek to worship the living God in light of that vision, offering praise that is shaped by the glory of Christ. Finally, we should transform every aspect of our discipleship so that all we say and do is done for the name, fame, reign of God's Son. In other words, fervency for Christ in *word, worship, and walk.*)
5. **Paul summarizes this radical vision of the supremacy of God's Son with three little words in Colossians 3:11: *Christ is all!*** ("All" means He is fully sufficient. "All" means He is both the center and the circumference of our lives because God has nothing for us beyond who Jesus is in the full extent of His supremacy. "All" means we need look nowhere else to find the ultimate focus of God's person, the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes, the ultimate fullness of God's promises, and the ultimate fervency from God's people.)

**NOTE AGAIN:** What we find in our study of Colossians is that, as far as Paul was concerned, the impact of a church in the advance of Christ's Kingdom was not dependent on the size of its *membership* but rather on the size of its *vision* of the One ruling over them, moving among them and reigning through them as the Head of the church. Again: Not the size of its membership but the size of its vision.

## How do we also need to see and speak of God's Son in new ways?

[suggested observations]

Megachurch pastor Rick Warren has introduced into Christian vernacular the helpful phrase "the purpose-driven church" and "the purpose-driven life" (selling over 20 million books on the topic). These are great concepts! But let's ask: How many of us have discovered, first of all, what it means to be *Person-driven* in our churches and lives?

In other words, how many of us are drawn into the prior issue, a passion for the *person* of the supreme, sovereign, and all-sufficient Son of God for whom the *purpose* for our churches and our lives exists?

*Let's ask this in some other ways:* How many of us possess a deepening sense of the imminent Consummation of all things in Christ, in which we have a strategic part? Do we long to be a part of a movement toward the glorious climax of history in Him? Do we sense that we're on a mission that even now tastes of the powers of the age to come because Jesus Christ is in our midst? Who among us ties our true destiny directly to the hour when heaven and earth will be "summed up" in God's all-consuming Son (Eph. 1; Col. 1)? And how often do we Christians ever share such a vision among ourselves?

*Let's be candid:* When all is said and done, evangelicals may not be the *Person-driven* people we thought we were. For example: How many of us follow Jesus daily with the exciting conviction that what He will be Lord of *ultimately* He is Lord of *even now*; that every believer is being led by Him in triumphal procession today toward the

Grand Finale over which He will fully triumph at the end? How often do we *say so* to one another, and with boldness?

Do we not talk *around* Jesus more than we talk *about* Him?

Tragically, for multitudes of Christians there appears to be little of a compelling, *Person-driven* core to their sense of God's purpose. Motivation based on Christ for ALL that He is remains marginal. Relatively few of us are propelled with a hope and passion worthy of God's Firstborn, ignited by Scripture's teachings on His lordship in everything. Instead, far too often we find ourselves stumbling over His supremacy.

Mostly we talk *around* Jesus more than we talk *about* Him!

Without a doubt, Christ fulfills our everlasting future. He embodies our blessed hope. He provides the guarantee for all we could ever become or do for God. And He offers to be this for us in Himself alone (1 Tim. 1; Titus 2). But I ask you: Is this normally, consistently, how we talk about Him with one another? In other words, are we *driven* by this Person and the promises He encompasses? Do we find it impossible to be silent about Him, most of all with believers?

What if the Savior whom Christians bank on appears, instead, to be almost the opposite? *What if* He usually *seems* to be indifferent to securing meaningful solutions for the struggles of our lives? What if He *comes across* to us as offering little immediate hope for broken relationships, or financially besieged families, or bungled battles with addictions, or our beaten-up sense of self-worth, or the breathless busting of our churchly activities, or the moral bankruptcy of our communities? What if the Jesus we call Lord is frequently *perceived* as incapably involved with us when we are drowning in dark moments of despair? Why would we want to make Him a major topic of conversation when we gather together? Why would we rather not talk around Him instead of about Him?

Is our most pressing spiritual ambition simply to "flee from the wrath to come" (Luke 3:7, NASB)? Or is it much more? Is it also to seek the glory of the One who is to come (1 Thess. 1)? If mostly the former, then why should we be surprised that Sunday schools, for example, are far more intent on discussing biblical solutions to day-to-day survival issues than exposing students to the successes of a Sovereign who right now is saturating the nations with the triumphs of His grace?

### **How one little book can help reintroduce us to Christ for all He is?**

[suggested approach to introduce the distribution of *Christ is All!*]

That's why, starting today, we're going to begin a new adventure together as a congregation (or small group, or Sunday school class, etc.).

When you leave, you'll receive a little book, made up of 25 chapters, titled ***Christ Is All! Join in a Joyful Awakening to the Supremacy of God's Son.*** The leaders of our church purchased copies for every one of us because they believe it provides a great way to get reacquainted with our Savior and Lord. You'll see by the endorsements on the back that many others feel the same way.

*Now there are two ways you can use the book:* (1) Read it on your own. Take the next month, if you like. There are 25 chapters, plus an important *Foreword* you need to read to understand what the book offers you, and an *Afterword* that is the perfect way to climax your monthlong journey. The chapters are short so you could read one a day. One chapter requires less than ten minutes to read. In addition, there's a suggested brief Bible passage at the end of each chapter you also might want to look up before you're done. This entire experience might require as much as 15 minutes a day.

After a month of thinking through the themes of ***Christ Is All!*** then ask yourself: In the course of these weeks do I feel as if I've met the Lord Jesus again? Do I see more dimensions of His majesty and supremacy? Does this vision feel powerful enough that it's almost as if I'm meeting him for the first time? I'd like you to share with me personally what you conclude. Would you do that for me when the month is up?

(2) Some of you might want to form a small group to study the book. If so, there's a Web site where you can download for free a small-group discussion guide to implement a five-week study (or a five-week Sunday school class) of *Christ Is All!* That's a great way to unpack the rich insights of this book in a *shared* encounter with God's Son for all He is. If you're interested in this approach, let me know, and I'll help you get linked up with others who want to take the five-week journey with you.

Also, you'll be glad to know that at the same Web site there are other free materials to download, such as a one-month devotional on the person of Christ, that can help you continue your journey after you finish this little book.

### **It's time to consume Christ and be consumed with Him!** [suggested closing for the message on Colossians]

In *The Silver Chair* (one volume in C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*), a dreadfully thirsty little girl named Jill finds herself desperate to drink from a stream of water. Unfortunately, it is guarded by a fearsome-looking lion named Aslan (the Christ figure in the Narnia series). Lewis describes how, overcome by thirst, "she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first." Jill asks and receives permission from him to come and drink. The lion's voice frightens her so much, however, that she wavers over risking another step toward the stream.

"Will you promise not to do anything to me, if I do come?"

"I make no promise," said the Lion. . . .

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. . . .

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion. "There is no other stream."

It was the worst thing she had ever had to do, but she went forward.

With this incident Lewis illustrates the tension all Christians should feel about their relationship with God's Son.

On the one hand, around Christ flows a river of blessing filled with the riches of His Kingdom. It is sufficient to quench our deepest thirsts as well as satisfy the pervasive longings of a whole creation. Christians are invited to drink with abandon, to consume without hesitation all He promises us. Yet we do so knowing this: Christ will also consume *us* with Himself in the process. This is the ultimate transaction held out to everyone in the gospel. This is what Lewis understood so well: God calls us both to consume Christ (never to cease feeding upon the wealth of power and riches in His Kingdom) and to be consumed with Him (like the fiery bush Moses witnessed as it was consumed with the flames of God's glory yet able to keep on burning).

As you walk out today with your own copy of *Christ Is All!*, be prepared for the possibility you soon may experience a Spirit-given, personal encounter with the King of glory that feels a little bit like Jill's with Aslan. It's the one new adventure that every one of us in this congregation (group, class) needs to pursue at this hour. Above everything else, we need to consume more of Christ for who He really is and more fully to be consumed by the glory and reality of His supremacy.

**Remember:** Colossians teaches us that the impact of a church in advancing Christ's Kingdom is not dependent on the size of our *membership* but rather on the size of our *vision* of the One ruling over us and moving among us as the Head of the church. That's why we need to discover afresh how truly Christ *is* ALL for *all* of us.