

What does it mean “Jesus is the firstborn of all Creation?”

When Paul writes to the church of Colossae, He refers to Jesus with the title as “the firstborn of all creation.”

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (Greek: **prōtotokos**) of all creation. (Col 1:15)

What is Paul stating about Jesus? Is this in regard to birth order – that He was created before Adam or before anything? Or is Paul speaking about Jesus’ prominence or both?

The Greek term for “firstborn” is “prōtotokos,” and it is used eight times in the New Testament.

“Prōtotokos,” when used in the context of a child of human beings, is understood in the literal sense and referring to birth order as the first to be born.

And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son (**prōtotokos**); and he called His name Jesus. (Matt 1:24-25)

And she gave birth to her firstborn son (**prōtotokos**); and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) would not touch them. (Heb 11:28)

When used in the context of God’s Son, “prōtotokos,” takes on the literal sense, as God’s first born Son in the flesh with all of the entitlements of the firstborn son, and the figurative sense, as pre-existent and not a product of Creation.

For to which of the angels did He ever say,

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You”?

And again,

“I will be a Father to Him
And He shall be a Son to Me”?

And when He again brings the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) into the world, He says,

“And let all the angels of God worship Him.”

And of the angels He says,

“Who makes His angels winds,
And His ministers a flame of fire.”

But of the Son He says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness above Your companions.”

And,

“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the works of Your hands;
They will perish, but You remain;
And they all will become old like a garment,
And like a mantle You will roll them up;
Like a garment they will also be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end.”

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But to which of the angels has He ever said,
“Sit at My right hand,
Until I make Your enemies
A footstool for Your feet”? (Heb 1:5-13)

When human beings refer to Jesus Christ as “prōtotokos,” it is a title of honor, in recognition of His supreme rank among beings: preexisting and mediating Creation, incarnate on earth, and, after His death and resurrection, glorified and enthroned.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Col 1:15-18)

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) among many brethren; (Rom 8:29)

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood, (Rev 1:5)

Paul’s statement to the church of Colossae (Col 1:15) is a syllogism and makes the case for Jesus’ preeminent position which qualifies Him as the mediator of salvation.

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15).

Jesus Christ preexisted and mediated Creation (Col 1:16-18).

Therefore Jesus Christ is God.

As the “head of the church” and “firstborn from the dead,” Jesus Christ the Son of God is deserving of worship just as His Father was in the Old Testament. In contrast to fathers who designate their firstborn as recipients of inheritance exclusive of other siblings, God, while exalting His Son, recognizes anyone who has a relationship with His Firstborn as one worthy and therefore a recipient of all the privileges and inheritance of a son.

to the general assembly and church of the firstborn (**prōtotokos**) who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (Heb 12:23)

References:

1. Brown C, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (1979).