

## Jesus: “Firstborn”

Joe Slater

We know what “firstborn” means when it comes to family – it’s the first child to be born! Easy, right?

But what about Jesus being “*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (of) all creation*” (Colossians 1:15)? Some teach that this means Jesus is the first thing God created. However, “firstborn” in this case has nothing to do with chronology. Instead, it deals with being the highest ranking one.

In Biblical times, the oldest son became the head of the family upon the death of the father. Thus the term firstborn came to deal with rank. God said concerning King David, “*I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth*” (Psalm 89:25). David was the youngest, not oldest, of Jesse’s sons; and there were many kings on earth at that time who were older than David. God made him “firstborn” in the sense of out-ranking all the others, not being the oldest.

Likewise, Jesus out-ranks everyone else in all of creation. In fact, the next verse (Colossians 1:16) says, “by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible . . . All things were created through Him and for Him.” Therefore, far from being created, Jesus is the Creator. Everyone should see that the Creator out-ranks His creation. And that is the point of saying He is “firstborn.”

Jesus’ resurrection further demonstrates His status as firstborn. “*And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*” (1:18). Jesus was not the first chronologically to be raised from the dead, but He out-ranks all others. He was raised never to die again. That cannot be said accurately for the founder of any religion but that of Christ. He is preeminent!

## Fake News Regarding Faith

I have heard it said that Christians are just as likely to be divorced as non-Christians. Often the statement is made by preachers, usually in the midst of an exhortation to be more diligent in the practice of our faith. But it seems that this so-called statistic is not even close to accurate.

Professor Bradley Wright, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut, explains that of people who identify as Christians but rarely attend worship, 60% have been divorced. But of those who attend church regularly only 38% have been divorced.<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, 38% is still not good. But the gap is significant.

Those who attend worship regularly are much less likely to be divorced than those who consider themselves Christians but do not attend regularly. I wonder what the figure would be if we checked those who both attend worship regularly and who worship at home? What of those who attend worship regularly, worship at home, and who are involved in some form of Christian service?

Don’t be fooled by fake news. A mere verbal faith does not make a difference in divorce statistics, but a living and active faith makes a significant difference.

Let’s try that last statement with a slight change.

Don’t be fooled by fake news. A mere verbal faith does not make a difference in one’s salvation, but a living and active faith makes a significant difference.

“*You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone*” (James 2:24, ESV).

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

<sup>1</sup> Bradley R.E. Wright, *Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites ...and Other Lies You've Been Told*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2010), p. 133.

## *Hard Times Can Bring Out The Best*

Have you ever been to Fort Rucker, Alabama? They have a monument built in the shape of the Mexican boll weevil, an insect that, in 1915, destroyed 60% of the cotton crop. The catastrophe motivated the farmers to try a different crop – peanuts. By 1917 the county was producing more peanuts than any other county in the nation. The little bug was actually a harbinger of prosperity. Their monument has this inscription: “In profound appreciation of the boll weevil, and what it has done as the herald of prosperity.”

Have you ever thanked God for hard times? The psalmist did. “*Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word*” (Psalm 119:67). Hard times can make us better people. It was said of Jesus, “*Though He was a son, yet He learned obedience by the things He suffered*” (Hebrews 5:8). God disciplines and chastens those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:5-6). The end of that suffering is to make us better.

Joseph experienced hard times. His brothers were jealous and hated him. They sold him into slavery. He was taken to Egypt and spent years in prison. Instead of being better, he became a better person.

Corrie ten Boom was a little girl during World War II. She and her family suffered terribly in a Nazi concentration camp. Her sister died there. Corrie ten Boom’s amazing story is that she was able to forgive those who had abused her and her family. When she met one of her former guards as she was conducting a lecture, she was able to tell him, “I forgive you.” She later wrote, “I have never known God’s love so intensely as I did at that moment.”

Have you ever thanked God for hard times?

--Danny Tunnell (Miami, OK) via *Old Paths*