

Devotional Guide | Week of June 8th, 2020



SCRIPTURE READING

Read Deuteronomy 4:9, 15-24



PRAYER OF ADORATION

Our Almighty Creator,

We bow before Your awesome power as vessels created to honor You. You alone are worthy of our worship. You alone should be our focus and meditation. There indeed is nothing and no one like You. By Your hand all things were created, but You were from eternity past to eternity future. We witness the works of Your hands, the sun, moon and stars that testify to Your power and glory. You have formed human beings in the image of God and we are humbled by that truth which should move us to worship the creator, and not the creation.

You are our Lord and our God. You are a consuming fire and a jealous God who will not share your glory with false gods. All of the fullness of God is revealed to us in Your Son Jesus Christ, the firstborn of creation who holds the position of authority over all creation as the second person of our Triune God. All of creation displays Your majesty and power and it is all through You and all for You. Lord Jesus we worship You as a good King who has redeemed us by Your own blood. May we lift our eyes to no other. Amen.



RECOMMENDED SONG

"All Creatures of our God and King"

music & lyrics: https://youtu.be/hhycL4h64_s



SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

Many of us can easily recall our favorite movie quotes, the lyrics to our favorite songs, or the words of our most beloved pieces of poetry. We remember these words because they communicate powerful ideas to us, in unique and compelling ways. Colossians 1:15-20 is likely a hymn or creed that was known by early Christians, and today we'll be looking at the first half of it in verses 15-17. Upon reading this hymn we can see why Paul would place it in his letter to the Colossians. There are few places in Scripture in which the person of Christ is written about in such a compelling manner!

Remember that Paul is writing to the Colossians, having heard of a false teaching that might lead the Colossians believers astray. He writes that he might set their eyes on Jesus. To quote from our introductory devotional guide to Colossians... "Paul wanted them to focus on Christ who was clearly superior to whatever traditions and philosophies by which they might be led astray. He wrote intending for them to see the central place of Jesus in doctrine and practice." Colossians 1:15-17 helps us all to do just this. Last week we read in v.13-14 that Christ has brought his people into his kingdom, redeeming them, and forgiving their sin. Verses 15-17 tell us why he can do so:

Christ – The Image of God

It is stated, “He is the image of the invisible God...” The Greek word translated as “image” is εἰκὼν, from which we get the English word *icon*. The word *icon* is often used to describe a person who is representative of an ideal. There are icons in many areas of our culture – business, sports, music, and film, to name a few. There are none, however, who can fulfill the usage of this word εἰκὼν as fully as Christ does here. He is the full representation of the creator God, because he is God, superior to all other “traditions and philosophies” and fully able to save his people.

The reality that Christ is the *image* of God helps us understand how he redeems his people. Christ bears God’s image as, in the beginning, the Father designed Adam to bear it. G.K. Beale explains: “A number of commentators rightly understand that the reference to Christ as the ‘image of the invisible God’ is, at least in part, an allusion to Gen. 1:27: ‘*God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him*’”.^[i] Adam was created in the image of God, but fell short of his glory because of sin. Christ is the image of God completely, and he died for the sin of Adam and all of his people, that we might be restored in God’s image. In Christ, the Father redeems his people and conforms us to the image of his Son.

Christ - The Firstborn of All Creation

Verse 15 also declares that Christ is the “*firstborn of all creation*”. This is another way that the Colossians were to understand Christ as superior to all philosophy and human tradition. This statement does not mean that Christ was created, implying that at some point he did not exist; rather, this statement is meant to help God’s people understand the implications of Christ’s position as the Son of God. To be a firstborn Son was a position which came with rights and privileges, and even more so for the firstborn son of a monarch, who would inherit the rule of the kingdom.^[ii] Many have pointed out that this verse calls to mind the Davidic promise and the words of Ps. 89:27:

*“And I will make him the firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the earth.”*

The words of this Psalm are ultimately true of Christ. His position as the firstborn Son means that he rules over all creation as its king.

Christ – The Creator

In fact, this hymn goes on to say that he is the creator! The Colossians were to understand the superiority of Christ because “*by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth...*”. And, as creator, he is absolutely preeminent in all things. There is no authority that is rival to his. He created that which we can see and that which we can't. He raises up earthly rulers and brings them down. He even reigns over the spiritual beings who have turned against him, and now lead many men astray. He reigns in such a way that even those who rebel against him will ultimately serve the purpose of bringing glory to him, for “*...all things were created through him and for him.*” So, Christ's people worship him as the creator, preeminent in all things.

Christ – The Ruler

When we see Christ as the pre-existent creator, we understand the assertion that “*He is before all things...*” His precedence, however, is not only seen in the timeline of history in his coming before all things as creator, but also in his ranking before and above all things in perfection and significance. He is the most perfect being in all the universe, and as such, nothing ranks before him in significance or worth.[iii] He, then, is worthy of all worship and glory in all of his creation.

Not only did Christ create the universe but “*...in him all things hold together.*” He holds all things together by his sovereign power. In considering this truth one commentator says, “He is the sustainer of the universe and the unifying principle of its life. Apart from his continuous sustaining activity.... all would disintegrate.”[iv] God's people everywhere, and in every age, take comfort in knowing that our Lord's sovereign power holds all things together. No rebellion, pestilence, economic downfall, social upheaval, natural disaster, or any other event happens without our good, sovereign Lord allowing it for his purpose. Christ is holding all things together that his will might be accomplished in all the earth.

May these words compel us to see the central place of Jesus in all of his creation and may we ascribe to him the honor and worship he is due.

[i] G. K. Beale, “Colossians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 851.

[ii] Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2294.

[iii] Matthew Barret, None Greater (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2019) 48.

[iv] Peter T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1982), 47.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How does understanding Christ as the image of God shape your understanding of how we can have intimacy with God in and through him?

How might you explain the gospel to someone by helping them understand the meaning of Christ being the image of God?

How does understanding Christ as the “firstborn of all creation” help you to see him as superior to every philosophy and human tradition?

Think of a worldview, philosophy, or religion you are familiar with - what specific ways do you see Christ as superior to this?

How does understanding Christ as the creator and upholder of all creation help you to steward all of your life for his glory? Does this understanding help you to do so in times of social or economic uncertainty?



RECOMMENDED SONG

"In Christ Alone"

music and lyrics: <https://youtu.be/gMixnWehee0>



PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God, we confess that we easily tend toward idolatry. While we may not be physically carving images of wood and stone, we still worship the creation rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. We glorify the obtaining of things and wealth of various forms, thinking that will satisfy and make us happy. We think “I only need _____ to be satisfied.” We trust in our bank accounts and prove our lack of trust in you when those accounts get low and we panic.

Lord, please reveal the idols in our lives, whether visible or invisible. Help us to see the things that we glorify instead of You. Search our hearts and minds.

Forgive us for running to the things of this world instead of to You when we are afraid. Forgive us for striving to store up treasure on earth instead of treasure in Heaven. Forgive us for seeking peace anywhere but from You. Forgive us for bowing to the idols of politics or human legislation. Forgive us for bowing to the idols of intellectualism or superior argument. Forgive us for bowing to the idols of artificial peace and safety. Forgive us for bowing to the idols of family, friends or health. May we set nothing but You upon the throne that is rightfully Yours. You alone are worthy.

Lord, please hear our prayer. Forgive us. Cleanse us. Restore us according to your tender mercy and help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, in whose precious Name we pray. Amen.



ASSURANCE OF PARDON

People of God, the good news of the gospel is that although no idol, or false god, or sacrifices made to them can atone for our sin, Jesus our Messiah the perfect, spotless Lamb of God has delivered us from sin and death. *“While we*

were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus already paid the price for our sin and in Him we are forgiven and freed from all things which the law could never free us from. Your sin is forgiven in Christ Jesus!



RECOMMENDED SONG

"Holy Spirit Living Breath of God"

music & lyrics: <https://youtu.be/8nbMfLQd2P4>



PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Please pray for our nation during this difficult time of unrest.

- Pray that the gospel would go forth and transform men and women throughout our nation.
- Pray that God would search our hearts and expose our own sin.
- Pray that God would give each of us opportunities to love and serve our neighbor, and that we'd have wisdom, strength and courage to continue in the mission that God has called us to as His people.

**FROM COLOSSIANS 1:9-10:
NOW MAY YOU BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL IN
ALL SPIRITUAL WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING, SO AS TO WALK IN
A MANNER WORTHY OF THE LORD.**



Words to Live By for June

Galatians 5:16

[16] But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (ESV)