

Colossians 1:15-23

I. Introduction

- A. Paul is writing this letter from prison in Rome
- B. After only 5 or 7 years false teaching has crept into the church at Colossae
- C. The false teaching seems to revolve around
 - 1. Jewish asceticism
 - 2. Importance of angelic spirits
- D. Counterfeit training
- E. Paul's letter presents the truth and not a critique of the errors

II. Christ is Head over ALL Creation (15-17)

- A. He is God: "image of the invisible God" (15)
 - 1. When we look at Christ we see God Himself
 - 2. The scriptures are clear on this issue:
 - a. *2 Cor 4:4* - "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
 - b. *Heb 1:3a* - "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature"
 - c. *Phil 2:6-7* - "6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."
 - d. *John 1:1, 14, 18* - "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And

the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

e. *John 14:6-9* - "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

3. Why is this so important?

- a. Christ is not a mere man, a "good teacher", or even a prophet. He is God incarnate!
- b. Some people say that Jesus never claimed to be God, but we see that He did exactly that when talking to Thomas and Philip.

B. He is God's heir: "the firstborn of all creation" (15)

(*Psalm 89:27, Rom 8:29*)

- 1. This is NOT a reference to Jesus being created
- 2. It is a reference to the custom of both the Hebrews and ancient Greeks, where the firstborn was given rights and privileges not shared by other siblings.
- 3. He is the father's representative and primary heir. He was also the manager of the household. And the one responsible for keeping the peace and bringing reconciliation to family members.
- 4. Paul is emphasizing Christ's supremacy over creation, like a firstborn son's supremacy over his other siblings and his father's household.

C. He is the **Creator and Sustainer of everything** (16-17)

1. He created everything:
 - a. **“By Him”** - identifies Christ as the **Creator** of all things.
 - 1) Notice **“ALL THINGS”** (mentioned 5 times in this section)
 - a) All things really means all things (16):
 - (1) Things in heaven and on earth
 - (2) Things visible and invisible
 - (3) Thrones, dominions rulers and authorities
 - b. **“Through Him”** - identifies Christ as the **agent** of creation (*John 1:2-3*)
 - c. **“For Him”** - identifies Christ as the **purpose** for creation
 2. He maintains everything (17)
 - a. Jesus **“is before all things”**--the present tense verb indicates that the emphasis here is not that Jesus existed before all things (which He did), but that He is currently superior to all things
 - b. **“Hold together”**--the perfect tense of the verb here indicates the completeness of this action. It was secured in the past through a one time action that doesn't need to be repeated

III. Christ is the Head over Re-creation and Reconciliation (18-20)

A. He is the the **head of the Church** (18)

(*Eph 1:22-23*)

1. Christ is our only authority regarding our faith

2. He is our only example for our righteousness

B. He is the **beginning, the firstborn from the dead** (18)

(*2 Cor 5:17, Is 65:17-18 -- Acts 26:22-23; 1 Cor 15:20*)

1. Jesus' resurrection marks the beginning of a new creation
2. Christ inaugurated the new age anticipated by the OT prophets (Acts 2:29-36; 13:32-35)
3. He established a new humanity in Himself to replace the old humanity in Adam
4. His own resurrection is a guarantee of the resurrection that we as His brothers and sisters anticipate

C. He is **preeminent over everything** (18)

1. This does not detract from the glory the pre-incarnate Christ, but . .
 - a. It marks out a for Him a new and higher standing
 - b. Wins for Him an even greater name (*Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:8-11*)
2. By virtue of His resurrection, Christ is the Lord of the universe that was created by Him, that He has always sustained, and which He has now redeemed!

D. In Him **all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell** (19)

(*Col 2:8-9*)

1. Jesus contains all of God's attributes
2. Humbling himself to leave His glory in heaven and become a man was not a hardship for Christ. He was pleased to do it.

E. He is the **means of reconciliation** (20)

1. The fact that Jesus is God is what made it possible for Him to reconcile all things to Himself

2. How did this reconciliation happen?
 - a. Our fall into sin brought with it the corruption of all creation (Gen 3; Rom 5:12; 8:20; Eph 2:2)
 - b. Through Christ's incarnation and atoning death on the Cross, God's righteousness is satisfied (Rom 3:21-26)
 - c. Peace between God and man is restored (2 Cor 5:17-21)
 - d. The eventual restoration of all of Creation is assured (Rom 8:18-21)

IV. The Colossians were Recipients of this Reconciliation (21-23)

- A. They (we) were formerly
 1. **alienated** (strangers with God)
 2. **hostile in mind** (enemies in their thinking)
 3. **engaged in evil deeds** (enemies in their actions)
- B. But they are now reconciled to Him by His death on the cross
- C. He did this for one purpose: that we would be presented before God as **holy and blameless and above reproach**.
- D. This is the good news of the Gospel!
- E. The proof of their reconciliation depends on their continuing in the faith -- that is holding true to the gospel that Epaphras taught and Paul reiterated here.

V. Conclusion

- A. Paul's primary points here are Christ's Head over Creation, Redemption and Reconciliation
- B. This means that absolutely everything comes under His authority
- C. Salvation is found ONLY in Him and secured ONLY in Him

- D. This is true only if we remain committed to the doctrines of "the faith" and not moving away from the hope of the Gospel
- E. The Colossians were in danger of drifting . . . what about us?

VI. Prayer

Dear Jesus,

You are the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by you all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through you and for you. And you are before all things, and in you all things hold together. And you are the head of the body, the church. You are the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything you might be preeminent. For in you all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell, and through you to reconcile to yourself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of your cross.

And we, who once were alienated and hostile in our minds, doing evil deeds, you have now reconciled in your body of flesh by your death, in order to present us holy and blameless and above reproach before you, if indeed we continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that we heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

Lord, grant us the grace to persevere to the end.

Amen.