



Colossians - Chapter 1 verses 15 to 23

Firstborn over all creation

If ever you are asked for a description of who Jesus is or what he accomplished, this section of Colossians 1 has most of the answers. This passage is in two main sections. Verses 15 to 20 are an expression of praise of Jesus Christ. For a fledgeling church like Colossae this statement would have given them complete clarity about Jesus. Some think that verses 15 to 20 were an early Christian hymn. But others say that Paul was anxious to help his friend Epaphras explain to new believers about the person of Jesus.

We'll take a look at each of the phrases that make up this amazing passage. You may find that the response to these statements is more likely to be amazed worship rather than discussion.

Image of the invisible God v15

Quite strange for something invisible to have an image. Paul's meaning here is not that Jesus is a kind of facsimile of God but rather he is an exact, visible, representation of God. In Romans, Paul insists that God's eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen since the creation (Romans 1:20). But in Christ we see who God is.

Think about some of things Jesus said and did. What do these words and actions tell us about God? (e.g. Stilling the storm, raising of Lazarus, clearing the temple etc.....)

Firstborn over all creation v15

We normally mean the oldest child when we use the word 'firstborn'. Paul's meaning here is quite different. It does imply a priority of time but, more importantly, it implies that Jesus should be distinguished from all created things as being before them in time and supreme. He outranks all things in creation.

How does this statement challenge our view of Jesus? Do we limit Jesus to the earthly ministry about which we have a record or have we lost this awesome eternal dimension?

All things created in him v16

This explains why Christ is preeminent over all creation. He was the agent of creation. Bethlehem was an 'incarnation' not just a human birth. He entered the world but had been there since the foundation of the world. The list of powers in verse 16 and 17 tells us the role of Jesus in creation was all-encompassing. We can see the powers he has on earth but there are also things we cannot see.

How should we react to the all-encompassing power of Jesus when we feel the world (our world) is out of control?

The controlling principle of all creation

One commentator has paraphrased this as Christ being 'the divine glue' that holds creation together. So often we see Brian Cox (and others) telling us about other worlds which are volatile and unstable. Yet our world has a wonderfully predictable pattern and order about it. And he commands us to be stewards of that world.

How should knowing that Christ 'holds all things together' affect our attitude to the created world?

The head of the church

This means that the church as instituted by Christ and the created order he has made are bound up together. Their destinies are inseparable because both have Christ as the head. So, just as creation should be cared for by God's image-bearing people, so should the church because Christ is its head. Just as the creation command is to bear fruit so the church's mandate is to be fruitful.

Is it easy to forget that Jesus Christ is the head of the church - could this lead us to thinking that the church is there for our benefit? Is it easy to forget the church is there to please and bless its head, namely Jesus Christ?

The beginning and firstborn from the dead

We've moved from creation to 'new creation'. Christ's resurrection is the source of new life for others. 'Because I live, you also will live' says Jesus. (John 14:19). This is not just about beating death. This is about God's ultimate aim of drawing all his followers together where we will worship him. Look at what Jesus prayed for in John 17.

Is it sometimes hard to believe that we will one day all be risen from the dead and gathered with a great multitude in the presence of the risen Jesus? What stops you being convinced?

The fullness of God

He is a full embodiment of God. He chooses to dwell fully and permanently in the person of Jesus and not in a building ('a house made with hands'). God's spirit, word, wisdom and glory are disclosed in the person of Jesus.

How does this affect the way we speak and listen to Jesus in our prayers?

The one who reconciles all creation through his death

God created heaven and earth and everything in it. Since the fall (Genesis 3) the world has been tainted by sin. But in the end times all will be brought back to how God intended it to be. The bringing of peace will only fully be realised when Christ returns in glory.

What aspects of glory with Jesus do you long for?
What are the issues that will be dealt with when he returns?

THE DOWNLOAD VERSE

This amazing passage about Jesus contains many amazing qualities and actions. But look at the consequences in verses 21 to 23

'Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. BUT NOW he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation'

Reflect on what you once were (alienated), what you are now (reconciled) and what you will be one day (in his physical sight)

Take some time this week to reflect on what Jesus has done for you and **THANK HIM**