

Jesus, the Creation, and the New Creation

(Colossians 1:15-20)

INTRODUCTION:

1. In the first chapters of various N.T. books there are some extraordinary descriptions of Christ that should really help shape our view of Him, God, and our lives in Christ.
- 2. Colossians 1 is one of those first chapters.
 - A. Here Paul begins this epistle with a prayer of thanksgiving for the Colossians' faith and a petition for God to grant them wisdom to walk worthy of their calling and the strength to be steadfast, while joyously giving thanks to God for qualifying them for the inheritance of saints!
 - B. He follows this with how God **through Jesus** has brought about the *new exodus* from the *domain of darkness* (1:13-14 – “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,¹⁴ **in whom** we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness** of sins.”).
 - i. So, Jesus is God's new Moses, our redeemer who delivered us from the bondage of sin.
 - ii. And we are God's new Israel, living now in the kingdom, redemption, and forgiveness of Christ His Son.
- 3. What follows in Colossians 1:15-20 is something unique and special.
 - A. For, the Spirit turns our attention to the **incomparable greatness of our Savior, Jesus Christ**, by use of a poem.
 - B. That we have the Spirit speaking in the form of a poem is hard for **us** to see because the *skillful wording* and *rhythmic balance* of the Greek gets lost in translation.
 - C. Yet, we should not be surprised at the Spirit's use of poetic language here because such language is found in the Psalms and other places in the O.T., and we are made in God's image, and as such we are drawn to and can appreciate the beauty of such language.
- 4. The Poem: Jesus, Creation, and the New Creation
 - A. If you were to map it out it would look something like this.
 - B. In the first and second sections the Spirit connects **Jesus** to **the creation** as God's **exalted, eternal, pre-existing agent** through whom **all creation came to be** (1:15-17).
 - C. In the third and fourth sections of the poem the Spirit connects **Jesus** to God's **new creation**, the **church**, showing Him to be God's **exalted agent by whom all spiritual life by reconciliation and redemption** has come to be (1:18-20).
5. So, I want us to focus on this poem today in hopes of helping each of us to better appreciate the majesty of Jesus our Savior that we might praise Him more.

BODY:

- • **I. Section 1 – Jesus and creation (1:15-17):**
 - A. He, Jesus, is “the image of the invisible God” (1:15a).
 1. It may seem strange for a poem to begin with this statement, but when its design is to help us see the glory of our redeemer, what better way to start than this.
 2. But this statement gives us cause to pause because **all people** are made **in God's image** (Gen. 1:27 – “God created man **in His own image**, in the **image of God He created him**; male and female He created them.).
 - a. That is something special about everyone. We are created to show God to the world.
 - b. Yet, the presentation of that image has been lost in so many ways through our sin!
 3. So, God sent **Jesus** to earth to live in the **flesh** to present **His image**, His *representation*, the very *manifestation* of Himself the invisible God to all (Jn. 1:18).
 - a. So, as **2 Cor. 4:4, 6** says, God has “shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God **in the face of Christ**.”
 - b. For He has presented God *perfect image* because from eternity **He is God** (John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**”).
 - 4. Being in God's image, Jesus is **the firstborn of all creation** (1:15b).
 - a. This causes trouble with some concerning Christ's deity, but it should not.
 - b. He is *not created* (see 1:16), but is the **firstborn of all**, or **everything, created!**

- i. Firstborn is used of His **position** like in Psalms 89:27 where God speaks of David saying, “I also shall **make him My firstborn**, the **highest** of the kings of the earth.”
 - ii. In other words, being in the image of God means Jesus holds the highest position of rank and honor over all creation.
- B. Christ holds this position because “For by [in] Him all things were created” (1:16).
 - 1. This is significant because Gen. 1:1 says, “In the beginning **God** created...”!
 - 2. So, what is the Spirit telling us? Well, it is easy to miss the subtleties of the language here, but it is telling us something special!
 - a. That all things were created **by/in [en] Him** indicates that **in** Jesus—in **His creative power, wisdom, and glory**—is how **all things** came to be.
 - b. In other words, God (Gen. 1:1) used the **creative power and wisdom possessed by Jesus** to create everything that God has created. That is what the one sent to earth did!
 - 3. His creative work includes what is “both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” (1:16b).
 - a. Jesus is the source of what we might call the universe’s power structure—things “in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities.
 - b. All these “powers” that we see, and maybe even fear (i.e., world powers, China, etc.), are part of the creation through Christ.
 - c. Whether these powers are earthly or spiritual, and whether they appear to hold sway over the earth or not, they would not and cannot exist except by Jesus’ hand.
 - 4. For, “all things have been created through Him and for Him” (1:16c).
 - a. Jesus, unlike man, is not a glorified part of the creation, but the agent, the one **through [dia] whom**, God worked to create all that was created.
 - b. But God’s plan for creation went farther, making Jesus Christ the very **goal of creation**—that creation is *for [unto – eis] Him*.
 - c. **Creation finds its purpose/meaning in Christ!**
 - d. You want to know why we and all of this are here, **look at Jesus!**
 - 5. Here in 1:16 the poem has moved us from the **past** (Jesus as the agent of creation) to the **present** (all creation owes its existence to Christ) to the future (how God’s purposes for creation will be ultimately be seen in Christ and His glory).
 - a. So, think of what this says and the implications it has for you and me now and forever!
 - b. For, though the powers of the earth and the heavens may be in rebellion and have the appearance of strength, their existence and ultimate purpose will be Christ’s glory!
 - c. So, what do we have to fear them?!
- **II. Section 2: Jesus’ prior and present relationship with the creation**
 - A. “[And] He is before all things,” (1:17a).
 - 1. Here Jesus’ majestic supremacy over all things is expressed in relation to time!
 - 2. Christ **exists before** any **thing**, any part of creation, indicating His **eternal nature** and, therefore, **supremacy over all creation!**
 - 3. So, again, everything we can see, and all that we cannot see, exists in subjugation to Christ, who is **before it!**
 - B. “And in Him all things hold together (1:17b).
 - 1. So, Jesus’ greatness is not simply a matter of *priority* to creation, but creation’s *continuity*.
 - a. In other words, the created universe’s unbroken existence and operation is owed to Jesus.
 - b. He is the one that **makes it all work** and prevents it from falling into chaos.
 - 2. What does this mean for us?
 - a. First, it means we serve a Master who has the power, knowledge, and wisdom to constantly control and direct all the intricate workings of time, space, matter, and energy!
 - b. Second, it means nothing of creation is autonomous or independent of Jesus’ power! All are servants (Ps. 119:90-91) and dependents (Ps. 104).

3. So, when I look at Christ and creation, I think I need to be asking myself whether my view of Christ is **too small** and whether I am giving Him the **glory** and **faith** He deserves!

- **III. Section 3 – Christ’s headship over the new creation**

- A. “[And] **He is head** of the body, the church” (1:18a).
 1. The metaphor of the human body to describe the church’s relation to Christ expresses in perfection the organic and dependent relationship we, the church, have with Him.
 2. For, as a body cannot live/function without the head, we cannot live/function without Jesus!
 3. So, Christ’s headship expresses more than His rule over the church, but our complete dependence on Christ for everything (Jn. 15:5 – “for apart from Me you can do nothing.”).
- B. I wonder if I truly appreciate the significance of this and whether my choices and deeds reflect this reality—that apart from Jesus I can do nothing?

- **IV. Section 4: Christ as God’s agent of creation of the new creation (1:18b-20)**

- A. “And He is the beginning” (1:18b).
 1. Though to be the *beginning* (*archē*) does speak of Christ’s priority in time/rank over the church, here it emphasizes Jesus being the *principle* or *life-source* of the church (i.e., as Jesus is the “beginning” of creation).
 - a. The body/church exists and lives because of Christ!
 - b. Without Jesus, I and all sinners, would remain dead in our sins and separated from God!
 - 2. Why? Because Christ is “the firstborn from the dead” (1:18c).
 - a. Being the **firstborn** *from the dead* means Christ holds the position of *supremacy*, that He is the *head* of the church, by way of, or because of, *the resurrection*!
 - b. Why? Because by the *resurrection* Christ defeated our greatest enemy—**death**—opening the way to eternal life to all who trust Him. For, note His words to Martha (Jn. 11:25-26 – “Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection** and the **life**; he who believes in Me **will live even if he dies**,²⁶ and everyone who **lives and believes in Me will never die**. Do you believe this?”). I guess the question for me is, “Do I believe this?” **I must!**
 - 3. Why is Jesus firstborn from the dead? “So that He Himself will come to have **first place** [preeminence] in **everything**” (1:18d).
 - a. In section one this poem showed Christ’s **supremacy** over the material creation by reason of being its *source* and the *agent* through whom God created all things.
 - b. Here Christ’s **first-ness**, His **preeminence**, in **all things**—spiritual and material—is affirmed by reason of the *resurrection*, making Him the *source* of life for the church!
 - i. So, the glory, honor, etc., that was Christ’s by right of being God’s agent of creation (1:15-17) has now been formally shown to all by the resurrection of Jesus the man!
 - ii. How, by His exaltation (Phil. 2:8-11 – “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming **obedient to the point of death**, even death on a cross.⁹ **For this reason** also, **God highly exalted Him**, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that **at the name of Jesus every knee will bow**, of those who are **in heaven and on earth and under the earth**,¹¹ and that **every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.”)!
 - iii. So, through Christ’s resurrection **God’s purpose** for creation and the new creation have come to pass—the **God’s glory** through the **preeminence of the Son!**
 - B. Verses 19-20 continues the poem’s structure by presenting the **explanation** of **why** God made Christ **preeminent** in all things.
 - 1. First: “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him” (1:19).
 - a. In other words, Christ is preeminent because **God in all fullness** has **taken up permanent residence in Him**, in the man, the Son of God, Christ Jesus.
 - b. Paul puts all this in a nutshell (Col. 2:9-10 – “For **in Him** all the **fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form**,¹⁰ and **in Him you have been made complete**, and He is the **head over all rule and authority**;”)!
 - i. Everything that makes God to be God dwells **in Jesus’ bodily form!**

- ii. So, not surprising is the fact that **everything we are**, our **completeness**, comes by being **in Him!**
- 2. Second: “and through Him to **reconcile all things** to Himself” (1:20a).
 - a. Through Christ God chose to **reconcile**, to **take away the enmity/hostility**, to **bring unity and oneness**, between **all things** and **Himself**.
 - b. **How?** By God “having made **peace** through the **blood of His cross**” (1:20b).
 - i. This statement screams of how much God and Christ desire our reconciliation—that **Jesus** would become a man to **shed his blood on a cross** to make peace!
 - ii. For, Christ’s incarnation was not enough. For, Jesus needed a **body** not just to show us God’s image (**section 1**), but so He might **die** to defeat the devil that we might be **freed** from sin and death and be reunited with God (Heb. 2:9,14; 10:5).
 - iii. That is why Jesus is everything to us, His church, His body!
 - c. The **extent** of reconciliation? That **all things** “through Him, *I say*, whether **things on earth** or **things in heaven**” (1:20c).
 - i. It is easy to understand my need for reconciliation. For, I am an *offender*, a hostile one, requiring that I be reconciled to God, and not the other way around.
 - ii. But God in Christ has **reconciled all things** whether **in heaven** and **on earth**, which would appear to encompass all creation, including the physical and spiritual realm.
 - iii. Just as the creation has its goal in Christ, so Christ’s work of reconciliation has a goal for creation! That it will be **reconciled to God**.
 - iv. And whatever that means concerning the alienation sin and rebellion has caused between heaven and earth (Gen. 3), **I know** that **I** and **you** are included!
 - v. **Praise God for that!**

CONCLUSION:

1. So, today we have been privileged to learn through this divinely inspired poem of the **wonders of Jesus and His majesty** expressed in relation to the **creation** and the **new creation**.
2. So, I hope this passage, and my presentation of it, has...
 - A. Helped you appreciate Christ more, and helped you see how His work in creation should affect our view of this word and our existence in it.
 - B. Encouraged you to ponder Jesus and his work of redemption concerning the new creation, the church, and its ramifications on your life and how he is deserving of our praise continually!
3. Will you honor God and His in the creation and the new creation, the redemption found in Christ, today by returning to Christ in repentance, or by coming to Him as your Savior in F-R-C-Bp?