

SECTION 2: Thank God for Christ

Colossians 1: 15 - 23

1:15. He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21. 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 - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

In most situations there is a dynamic of priorities where, although it might never be expressed formally, there is a pecking order: so it is good to know what comes first, who is in charge. If that is so in the natural realm, it is more so in the spiritual.

There is a real need to know who is supreme when it comes to eternal matters and to know where we fit into the great scheme of things.

There is no doubt at all about the supremacy of Almighty God. Even those, who have little or no faith or understanding, will concede that they believe in a 'supreme being'.

For those of us who have faith, who do believe, we need to know who Jesus is and where He fits into this world of ours and into our lives.

Jesus should be pre-eminent in our lives because of:

1. His position of headship;
2. His work of reconciliation;
-in respect to all of creation; and with respect to the church.

The meaning of 'pre-eminence' here is to be more, or better by merit, than anything else. That is the notion here in relation to Jesus: He is more than, better than, takes precedence over, has greater claims than, etc. He is first, He is No. 1. There is no one like Him

1. Jesus stands in first place in everything that really counts.

a. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.(vv15-17)

- **He is the complete revelation of God.** He alone is the only way we can see and understand who God is and what God is about. The Christian message is about a God who wants us to know Him, and has given His Son for that very reason - that we might know Him. Wesley's hymn expresses it wonderfully: "*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate deity.*" And the words of the Lord Jesus in John 14: "*He that has seen me has seen the Father*" confirm this.'
- **He is the first born of all creation.** There are those who would look at this statement and say that Jesus was just part of the created world. But what is being said here is that Jesus is the first, the heir, the owner, the possessor of all things; and that over all creation.
- **He is even the Creator of all things.** The Colossians were confused by the perceived standing and importance of angels in relation to the role and position of Christ. This letter was in some way to set them straight. They perceived a tension between the spiritual and the material, the one being holy and the other evil. Angels were thought to hold a higher status in the 'middle ground' between man and God. But, Jesus is pre-eminent over all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible.
- **He is the goal of creation.** That means that all things are made for Him. Christ is the centre and everything, including ourselves, revolves around Him, and not the other way around.
- **He is the precursor of creation.** He was with the Father before the foundation of the earth. He is before all things. He is from eternity to eternity.
- **He is also the sustainer of creation.** All things hold together in Him. He "*upholds all things by the word of His power.*"

b. Jesus is the Head of the Church (vv18,19)

We now move from the natural creation to the spiritual order.

- **He is the embodiment of God.** All the fullness of the deity dwells in Him. He is fully God. Hebrews speaks of Jesus being "*the express image of His (= God's) person.*"
- **He is the head of the body.** He is the most important, essential

part of the body of believers, the church. All things relate to Him. He directs and controls.

- **He is the Leader.** By virtue of the resurrection, He is the firstborn, the first to rise from the dead. He is the forerunner, as Hebrews mentions. He goes before and is therefore the Captain. It is His risen life that is imparted to the church.

2. Jesus is first because of His role in reconciliation

That is based on:

a. His work of reconciliation - in creation. (v20)

- **Reconciliation is through Christ.** He is the agent of reconciliation. It was what he came to earth to do. Here we have something of the cosmic importance of Jesus Christ.
- **He reconciles all things.** Whether on earth or in heaven, all things will be reconciled through Him. Romans indicates that reconciliation concerns both people and creation.
- **The nature of the reconciliation** means peace. It is bringing two opposing elements together. It is to bring a sense of belonging, an absence of enmity, - peace; that *peace that passes all understanding*.
- **The means of reconciliation** is by His blood, by His death on the Cross and all that the Cross stands for in the purpose and strategy of God.

b. His work of reconciliation - in the church (v22)

- **Who and what is reconciled.** It is you - the believers as individuals and as a church - who are reconciled from being formerly alienated, hostile in mind, and engaged in evil activity
- **The nature of reconciliation** is through Christ's physical body through death. The New Testament speaks of Christ *who knew no sin being made sin for us. And, He who bore our sins in His body on the tree*".
- **The goal of reconciliation** -It is *'in order to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation- before Him'* or, as Revelation puts it: to be *"as a Bride ready to meet her husband"* - the two becoming one.'

That leaves us with a responsibility to continue in the faith. It is essential to persevere, and to benefit from the *'hope we have as an anchor'*. We need to live our lives in union with Christ and to know Him as

pre-eminent in our world and in our lives. That faith is available to all through the Gospel of God's saving grace. " *This is the gospel which you heard and which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.*" It is the gospel we are privileged to hear and have the opportunity to believe in, so that we can enjoy the benefit of reconciliation and persevere in the assurance of hope.

We need to live in union with Christ and to know Him as pre-eminent in our world and in our lives.

That has significant implications.

We now go on to look at some of these.