

## The Exalted Christ and You

Colossians 1:15-23 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

- I. Introduction
  - a. In 2008, in Easton, MD, someone left a load of unused items at a Goodwill donation center. Among their discarded items was an oil painting by a 19<sup>th</sup> century French impressionist that later auctioned for over \$40,000.
  - b. Sometimes we don't recognize the true value of things
    - i. Familiarity breeds contempt
    - ii. Even our most prized possessions can lose their significance, if we don't stop to consider their true worth
    - iii. In our culture of consumerism and acquisition, our focus tends to more often be on the few things we want that we don't have, rather than the many things, and often very valuable things that we do have.
- II. Key Thought: In Col. 1:15-23 Paul describes how valuable Jesus is and how we relate to him.
  - a. The worth and value of Christ is the theme of his letter to the Colossians
    - i. Jesus Christ and His preeminence in all things
    - ii. Preeminence means first place
  - b. Let's examine Paul's key statement of the exalted nature of Christ, and see how it relates to us.
- III. Christ Has First Place Over Creation
  - a. His Role in Creation (v. 15)
    - i. The image of God
      1. He shows us what God is like
      2. If you have seen me you have seen the father - John 14:9
      3. Heb. 1:3 - READ
    - ii. Firstborn of all creation

1. Not necessarily born first – there was never a time when Christ was not
  2. Rather, having the birthright
    - a. The Supreme heir
    - b. Would receive the lion's share of the inheritance
    - c. Would be the ruler over the family
  3. Like Jacob, after purchasing the birthright from Esau
  4. Like Ephraim, who inherited ahead of his older brother Jer. 31:9
  5. Like David, who was MADE first-born (Psa. 89:27)
- b. Created all things (v. 16)
- i. All means all
    1. in heaven & on earth
    2. Visible and invisible
    3. Thrones, dominions, etc.
      - a. Represent spiritual powers
    4. John 1:1-3
    5. Jesus himself was uncreated
  - ii. Created
    1. By him – he was the one responsible for creation
    2. Through him – he was the agency through whom they were made
    3. To (for) him – it was for him that they were made, for his benefit and in consideration of his purposes
    4. The whole Godhead was involved in creation
      - a. Indicated by “Let us” – Gen 1:26, etc
      - b. But they are not mentioned here
      - c. Paul's emphasis is that whatever hand God the father had in creation, God the son was no less a part of it
      - d. and it can be said that it was all done by, through and for Him
- c. They depend on Him (v. 17)
- i. He is before all things
    1. He came before them in time
    2. He certainly also comes before them in priority, glory and importance
  - ii. They consists in Him (hold together)
    1. Hold together – constituted, stand together
    2. Upheld by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3)
    3. Without his active will and support, the universe could not and would not continue to exist
  - iii. If He created and sustains all things
    1. Are His people going to have much to worry about with regard to all these things?
    2. Jesus says NO (Matt. 6:31-33)

- IV. Christ has First Place over the New Creation
  - a. His role in the new creation (v. 18)
    - i. Head of the body
      - 1. His body is the church
      - 2. Eph 1:20-23
    - ii. The beginning
      - 1. Others would follow
      - 2. He started the church
      - 3. Heb. 5:9; 12:2
  - b. Firstborn from the dead (v. 18)
    - i. He conquered death
    - ii. Is the Supreme Heir over the other resurrected
    - iii. Therefore he has rule and headship over those who are partakers of His resurrection
    - iv. Rom. 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:15
    - v. First place in everything
      - 1. Not just over creation
      - 2. But also over the redeemed
  - c. The fullness in him (v. 19)
    - i. The one who desired the fullness to dwell in Christ is not explicitly stated
      - 1. Many translation supply Father, therefore italicized
      - 2. But it could just as well be taken as Jesus who desired this fullness be made to dwell in himself
    - ii. What fullness?
      - 1. Not the fullness of the divine attributes
        - a. He already possessed those (Col. 2:9)
        - b. He never stopped being Divine
      - 2. All those qualities, powers and possessions He required to be the redeemer of mankind
        - a. These he did not possess and could not possess until atonement was made and accepted at the throne of God
        - b. He would not be satisfied with another being the savior, not that any other could
        - c. It was His good pleasure to have the full role of redeemer, atoner, reconciler, forgiver, cleanser, intercessor and mediator exclusively in himself
        - d. So that He could fully exercise the power of redemption on behalf of sinful human beings, without resort to the aid or assistance of anyone else
    - 3. What he has in fullness,
      - a. We need – Eph. 4:7-10
      - b. The world needs - Eph. 1:20-23
        - i. And sees in the church



- VI. Even You (v. 21-23)
  - a. Then
    - i. Alienated
    - ii. Hostile in mind
    - iii. Doing evil things
  - b. Now
    - i. Christ has reconciled you
      - 1. Through his physical body
    - ii. With a purpose
      - 1. To present us in our perfected state
        - a. Holy
        - b. Without blemish
        - c. Free of guilt
    - iii. It depends
      - 1. On maintaining our faith
        - a. Firm
        - b. Steadfast
      - 2. Not wandering away
- VII. Conclusion
  - a. We have shown that Jesus Christ has first place
    - i. Over all Creation
    - ii. And in God's scheme of Redemption
  - b. There is only one place in all the universe where it is possible for Jesus to not be given first place
    - i. In a human heart
    - ii. Where is He in your heart? In mine?
  - c. Invitation
    - i. Have you given Jesus first place?
      - 1. Plan of Salvation
      - 2. Remain faithful
    - ii. As a Christian, do you continue to give Him first place
      - 1. Or have you been moved from the hope of the gospel
- VIII. SOURCES:
  - a. "\$40,000 painting left at Goodwill - Baltimore Sun,"  
[http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2008-06-25/news/0806240340\\_1\\_goodwill-industries-goodwill-store-painting](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2008-06-25/news/0806240340_1_goodwill-industries-goodwill-store-painting).