

5/23/99

Colossians 1:15-29

Paul has greeted the Colossians, expressed his love for them and told them that he has been praying for them since they entered the kingdom as well as praying specifically for their wisdom, walk, strengthen in Christ, in view of the present false teaching.

Paul then turns to give some of the most profound and clear teaching regarding the deity of Jesus Christ to combat the Gnostic heresy I seed form that was dethroning Jesus.

Keep in mind that these truths about Jesus that Paul is declaring are only about thirty years after the death of Christ.

The attack on truth is ever-present but not ever-active but it will act against the truth.

1:15-20 The person of Christ.

1:15 The relation of Jesus to God.

* Some have seen a hymn to Christ for worship in the early church. vs. 15-20

1) Jesus is the image of the invisible God, to reveal God.

* Verse fifteen to seventeen focus on the divine nature of Jesus, eighteen to twenty focus on the human nature of Jesus!

a) Moses asked God to show him His glory. Ex. 33:18

b) God is Spirit. Jn. 4:24a; 1Tim. 1:17

c) The word image communicates two things.

1) The word implies derived likeness, used of the head stamped on a coin or a reflection in a mirror.

* Jesus was and is the image of God prior to the incarnation and after His exaltation, they did not make Him the image of God.

2) But also the word image implies a manifested presence, physically.

c) Jesus is the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father and has made Him known. Jn. 1:18

d) Paul says that we have the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2Cor. 4:4

* Leaving no room for emanation!

e) Jesus is the full and ultimate revelation of God, the brightness of His glory and express image of His person, through whom He spoke and speaks today. Heb. 1:1-3; Jn. 1:1, 14

- e) Jesus is the very nature and character of God in human form, Himself God, the visible expression of God. 1Tim. 3:16
 * Jesus said, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father, I and the Father are one”. Jn. 10:30; 14:9
- 2) Jesus is first in rank and position over all creation.
- a) The firstborn “prototokos” can mean priority in time or supremacy in rank, the context will always help to determine the meaning, here the emphasis is on supremacy, yet it also presupposes His priority in time.
 * The place of importance “over all creation” separates Jesus from creation, rather than placing Him subject to it or part of it! Phil. 2:9
- b) Jehovah's witnesses use this to prove Jesus is a created being, Michael the archangel, the old Arian controversy of 324 A. D.
- c) Jesus is distinguished from creation, is prior to creation and above it.
- d) Jesus is the incarnate wisdom of God. Heb. 1:6
- e) The Father is the source, the Son the channel and the Holy Spirit is the agent!

- f) We are to be renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him. Col. 3:10
- 1:16** The relation of Jesus to creation.
- 3) Jesus is the creator of all things.
- a) He was the sphere of power and influence, “by Him all things were created”, past tense, aorist a historical fact.
- 1) Genesis declared God created “bara” out of nothing and confirmed in Hebrews. Gen. 1:1, Heb. 11:3
- 2) The article is all things mentioned twice, marking omnipotence and the entire universe, nothing excluded, there is nothing created, not created by Him. Jn. 1:3
- a)) In heaven and earth.
- b)) Visible and invisible.
- c)) Thrones, dominions, principalities or powers which are four classes or ranks of angels.
 * Paul mentions both spirit and material together, without distinction as the false teachers did, to teach that there is nothing in heaven or earth, visible or invisible that is greater, be it in spirits or angels, aeons or

emanations that is greater or above Jesus, for He created them! 2:10, 15,18

- b) Jesus is the mediator or agent of creation, “through Him”, through whom it actually came to be.
 * The perfect tense focuses on the creation’s continuing existence.
- c) Jesus is both the channel, through Him and the reason or goal for which everything was created, for Him, to serve His will and Him.
- 1)) He is both the agent and the goal of creation!
- 2)) In fact all things are to be summed up and gathered to Jesus at the end of the age. Eph. 1:10
 * Notice Paul gave two and a half verses on creation in order to clearly refute the false teaching once and for all regarding matter being evil and spirit good and the one can not be one with the other or the need of angel or emanations as mediators! vs. 15b-17

1:17 The summary of the relationship of Jesus to creation.

- 4) Jesus is and was before all created things, He pre-existed and anticipated them and is Lord of creation. Prov. 8:23; Jn. 1:1

* He had primacy over the cosmos, the firstborn of all creation! vs. 15b

- 5) Jesus is the one who holds all things together, the sustainer of all things.
- a) The word consist “synesteken” means preservation or coherence, to hold together, the unifying principle of life. Heb. 1:2-3
- b) The atom has positive charges that should repel each other but don't.
- c) Upholds all things by the word of His power. Heb. 1:3
 * This is what makes our universe an orderly cosmos not a chaos of random chance.
- d) Earth will melt with fervent heat. 2Pet. 3:10

1:18 The relationship of Jesus to the church.

- * Paul moves from the cosmological perspective to the Soteriological one of Christ!
- 6) Jesus is the head of the body.
 * Remember verse fifteen to seventeen focused on the divine nature of Jesus, now verse eighteen to twenty focus on the human nature of Jesus!
- a) Jesus is the head, the One in control over His people whom He has delivered and redeemed, His church. vs. 13-14

- * Eph. 1:21-23; 5:23
- 1)) The pronoun “He” is emphatic, no one else!
 - 2)) The One who is the very image of God. vs. 15
 - 3)) The One who is the firstborn in priority over all creation. vs. 16
 - 4)) The One who is over every power and authority in heaven or earth, since He was the agent and the object for which all was created.
- b) Some attempt to say that “body” refers still to the cosmological created things but the word “body” is used in the book that way and very few times in the New Testament.
- * Paul uses the word body for the member of the corporate church in the context and other times in his letter. 2:19
- c) The church “eklesia” identifies what the body is, which means to call out, the body called out of the world of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. vs. 13
- 1)) It is a living organism, not an organization.
 - 2)) It is the extension of Christ to work through His members.
 - 3)) It is a loving relation between the Redeemer and those redeemed.

- 4)) It is totally dependent on the head and can not exist apart from it, while the head can exist without the body, Christ.
 - * There are many members but one head. Rom. 12; 1Cor. 12
- d) The beginning of the firstborn from the dead.
 - 1)) The word beginning “arkee” refers to the first and chief One.
 - 2)) The word firstborn “prototokos” is the same as verse fifteen, importance or rank, primacy based on His deity and now based on being the first to rise out from the dead in His humanity.
 - 2)) He is the authority and first of the new order and source that will rise up out from the dead like Him, He first and each in their order, the sample of the greater harvest to come. 1Cor. 15:23
- 7) Jesus is supreme over all things
 - a) The purpose of the resurrection was that Jesus would have the preeminence, literally might become the first in rank and authority exclusively, regarding all things by virtue of being Creator and redeemer through the resurrection.

- b) In view of that the Creator condescended to unite Himself in a human body, died and resurrected, He is the only way and name given to men to be saved. Phil. 2:9-11

1:19 The reasons for the preeminence of Jesus.

- 7) Jesus is the fullness of deity
- a) The word fullness “plemora” means the sum total of all divine power and attributes. Col. 2:9
 - b) This was a favorite word of the heretics to express ultimate attainment with God by climbing up the emanations through secret knowledge.
 - 1)) The various emanations or aeons were spiritual and separate from the material world and though they came from God, they were not considered part of God.
 - 2)) Jesus is not one of these emanation but distinct from them and in fact the above these emanations,
 - c) The fact is that it has pleased the Father, it has been His good pleasure, to take up His residence in the a physical body, through the incarnation, in the second person of the Trinity, Jesus.

- 1)) The Father confirmed this at His baptism and the transfiguration. Matt. 3:17; 17:5
- 2)) Everything God is, Jesus is!
- d) Jesus is the one mediator between God and man, the one in whom resides all the sum total of deity and they need not fear any supernatural power that be, be they emanations, aeons, angel or the like.
 - 1)) The word dwell “katoikesai” is in the present tense, stressing an ongoing reality.
 - 2)) Jesus is the work of the Father on behalf of Christians in the plan of salvation, the initiator of the plan. vs. 12-14

1:20 The plan of the Father.

- 8) Jesus is the reconciler of all things.
 - a) The extent is things on earth and in heaven, He is Lord of creation and salvation. Rom. 8:19-21; Rom. 5:8
 - 1)) The fall affected man and creation. Gen. 3:17; Rom 5:12-21
 - 2)) The reconciliation of all things does not teach that the fallen angels will have an opportunity to repent, for that was only made for man and Gehenna for Satan and his angels. Matt. 25:41

- 3)) The proper arrangement of the universe will be put under His submission after the millennium and then even the Son will be subject to the Father and God will be all in all. 1Cor. 15:20-28
- 4)) All thing is repeated over and over, their are no force, power, angels, emanation, etc that can harm a Christian, they have been defeated await their ultimate overthrow. Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:10-11
- b) The result of this reconciliation peace with God, by the forgiveness of sins. vs. 14b
- 1)) Propitiation for the world. 1Jn. 2:2
- 2)) Resulting in peace with God. Rom. 5:1; 8:2-3
- c) The basis of the accomplished fact is the payment of His blood on the cross. vs. 14a; Col. 2:14
- 1)) The implication is He had a body.
- 2)) The second implication is that He died on behalf of others, a substitutionary atonement as prefigured by the Old Testament.
- 3)) The payment “blood” after the Old Testament principal and pattern. Lev. 17:11

- 4)) The motive was love for man and He was the initiator to reach others. 2Cor. 5:18

1:21-23 The work of Christ.

- 1:21** The specific application to the Collosians for the accomplished salvation history of mankind, in particular the Colossians who had repented of their sins and accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- 1) And you is emphatic.
- 2) The contrast is that they were alienated but no reconciled. Eph. 2:1-2, 12
- 3) The reason was due to their past hostility of mind, a word used in the LXX for the heart dealing with the act of the will and emotions, which were manifested in works against God and the things of God. Jer. 17:9
- 4) The false teachers were teaching a person could live any way they wanted, it mattered little as long as he or she cultivate their spirit!

- 1:22** The medium of the reconciliation.
- 1) The specific procedure through a physical body unto death, not a phantom as the Cerinthian Gnostics taught.

* Jesus who was God therefore spirit had a body of matter that was not evil.

- 2) The purpose is declared, to present the Colossians holy, set apart, blameless or unblemished as the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and above reproach, a judicial word meaning without charge or stain in His sight, acquitted. Heb. 9:14; 1Pet. 1:19
 - a) This implies the efficaciousness of the sacrifice of Jesus,
 - b) This implies also that man has been joined back with God through Jesus not any other means or mediator.
 - c) Rom. 8:2-3; Jude 24; 2Cor. 5:21
 - d) offered to bear the sins of many. Heb. 9:28

1:23 The exhortation to the Colossians.

- 1) The danger of deception is real not imaginary.
 - a) The grammar is the first class conditional which is best translated “since you continue in the faith”
 - b) Paul is expressing his optimism and confidence in the Colossians. Col. 2:6-7
 - c) We certainly would not want to ignore the warning, even as Jesus gives it by the proclamation to abide. Jn. 15:1-5

- 2) The need is to be continue in the faith, be grounded and steadfast and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel which they had heard.

* The blessed hope, the soon coming of Christ and the glorified body!

- 3) The gospel that had been preached to every creature under heaven, which he became a minister “diakonos”, a servant of the gospel.

Jesus is:

1. The sphere of faith.
2. The object of hope.
3. The gospel message.
4. The commissioner of men is God.

1:24-29 Paul's service in Christ

* The chapter break is unfortunate for the entire unit runs from verse twenty-four to verse five and some even break it at verse seven of the second chapter, though they do have a natural break into two. Col. 1:24-29; 2:1-5, 7

* Some break it at verse five.

1:24 The cost of his ministry.

- 1) Paul declares that he rejoiced in his sufferings for them, due to the fact that Christ is no longer on earth, therefore he as a representative is persecuted and attacked instead.

- a) Paul does not tell the specific way he suffered for them but he was in prison for preaching to the Gentiles. 4:2
- b) All Christians will suffer for their faith in one way or another, at one time or another. Acts 14:22
- b) Paul in this context is speaking about his personal call to ministry. Acts 9:16
* 1Cor. 4:9-13; 2Cor. 1:3-11; 11:23-33; 12:9, 10; 13:4; Gal. 6:17
- 2) He is not saying he is completing or adding to the work of redemption.
- 3) He is not saying you have to do penance as the Catholic church says.
- 4) Paul is saying that Christ continues to suffer through His members of the body, the church without any idea of completing or finalizing the atonement. Phil. 3:10
- 5) Sufferings play many roles in the believers life.
 - a) To further the gospel, comfort others, keep humble, prepare us for future glory, a refining process for faith. 2Cor. 12:10; 1:4, 5; 12:10; 4:17; 1Pet. 1:6-7
 - b) The word for afflictions “thlipsis” is never used for Christ’s atoning death.

1:25 The call to ministry.

- 1) Paul became a minister “diakonos” a waiter on table of the church according to the stewardship, administration or dispensation from God. 1Cor. 4:1; 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9-10
- 2) This service, he applies to them at this time, “was given to me for you”, revealing his commitment to be involved only with what God told him and directed him.
- 3) Paul declares it was to fulfill, meaning to cram or level up the word of God in accord to the Old Testament Scriptures and his call. Acts 9:16
* Rom. 15:19; 2Tim. 4:17

1:26 God sovereign timing.

- 1) The word mystery “mysterion” was used in the pagan cults to indicate secret teaching hidden from the rest, the initiates were called “mystes”.
 - a) The word in it’s root means to shut the mouth.
 - b) The word is found in Paul’s letters twenty-one times, twenty-seven in the New Testament.
 - c) At times it has to do with future events yet to be manifested.
 - * There are many mysteries in the Scriptures that are yet to be manifested in the future.

- 2) This mystery was hidden in the Old Testament, the mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body, in types and shadows.
- a) In our context it refers to what has been manifest and revealed, namely the gospel of grace to the saints.
 - b) It was hidden from people and time.

1:27 God's revealed mystery.

- 1) To the saints God chose to make known this mystery among the Gentiles. Eph. 3:6
 - a) The instruments were the few believing Jews, the twelve, Paul, etc.
 - b) The quantity is said to be "the riches of the glory of the mystery", to oppose and put down the false teaching of further mysteries apart from Christ. Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 10:12; Phil. 4:19; Col. 2:3
- 2) The mystery is Christ in them, the hope of glory, to be just like Him and with Him. Eph. 2:11-22; 3:2-12
 - a) A veiled hope of glory, God's glory, not ours.
 - b) By the new birth through repentance of their sins.

1:28 The methods.

- 1) By preaching Christ, which is the act of warning about God's wrath to come and the offer of salvation by grace. Acts 20:31; 1Thess. 5:14
 - * The word warning "nouthountes" means to correct or admonish to put a person's mind in proper order, a term used for training, disciplining and warning children! Rom. 15:14; 1Thess. 5:12, 14
- 2) By teaching every saint in, which is the act of educating the saint and present them perfect in Christ. Eph. 4:11; 1Tim. 4:16
 - a) Take note of the word "every man", it is mentioned three times in this verse, no exception or elite persons.
 - b) Notice the phrase "all wisdom" once again, Christ is sufficient enough and there is no need of anything else.
 - c) The word perfect " " means unblemished and used for the animal sacrifices. Col. 4:12; Rom. 12:1-2
 - d) Paul says, "we", he is accompanied by others, he is not the only one, in this case he is referring to Epaphras and Timothy.

1:29 Paul part in the work.

- 1) To this end he was committed.

- a) The word labor “kopiao” means toil to point of weariness and exhaustion.
Phil. 2:16
 - b) The word striving “agonizomai” we get our word agony, it is an athletic word. 1Cor. 9:25-27; 1Tim. 6:12, 2Tim. 4:7; Col. 2:1 “agon”
- 3) The empowerment is according to His might, referring to God’s through the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8; Eph. 5:18; Phil. 4:13
- a) The working gives us our word “energy”.
 - b) The word mightily means inherent power or power through Christ by the Holy Spirit.