

## Engage

Thursday 12 November 2020

# Christ Supreme

Colossians 1:15-29

## BEFORE MEETING TOGETHER

Watch the Bible Project video: Colossians, an Overview <https://youtu.be/pXTXIDxQsvc>

## OPEN

*What does it mean to be the head of something? What do you expect from someone who is designated the head?*

## STUDY

**Read Colossians 1:15-20.**

This passage is one of the earliest Christian poems ever written. Paul wrote it (or possibly quoted it) to show the Colossians the centre of Christianity. It isn't about a way of being religious, nor about a system for how to be saved here or hereafter, nor a different way of holiness. It is about Jesus.

*How would you sum up what the poem reveals about Jesus?*

Jesus Christ, says the poem, is the one through whom and for whom the whole creation was made in the first place. When the lavish and generous beauty of the world makes you catch your breath, remember that it is like that because of Jesus. But there is also much ugliness and evil, summed up in death itself. That wasn't the original intention, and God has now acted to heal the world of all which mars it. He has done so through the same one through whom it was made in the first place, Jesus.

If we are to grow as Christians, increasing in wisdom, power, patience and thanksgiving, we need to know what the Colossians needed: the centrality and supremacy of Jesus.

*What are the implications of the centrality and supremacy of Jesus for your home and family life, for your work, for your church or your life as a citizen?*

**Read Colossians 1:21-29.**

Paul knows that this poem (15-20) was quite overpowering. Many might read it and think, Well, that sounds impressive, but what's in it for me? So Paul brings things into focus. If the poem is like a map of the entire cosmos, these next verses (21-23) indicate where the ordinary Christian fits in.

*How do you respond to the idea that you are in God's presence "holy, blameless and without any accusation" (22)?*

*What are one or two ways in which your life is different since you were changed from being alienated from God to being reconciled through Christ's death (21f)?*

The purposes of God were entrusted to Israel, the promise-bearing people. People living in Colossae, were outside Israel. As outsiders they were ignorant both of God's saving purposes and of how they themselves could share in those purposes. But now the Colossians find themselves inside.

The Colossians—and all who have come into the family of God from outside—are like people who have been outside the temple in Jerusalem, impure, unfit to appear in the presence of God. Now, suddenly, they have been told they are summoned in, indeed, welcomed in. What has happened to make them ready for the presence of this king, this God, is the death of Jesus.

*What does Paul mean by faith in Colossians 1:4 and 23?*

Paul says that the gospel was announced not just to a small number of men and women—but to “every creature under heaven.” What he means is that when Jesus rose from the dead a kind of spiritual shock wave ran through the entire cosmos. This was a new kind of event. Nobody had ever gone down into death before and come up the other side. God's new creation had begun: Jesus is, as the poem had said, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead (18), and now he is bringing to birth the reconciliation and renewal of all things in heaven and on earth.

*What was the source of Paul's joy (24f)?*

Paul sees his own sufferings as part of what he calls Christ's “afflictions” (24). This is not an addition to Christ's own suffering, rather, an extension of it. Paul made the remarkable statement that he was, “rejoicing in [his] sufferings.”

*Paul twice refers to a mystery (26f). Where and how has it been revealed?*

The risen life of Christ is the source of the church's hope. Every Christian has this hope within them. The reason is simple: Jesus lives by his spirit within each one.

*How have you experienced “the king, living within you as the hope of glory” (27)?*

Paul can't stop talking about Jesus. The church in Colossae has never met Paul, but he says that if they want to know what he spends most of his time doing, it is this: he announces Jesus as king and Lord (28f). And he does it with the aim of bringing as many as possible to mature Christian living “in Christ.”

*How has your view of Christ been confirmed or enriched by this study?*

## PRAY

Offer prayers of praise and submission to Christ, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, the firstborn from the dead, the head of the church.<sup>1</sup>

## NEXT TIME

God's Treasure Revealed (Colossians 2:1-7)

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright, Dale Larsen, and Sandy Larsen, *Colossians & Philemon: 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups, For Everyone Bible Study Guides* (London: SPCK, 2009), 19–25.