

Colossians Bible Study

1:15-23

Questions will be posed and space will be allowed for a written response. Make every effort to answer the questions before looking below for the answer. **The answers will be in bold print.**

1. Verse 15 begins the main theme of Paul's letter to the Colossians – the supremacy of Christ Jesus. Paul's words in verse 15-17 define in specific terms who Jesus is as our Creator. What does it mean the Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (v. 15)?
Hebrews 1:3

John 14:9

John 10:30

2. Jesus is the "firstborn over all creation." This does not mean that Jesus is a created being. What does it mean? See Colossians 1:16, 18; also John 1:1-3.
3. Part of the heresy the false teachers were presenting to the Colossians centered on angels. The false teachers apparently ascribe to angels and to other spiritual beings a power independent of and greater than Christ's. They also encouraged the Colossians to worship angels (2:18). How do Paul's words in verses 16-17 dispute this falsehood concerning angels?
4. Verse 17b counters another false teaching that surfaced in Colosse. The heretics at work there talked about "a living force" that holds everything in the world together. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that what holds the world and universe together is no strange, undefined force. What holds all of creation together is Christ Jesus. Jesus' work is both the Creator and Preserver.

In our world today much misinformation has been given about angels, and emphasis has been wrongly placed on their power and on vague "energy" forces that are reputed to keep our world working. To dispute the false teachings that abound in our world, how can we use Paul's words in verses 15-17 and in Acts 17:28a?

5. Jesus' supremacy also extends over His church (v. 18). The picture of the church as a body is seen throughout Paul's Epistles. Because Christ is our head, what is possible for us as members of His church? See Ephesians 4:15-16; Ephesians 5:23.
6. Just as Paul said Christ is "the firstborn over all creation" (v. 15, in verse 18 Paul says Christ is "the firstborn from among the dead." Others, such as Lazarus (John 11:44), were raised from the dead to later physically die again. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead with a resurrection body. What does Jesus' resurrection guarantee us? See 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

7. Reread verses 20-21. Knowing that Jesus' sacrifice for you is all that is needed to make peace between you and God, what kind of relationship with God can you now enjoy?
8. In verses 21-23, Paul contrasts the situation of the Colossians before Christ and after. From "alienated" and "enemies" to people who are "reconciled" (friends) to God and holy –"without blemish and free from accusation." How did God accomplish this transformation?
9. Earlier in this chapter (vv. 15-19) Paul emphasizes that Jesus, the Savior, is true God. Now the emphasis on "blood" (v. 20) and "physical body" (v. 22) underscores that Jesus is a true human being. Why was it necessary for our Savior to be true man?
Romans 5:19

Romans 6:3

Hebrews 2:14
10. In verse 23, Paul gives the Colossians a firm directive – "continue in your faith." Paul doesn't want any of the Christians at Colosse to be moved from the hope they have in the Gospel. What influences in our world today attempt to belittle the Gospel?
11. What helps us to reject such influences?

How can we sinners be sure that Christ's work reconciles us to God? Paul says we have this assurance because of who Christ is: the image of the invisible God, the Creator, the one who is preeminent over all things. What else would you look to for assurance? To an angel? To yourself? No, look to God Himself in Christ. • "Through Jesus' blood and merit I am at peace with God. What, then, can daunt my spirit, However dark my road? My courage shall not fail me, For God is on my side; Though hell itself assail me, Its rage I may deride." Amen. (LSB 746:1) (TLSB)

Some Answers to the above Questions:

1. That Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” means that Jesus radiates God’s glory, for He Himself is God. Jesus is not merely a reflection of God, He is the absolute representation of God’s being. As Jesus says to Philip in John 14:9, “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.” Jesus possesses all of God’s divine characteristics. When Jesus says “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), He is saying, “I am God!”

2. Just as the firstborn son had certain privileges and rights in the Biblical world, so also Christ has certain rights in relation to all creation—priority, preeminence and sovereignty (vv. 16–18). (CSB)

Paul’s description shows Jesus’ relationship to the created world. The title “firstborn” does not mean that Jesus is a created being like man. Jesus is the Creator. Because He is “firstborn,” He is superior to every created being. Jesus is God and was with God in the beginning, before the world was created. As John 1:3 says, “Through Him [Jesus] all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”

3. Jesus created everything, including angels. He created all things we see and all things we don’t see. He is superior to (“before”) all things. This “before” also indicates that Jesus existed before all things in time (John 1:1-2).

Seven times in six verses Paul mentions “all creation,” “all things” and “everything,” thus stressing that Christ is supreme over all. (CSB)

4. Paul tells us in verses 15-16 that Jesus is God and that He has created all things. In verse 17b Paul says that Jesus holds all things together. These facts alone dispute false teachings that say angels or universal energy force controls and preserve us. Paul’s words in Acts 17:28a put the icing on the cake against arguments that Jesus is not in control. These words clearly say that in Jesus “we live and move and have our being.” Without Jesus we are powerless to live. Without Him, we can do nothing.

The phrase “*in Him all things hold together*” contradicts the heretical teaching that the creation is inherently evil. Jesus still cares very much about this created world, continues to sustain it, and will renew it. (TLSB)

5. Because Jesus is our head, we are saved. Jesus makes it possible for us to “grow up into Him” (Ephesians 4:15). This means He will not only fill us with knowledge of Him, He will help us build up one another in His love. Jesus will also help us mature. He will help us become more and more like Him as He helps us to attain the whole measure of His fullness.

6. Jesus' resurrection guarantees that all believers will someday rise from the dead. Jesus has the power over life and death. His resurrection shows that He is supreme over all things, including sin, death, and Satan. Through the power of Jesus' resurrection, we too will conquer sin, death, and Satan.

7. Paul explains in verse 20 that Jesus reconciled all things in Himself by "making peace through His blood, shed on the cross." The false teachers in Colosse spoke much about making peace with God and removing the barriers between God and humanity through rituals, works, and good deeds. Paul wants the Christians in Colosse to know that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (His blood" that underscores Jesus' true humanity) was all that was needed to make peace between the human race and God. "All things...on earth or ... in heaven" doesn't mean that all people will be saved, but refers to the disorder in creation that is restored in Christ (Romans 8:19-21). Because Jesus' sacrifice reconciled us to God and made peace between God and humanity once more, we can now enjoy a full loving relationship with our heavenly Father. We can come to Him in confidence with all our needs, knowing that He loves and forgives us in Christ Jesus. We no longer have to live in fear of God's hatred and punishment because of our sins. We can be certain of God's love and of His promise of salvation in Jesus. We can be certain God will never leave us, even if we physically die. We can be certain that we have the inheritance of heaven as redeemed children in Christ.

8. God accomplished this transformation "by Christ's physical body through death" (v. 22)

The apostle describes his readers' reconciled state with three complementary terms: holy, unblemished, and blameless (Col 1:22). Especially the last of these indicates that the purpose of Christ's redemptive work was that we might be found acceptable to him on the day of judgment. We will stand before him as holy ones on the basis of what he himself has done for us as Savior. (CC p. 70)

9. Christ had to be true man in order to act in our place – we who are humans – under the Law, and to keep that Law perfectly for us. He also had to be true human being in order to suffer and die for our guilt because we failed to keep the Law.

10. Answers may vary. The media, New Age thinking that emphasizes the supremacy of human beings, groups that claim Christian ways are ways of weakness, groups that emphasize scientific knowledge and explanations, and other groups that place emphasis on worldly knowledge all belittle the Gospel.

11. Holy Scripture is clear that all we need for salvation is faith in Christ Jesus. As a true human, He not only kept the Law for us, but died for our transgression against the Law. Because He is true God, we know that His sacrifice is of infinite

worth and truly redeems us from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil. This is the wonderful, precious message of the Gospel. Through the Gospel's message Jesus came into our lives. It is only through the Gospel that our faith is strengthened and maintained.