

Kurios: The Supremacy of Christ

The apostle Paul is writing to a church he has never visited, but whom he has mightily influenced through the influence of Epaphras (see verses 1:7 and 4:12-13). Epaphras apparently became a Christian under Paul's ministry in Ephesus and took the message back to his family and friends in his hometown of Colossae. Epaphras is with the apostle in Rome and has reported to him that certain heresies have begun to affect the church in Colossae. Paul, therefore, takes up and ministers to the Colossian Christians through this great letter and sends it by way of Epaphras himself.

The concern is that the "Colossian heresy" has begun to lead some of the Christians astray in their understanding of Jesus' unique authority and salvation. Paul, therefore, in his overall argument, reminds them of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ in creation and in redemption.

Paul gives the Colossians a reality that organizes all of life. For many decades physicists have sought "a theory of everything," which would combine what we know about the cosmos and what we know about atomic energy; specifically they seek to combine what we know in the general theory of relativity and in quantum theory. The purpose of these physicists is to find the mathematical formula which will explain everything in the universe. Paul is not a physicist. Even better, he is God's messenger to give us the ultimate "theory of everything," which enables us to live life in light of ultimate reality.

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

There are two major stanzas to Paul's Christological hymn: stanza 1 is found in verses 15-17, and stanza 2 is found in verses 18-20.

I. **We must know that Christ is the Lord of Creation (vv.15-17)**

a. Christ is God of very God (v.15)

Paul says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God (see Hebrews 1:3) and that He is the "first born" of creation (see Psalm 89:27). Here we learn that Jesus is God of very God (John 1:14, 18) and that He is preeminent over all other beings and King over all other kings.

b. Christ is the Creator (v. 16)

Jesus, the second person of the Trinity incarnate, is the one through whom, for whom, and by whom all things were made (see John 1:1-4). As the hymn writer says:

"Lo, within a manger lies, he who built the starry skies."

c. Christ is sustainer of the universe (v.17)

As H.G. Moule once said, "He keeps the cosmos from becoming a chaos." (see Hebrews 1:3).

We might ask the question that if Christ is the creator and sustainer of the universe, why the cosmos seems to be in such travail. With all the murders, explosions, diseases, and death, how is it true that Christ is in charge? Paul addresses this question by teaching us in the next stanza.

II. **We must know that Christ is the Lord of Redemption (vv. 18-20)**

Paul shows us four ways in which Jesus is the Lord of Redemption.

a. He is head of the Church (v.18a)

His headship solves the problem of chaos and anarchy. He is ruling the universe through creating a new humanity over which He is the head, which means that He is supreme, He is the authority over all of us, and He is the source and provision to meet all our needs.

b. He is the first from the grave (v. 18b)

Paul shows us that Jesus solves the cosmic problem of death. He is the first from the grave, and there are many to follow. He, once again, is entitled “the first born” because He is the preeminent one above all of those who are raised from the dead.

c. He is the fullness of God (v.19)

Paul is quite aware that in the Old Testament the fullness of God dwelt in the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple. We learn that Jesus is the fullness of God, and we share in that fullness for we are united to Christ.

d. He is the maker of peace (v.20)

Paul shows us that Jesus’ lordship over redemption solves all of our broken relationships, beginning with our ultimate relationship with God Himself. We are “out of sorts” with the Deity in our natural state because of the sin that Adam and Eve and all of our sins which proceed from that primeval sin. We have provoked the wrath of God, and we are helpless to redeem ourselves. John Calvin said, “We cannot be joined to God otherwise than through Him (Christ) ...Our happiness consists in our cleaving to God...there is nothing more miserable than to be alienated from Him.”

The good news is that God has done the “impossible.” He has reconciled us to a holy God. He has done it not because we have sought Him nor have we compensated for our offenses against Him; He has reconciled us through His own initiative in sending His son Jesus Christ to shed His blood on our behalf. This is why the apostle Paul says in verse 20, “making peace by the blood of his cross.” As Dick Lucas has said, “Reconciliation with God waits not upon human achievement, but upon human acceptance.” We simply must receive what God has provided in the atonement of His dear Son.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do we need a “theory of everything” in order to live meaningful human lives?

2. What is Paul’s “theory of everything” in Colossians 1:15-20? How does it differ from the way many of the Colossian Christians were thinking?

3. What is the main point of verses 15-17? How does this affect our lives?

4. In what ways in verses 18-20 does Paul show us that Christ is the Lord of Redemption?

5. How is our reconciliation with God accomplished? How does this differ from the ways in which humans usually reconcile to each other? What are the implications for us in all our relationships?

Going Deeper

1. In what ways do you tend to diminish the lordship of Jesus Christ in various aspects of your life?

2. What cultural influences do you most urgently need to counter in order to remain faithful and obedient to the Lord?