

The Supremacy of Christ in Creation and Redemption **Colossians 1:15-20, Dan Rupprecht, October 13, 2013**

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸He 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. ¹⁹For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰and 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. Colossians 1:15-20 (New American Standard Bible)

Introduction:

This text has been referred to by theologians as “the Great Christology”. Paul’s assertions here about Christ’s preeminence provide a critical basis for his teaching about Christ in the rest of the letter. He also lays a foundation for his arguments against certain false teachings, and establishes that Jesus is God’s sole and sufficient means of our redemption that we see celebrated in the surrounding texts.

Remember that the Colossian Christians were being influenced by false teachings that claimed that Christ wasn’t sufficient to provide a person with a full and vibrant spiritual experience of God, but that there were other rules to keep, practices to follow and mystical experiences to have if you really wanted to experience God.

Historically, it is when heresy like this surfaces that the church is pressed to systematize and dogmatize its understanding about God. In 325 AD, 300 bishops gathered at Nicea to determine the church’s official position on the divine and human nature of Christ and to decide if the priest Arius, who taught that Jesus was a created being, was a heretic. The result is the Nicene Creed.

image of the invisible God (v15)

Jesus is the perfect _____ of God to us, so that even though “no one has ever seen God” (Jn 1:18), Jesus can say, “if you have seen me, you have seen the _____” (Jn 14:9). (Gen 1:26-28; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 3:10; Heb 1:3)

firstborn of all creation (v15)

The term does not here mean “born first”. It is a title of _____ given to the first male born into a Jewish family and is used metaphorically here to express Christ’s preeminence over creation, since He was in the beginning with God, and all creation came into being through Him (Jn 1:2-3) (see also Ex 4:22; Ps 89:27)

by Him (through him and for Him) all things were created (v16)

He created everything, both material and immaterial in the universe, “*in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible*”. This includes all the good and evil angels “*thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*”.

He is the _____, the _____ and the _____ of creation, for “*from Him, through Him and to Him are all things*” (Ro. 11:36)

before all things (v17)

He _____ creation, a quality that can only belong to the creator, God.

in him all things hold together (v17)

The resurrected Jesus Christ, not a theory or even a “law” of nature is the source of _____ in the universe, keeping electrons circling nuclei, planets orbiting stars and your heart beating.

head of the body, the church (v18)

The church is the new creation of God through Christ. He is in an _____ relationship with this new creation, like a head is with the body that it controls and provides for.

the beginning, the firstborn from the dead (v18)

Jesus is the founder of a new _____, initiated when he broke forth from the _____ of the earth at His resurrection, guaranteeing that all who become “united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly shall also be in the likeness of his _____” (Ro. 6:5; Mt. 27:52-53; Acts 26:33; 1 Cor. 15:20).

will come to have first place in everything (v18)

Jesus is eternally sovereign over all creation, but His resurrection established His power over a fallen, rebel world in a new degree. We do not currently see all things under His rule, but God says that one day it will be so (1 Cor. 15:25-28; Phil 2:11; Heb. 2:8). He came, not _____ among peers, but to be _____ over all.

Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness of God to dwell in Him (v19)

The Gnostics approached God through the pleroma “fullness”, a created, angelic _____, from God to the earth that you would “climb” to approach God. Paul uses their word to identify that Jesus is the true “pleroma” of God.

through Him to reconcile all things (on earth or in heaven) to himself (v20)

Heaven and earth are the physical creation, cursed of God and subjected to _____ (Ro. 8:20). One day, Jesus will return the creation to its pre-corruption status when He makes a new heaven and a new earth, where _____ dwells (2 Pet. 3:13)

having made peace through the blood of His cross (v20)

His _____ offering satisfied the wrath of God against human sin, removing the _____ to peace between God and man, and by extension, peace among factious people. (Ro. 5:1; Eph. 2:14)

Questions to ponder in light of this text:

How well do I know Jesus?

Are there areas of my life that I would rather Jesus not exercise His preeminence over?

Do I worry about things that threaten my security and the stability of my world?

Am I living under the authority and provision of my “head”, Jesus?

Am I living as someone who has died with Christ to this world and anxiously awaiting the resurrection?

Is Jesus Christ preeminent in my affections or is he merely prominent among my competing affections?

Where else besides Jesus am I looking to experience “fullness” of life?

How is my life a reflection of the reconciling purposes of God in the world?

Where do I need to apply the gospel of the cross to make peace where there is currently strife?