

Christ in you...

The message of Colossians



Part 2: Seeing God

INTRODUCTION – Arius VS Athanasius

- 4th Century...
- Arius teaches that the Word was birthed out of God's heart (and therefore had a beginning).
- Athanasius teaches that the Word was co-eternal with the Father.
- Even after the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) sides with Athanasius and Arius is exiled, debate continues to rage on in the Christian church.
- Later, Arius and his followers (Arians) grow in popularity so that when Athanasius refuses to grant Arius Christian fellowship Athanasius is banished by the emperor.

But Paul doesn't enter into that debate. His point is that SOMEHOW (without debating the HOW!), Jesus is at the centre of it all.

1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2

DINE IN – Learning The Text In Its Context

- **CONTEXT:** After his introduction about the power of the Gospel, and before he warns the Colossians about false teaching, Paul helps his readers get a clear view of the fundamental essence of Christ. Most scholars believe **1:15-20** is a hymn or poem, adapted or written by Paul. (Recall Paul's use of a hymn/poem in **Philippians 2:6-11**.)
- **THE SON:** Translation detail... the Greek text of **verse 15** begins "whom", but we know this is about "the Son" from the preceding verse.
- **GOD IN CHRIST:** Jesus is... God's image (**1:15**); the Creator (**1:16**); the Sustainer (**1:17**); the fullness of God in human form (**1:19**; also see **2:9**). Jesus is somehow God in the flesh. He somehow shows us the heart of God most clearly (**John 1:1, 14, 18**).
- **FIRSTBORN:** The Greek word, *prototokos*, can mean first in sequence or first in authority (e.g., **Psalms 89:27**). Here it probably means both. Jesus is first in authority, and first to rise from the dead.
- **BEGINNING:** The Greek word, *arche*, means beginning or first, in sequence or authority.
- **THRONES, POWERS, RULERS, & AUTHORITIES:** Are these spiritual dark forces? Or earthly, cultural, socio-political forces? The answer is probably "yes" – these are societal forces that are used by the enemy.
- **HEAD/BODY:** The Greek word (*kephale*) can mean source (as in the head of a river) or authority (as in the head of a movement). Here it is being used to refer to Jesus as both the source and the leader of the church (and the universe).
- **THE CHURCH:** Paul uses the word "church" (Gk., *ekkle sia*) to refer to the universal body of Christ (e.g., **1:18**) and separate local congregations (e.g., **4:15-16**).

- **ALL THINGS:** Repetition of "all things" emphasizes Christ's supremacy over everything that was, is, or will be, whether supernatural or physical realities. What it means that through Christ God will reconcile "all things" is debated among Bible scholars.
- **PEACE THROUGH HIS BLOOD:** The way Jesus makes peace with the violent forces of the universe is to absorb their violence rather than reflect it back. By doing so, he disarms them and triumphs over them (see **2:15**).

TAKE OUT – Applying The Text To Our Context

TAKE OUT #1: Art, poetry, and song are appropriate ways to express the truth of Christ which is beyond purely academic grasp (also see **3:16**).

TAKE OUT #2: The antidote to all spiritual problems, the answer to all meaningful questions, and the way to solve all ethical dilemmas is to first of all fill your mind with a clear vision of Christ. (Note: Jesus is mentioned in almost half of all the verses in Colossians – 46 of 95.)

TAKE OUT #3: What is true of Christ somehow becomes true for those of us who are "in Christ". For instance, just as Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God, so should we be (**3:10**; **Romans 8:29**; **2 Corinthians 3:18**). Just as Jesus shows the "fullness" of God (**1:19**; **2:9**), so we are brought to "fullness" in Christ (**2:10**). Just as Jesus is the firstborn from among the dead, so we are assured to follow in his footsteps one day, experiencing our own resurrection. Jesus, therefore, not only shows us the heart of God, but he shows us our true human calling and helps us fulfill it every step of the way.

Colossians 3:10; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18

TAKE OUT #4: As Jesus conquered the powers of violence (Roman/political, Jewish/religious, and spiritual/demonic) through a tool of violence (the cross) by absorbing rather than reflecting the violence, so we are called to be agents of peace by absorbing rather than reflecting violence, judgement, and hatred.

CONCLUSION – What Violence Will You Absorb?

What relationship tempts you to fight back against coercive power with more coercive power? What would it look like for you to be Christ-like in that situation?

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one thing that most challenged, puzzled, or encouraged you.
2. How would you respond to someone who asked, "How can I get to know God?"

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

3. Re-read our central text, **Colossians 1:15-20**, preferably from multiple translations if possible. a) In what ways do the various translations help your grasp of the text? Talk about examples. b) What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why? c) Discuss what we learn about Jesus from the ideas behind these words: "image", "firstborn", "fulness", "reconcile", and "all things". d) Remember the interview with Brian Walsh. What do you think are the "thrones, powers, rulers, and authorities" in our world today? What are the implications of this for us?

SO WHAT?...

4. Re-read **verse 20**. What relationship tempts you to fight back against coercive power with more of the same? What would it look like for you to be Christ-like in that situation? Talk about specific next steps you can take and pray for each other.

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