

Colossians 1:12-23 – Jesus above all

Paul had never met these Christians in Colosse. He had never been there (2:1). But he cared much for them. He was the apostle to the nations. They were his work, his concern and his joy. He wanted to make sure they had a strong foundation. There were false teachers and wrong practices in Colosse. He wanted them to make sure they had the true, apostolic Christianity. We also need to make sure of this. There are many “churches” and many “Jesus-es” being preached. Do we have the real Jesus?

1. Christ the Creator (v15-17)

We always ask where someone is from. Where is Jesus from? Paul says he is eternal; he is “before all things” and holds up the universe (v17). He is not created: he is the Creator; all things are from him (v16). He is the eternal Son of the Father. He is the firstborn – the one who is the head, the ruler and the heir. It does not mean he was created (as some cults teach). All things are for him; he is the Father's delight (v13). Why do we exist? What are we here for? This universe belongs to Jesus and is for his glory. Very many people are living as rebels against the glorious Son of God. There is no meaning or purpose in life without Christ. We must return; we must repent. We must not simply believe in him for salvation, but bow before him in everything. How big is your Jesus? The real one is over and above all things from eternity to eternity.

2. Christ the Risen Redeemer (v13-15, 18-22)

As the “firstborn”, Jesus is the one who can redeem creation and redeem God's people. He is the one who can restore God's honour and God's justice in God's creation. For this, he entered the world. He came in bodily form (2v9) – a true man, to redeem men. All the fulness of God is ground in him (v19). He is the true image of God – the true Adam (Genesis 1:26-28). The true problem of the world is sin, and so Jesus dealt with this by going to the cross. By his blood, he bought peace between man and God; he made “reconciliation”. Paul explains that this is a New Exodus (v12-14); just as God rescued a people out of Egypt for his own glory, so now we have been redeemed from the power of sin to become his holy people. Jesus rose from the dead as the great victor over darkness. He is the head of the new creation. He is making all things new – not just people in ones and twos, but the whole universe is being renewed through him. Are you part of this? Have you bowed to him? Have you honoured him as the Lord of all who alone can save you? Is he *your* Redeemer?

3. Giving Christ the Glory (v12, 21-23)

How do we live rightly in Jesus' world? It begins by hearing the good news about redemption, and receiving it. We must believe. Our lives then change – the gospel becomes our foundation. We become “established” or “grounded” in it. We begin to follow Jesus as the Lord over everything. This is repentance. We must then continue in the same way (v23), not being moved. There are many tests and trials – but we must hold on. There is nowhere else to go if we fall away from Christ. If we keep going, then we will share in the inheritance (v12). We must wait for him, with joy (v11) and thanksgiving (v12). These are keys; secrets of strength. An army grows weak when the soldiers are discouraged and complaining. We must rejoice in the greatness of Jesus and his cross. How big is the Jesus you worship? Life is all about him. The true way to glory is to forget ourselves and bow in praise, worship and service before him.