

Soaring Oaks Presbyterian Church: Adult Bible Study Questions for 12/17/2006
Colossians 1:15-23

Col 1:15-20 – He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 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 and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

NIV

- 1. Read Colossians 1:15a. In the 10 commandments [Exodus 20:1-17], we are told not to make any carved image of God. Contrast a carved image to the “image of the invisible God” Paul speaks of here, referring to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1-4 may help you here.**

Ps 115:4-8 – 4 But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. 5 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; 6 they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; 7 they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. 8 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. (NIV)

Carved images are empty imitations – a picture of a house depicts its elegance & beauty, but it is only two-dimensional and cannot serve as the true house serves.

Heb 1:1-3 – In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (NIV)

As the “image of God,” Jesus is the exact representation. What God is, Jesus is. What God contains, Jesus contains. What God has, Jesus has. What God does, Jesus does. In every way that God is God, Jesus’ being exactly (fully and perfectly) represents God’s being. [John 5:16-23,26; 8:48-59; 14:9; 16:13-15; Luke 22:66-71; Colossians 1:19]

Conclusion: Jesus is God!

Rom 10:9 – That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (NIV)

2. Read Colossians 1:15b-17. Paul says Jesus is the “firstborn” of all creation, meaning “preeminent” over all creation, and not meaning that God-the-Son was a created being.
(a) According to these verses, what things did Jesus create?

All things were made by Christ

“All things” – Colossians 1:16

“The universe” encompasses all things – Hebrews 1:2

“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” – John 1:1-3,14 (Jesus is the “him” that made all things)

Both material things and spiritual things were made by Christ.

things in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible,
thrones, powers, rulers, authorities

- (b) Also, what do we learn that Jesus continues to do with this creation?

In Jesus, “all things hold together” – Col 1:17

“[The Son, Jesus, is] sustaining all things by his powerful word.” Hebrews 1:3

- (c) What, if anything, in these verses was a new idea to you?

For me, the most unexpected or unfamiliar element in these verses is that Christ is the Creator of things “in heaven” as well as “on earth.” Paul uses the word “ouranos” which means “sky” and “heaven,” as in the abode of spirit and of God himself. In Genesis 1:1, God created the “heavens” (“shamayim”) which indicates the lofty places where stars were placed but also the heavenly realms where angels and other spiritual beings dwell. Paul also says Jesus made things “visible and invisible,” which again points us beyond the material creation to spiritual things and beings. So Jesus created the spiritual sphere along with the material sphere.

3. Read Colossians 1:18.

- (a) What do you learn here about Jesus’ relationship to the church, to those who will share in his resurrection in the last days?

He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church.

He is the firstborn (preeminent one) from among the dead. – This refers to Jesus’ resurrection, which is the ground of our confident expectation in our resurrection, that he will raise us up in the fullness of time when the last days appointed by God arrive [John 6:39-40].

- (b) How do these truths affect your confidence in Christ as your savior and Lord?

4. Read Colossians 1:19-22.

(a) In these verses, what did God do in and through Jesus?

Definition: Reconcile – to change from enmity to friendship.

We were his enemies; we were hostile to God. God undertakes not only to justify us (count us as righteous), but to conform us to the image of his son (the Lord Jesus Christ). This reconciliation that God accomplishes draws us near to God, creates in us a new creature in Christ, and works in us a new life such that we will and do what pleases him.

Col 1:19-20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

NIV

(b) What do think the word “reconcile” means?

2 Cor 5:18-21 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

NIV

An illustration:

Sinners are out of alignment with God. God's righteousness is the straight path to which we are called. We need to be straightened out the way wrinkled clothes need to be ironed. We choose a wrinkled garment, put it on a straight ironing board, and apply a hot iron to make them conform to the straightness of the ironing board. God chooses sinners, draws them near (against the plumb line), and applies his power and purity to us so we become conformed to the character of God.

(c) Why would it be important that we are reconciled to God instead of God being reconciled to us?

Our sinful nature is not wooed by God, it is defeated by God through Christ who is in believers to dwell and rule.

5. Read Colossians 1:23 along with Romans 1:16-17, and look back to Colossians 1:13-14 that we studied last week. Would it makes sense to say that Paul here tells us that a believer is in jeopardy of losing the salvation they received in Christ?

I say, “No.” Paul is not saying that believers spend their time in this world on the brink of spiritual disaster, in daily danger of being rejected by God who saved them in the first

place. I will not attempt here to present a full biblical defense of this answer to the question, for centuries of disagreement will certainly not surrender to a few paragraphs from my pen. The critical counsel (in my opinion) is simply this: patience! Let God's own word administered to us by his spirit disclose his mind to us over the course of our lives as we are committed to listen.

6. Read Colossians 1:23 again. What practices help you today, or would help you if you did them, to “continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel [that the Word declares]?”

The purpose of this question is to bring saints alongside one another in the fellowship of faith. What one has found helpful may be the very thing a brother or sister has been seeking. God uses us this way and makes us see his wisdom in commanding us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together for the mutual comfort and encouragement we need. The Lord works in his own body by this blessed kindness to us.