

Colossians 1:15-23

Week 3 - The Six-Minute Gospel

Icebreaker

? How would you explain the Gospel, in thirty seconds, to someone who'd never heard it before?

Colossians 1:15-23 (NIV)

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or

Image and Firstborn?

At first glance, words like "image" or "firstborn" from Colossians 1:15 makes it sound like Christ is a copy of God or somehow less than eternal. However, we know from many of Paul's other writings that Jesus was fully God (Colossians 2:9, 1 Timothy 3:16, Titus 2:13). "Image of the invisible God" is likely Paul's way of saying that Jesus was the first visible manifestation of God's person, which had previously been veiled to humans. Additionally, "firstborn over all creation" doesn't mean that Jesus was the first being God ever created. The term firstborn expresses Jesus' pre-eminence, meaning that He is the rightful heir to all of Creation. First century Christians would have understood that Paul was holding Jesus up above creation, because Jesus was nothing less than God in the flesh.

*Resource: From Expository Files, Jon W. Quinn
<http://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-colos>*

authorities; all things have been created through 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.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

? What are the false ideas that Paul is arguing against in this letter?

? Why does Paul think it's important that Christ was the "firstborn over all creation"?

? What common misconceptions do non-Christians have about the message of the Gospel?

? Paul was trying to educate people about the Gospel, which they had trouble grasping. How does our society still struggle to understand the gospel?

? Do you ever have trouble believing any aspect of the gospel message? Why do you think you struggle with this?

? What does Paul mean when he uses the word “reconciliation” in verse 22?

? Why does Paul highlight our obligation to be reconciled to God in this letter?

? As Christians, how should this reconciliation be reflected in our daily lives?

? Even after being reconciled through Christ we sometimes live like we don’t know Christ. In what areas of your life do you live without God?

Knowing Gnosticism

Though we only have Paul’s letter to go on, many people believe that the Colossian church had fallen into an early form of Gnosticism – a system of belief that embraced spiritualism while treating physical matter (including our bodies) as inherently evil. Among these beliefs were some or all of the following: Jesus wasn’t God. Since he was a physical being, he was inherently evil and thus could not be God. That God could not have created an inherently evil universe. And, that additional knowledge was required to relate to God, rather than just faith in Jesus.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Do you ever feel like the Gospel isn’t enough? Other than God, what things do you run after in search of meaning?

? Are there any aspects of your life where God is calling you towards reconciliation? What steps can you take this week to pursue reconciliation?