



## Growth Sheet

### Lord of New Creation

Colossians 1:18-20

#### Review

The church in Colossae was only a few years old when a controversy broke out. Some people were teaching that spiritual maturity could be found in an advanced sort of knowledge (2:8) or rigorous self-denial (2:20-23). The effect of this teaching was that it minimized the sufficiency of Christ, thus weakening the Colossians' reliance on him alone to bring about spiritual maturity in their lives.

So Paul wrote to the Colossians to stress this central point: *true spiritual maturity is found in Christ alone*. He urged the Colossians to "walk in him" (2:6) and insisted that the Colossians can expect to find in Christ "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3).

In order to advance this point, Paul begins his letter by telling the Colossians what he has been praying for them (1:3-14). In this prayer, Paul thanks God that they show evidence of spiritual life (1:3-8), and reminds them that this evidence started to show when they first believed the gospel. He prays that their budding faith, love, and hope would blossom into spiritual maturity (1:9-12). Since one of the signs of maturity is gratitude, Paul then begins to discuss what the Colossians have to be grateful for: primarily what God has done for them in his Son, Jesus Christ (1:12-14).

With the mention of Christ, Paul launches into a poem exalting Christ's lordship (1:15-20). This poem divides into two sections. The first (1:15-17) deals with Christ's lordship over creation; the second (1:18-20) deals with Christ's lordship over the *new* creation, that is, the church. In this study, we'll focus on that second part of the poem.

#### Jesus: Lord of New Creation

Even though Christ is Lord over all creation, it is clear that something has gone seriously awry. The power structures do not submit to Christ as their Creator and Sustainer. The result is death and chaos. This points to a problem that Christ alone can fulfill. Not only is he the Lord of creation, but he is Lord of *new* creation. In other words, not only does he have power over what *is*; he also has the power to take the death and chaos of what *is* and make it what it *should be*.

But how does he do this? The second part of the poem tells us how. Briefly stated, Christ is Lord over new creation because he brings *life* and makes *peace*.

## Life and Peace

Amid the chaos of a fallen world, Christ is the founder of a new humanity—a people who are so vitally connected to Christ that he is said to be their *head* (1:18; see also Ephesians 1:22; 2:13-17). This is the *new creation*, brought about because Christ has the power to bring life and make peace.

Consider how the poem develops these two aspects of Christ's work:

### 1. Jesus brings life (1:18).

- a. As the source of life (“he is the beginning”)
- b. Jesus defeated death (“the firstborn from the dead”)
- c. so proving himself to be preeminent (“that in everything he might be preeminent”)

### 2. Jesus makes peace (1:19-20).

- a. As fully God (“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,” 19)
- b. Jesus made possible reconciliation with God possible (“and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven,” 20a)
- c. by sacrificing himself on the cross (“making peace by the blood of his cross,” 20b)

By emphasizing Christ's work as life-bringer and peace-maker, Paul reinforces his central point: Christ alone can bring a person to true maturity. We are left with no excuse for seeking maturity in any other power, visible or invisible, for Christ is Lord of all.

## Discussion and Application

1. Colossians 1:18 tells us that Christ is the “firstborn from the dead.” This means that Christ, as the first to be raised to immortality, is both the beginning and the guarantee of this immortality for others (see 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; John 11:26). Imagine what life would be like if everyone alive today lived endlessly—just as they are. What problems might this solve? What problems might this create?
2. Colossians 1:20 tells us that Christ makes *peace*. How would you define peace? Describe what the following places would be like if they were completely at peace:
  - your home
  - your school or place of employment
  - your mind and emotions
  - the world
3. We find it easy to point out conflicts among individuals, political parties, and entire nations. But the Bible is more concerned to point out the conflict between God and humans (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21). Why is it easy for us to overlook this conflict? Once we begin looking for it, how do we see this conflict played out?
4. The history of warfare tells us that peace can come at a very high price. What was the price Jesus paid to make peace? What does this tell us about the seriousness of our conflict with God? What does this tell us about Jesus' love for us?
5. Read Romans 5:1. What does this teach about how people can have peace with God? What other ways do people (including ourselves) try to achieve peace with God? What should be true about a person's mind and emotions who has peace with God?