



LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Growth Sheet

Lord of Creation

Colossians 1:15-20

Review

Paul wrote to the Colossians to tell them that true spiritual maturity is found in Christ alone. But merely knowing this does not automatically make a person spiritually mature. This is why Paul goes on to urge the Colossians, “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in him*” (2:6-7). Walking in Christ means guarding against anything that would draw us away from him (2:8-23). It means rearranging our priorities (3:1-4), values (3:5-11), and relationships (3:12-4:6)—all because of who Jesus is and what he has done for us (1:15-23).

To this point in our study, we have looked at Paul’s opening greeting (1:1-2), and his prayer for the Colossians (1:3-23). In this prayer, Paul tells the Colossians what they can be thankful for. This includes what God has done for them in Christ, so Paul takes time to explain who Christ is and what he has done.

Who’s in Charge?

As curious and desperate human beings, we naturally wonder who or what is in charge. We want to know who has authority over things as they are, and who has the power to make things as they should be. In these six verses (1:15-20), Paul exalts Christ as Lord of creation and new creation. By unveiling this breath-taking portrait of Christ (1:15-20), Paul is preparing for the point he will drive home, that true maturity is found in Christ alone.

Paul’s description of Christ in 1:15-20 is actually a carefully designed poem. The entire poem is about Jesus, but it may be divided into two sections. The first (1:15-17) deals with Christ’s relationship to creation; the second (1:18-20) deals with Christ’s relationship with the *new* creation, that is, the church.

When we put these sections side-by-side, we see some ways in which they mirror each other. They both refer to Christ as the “firstborn” (15, 18). They both have the prepositions *in*, *through*, and *to*, which point to Christ as having all power and deserving all glory. And they both end with Christ’s ability to “hold things together” or to bring together what has been separated: “in him all things hold together (1:17); and “to reconcile all things to himself” (20).



1:15-17 - Christ and creation

He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** of all creation. For by [literally, **in**] **him** all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created **through him** and for [literally, **to**] **him**. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

1:18-20 - Christ and new creation

He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning the **firstborn** from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For **in him** all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, And **through him** to reconcile **to himself** all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

By identifying Jesus as the Lord of creation and new creation, Paul's point is clear: the one who has the power to create and sustain the universe is the *same one* who has the power to bring the dead to life and reconcile God's enemies to himself. In other words, *Christ is both Lord and Savior*.

Consider what the first section (1:15-17) teaches about Christ.

1. *Who* he is: "the image of the invisible God" (1:15).
As the image of God, Christ *shows* us who God is.
2. *How* he ranks: "firstborn of all creation . . . before all things" (1:15, 17). Christ supersedes all things.
As the firstborn of all creation, Christ *surpasses* all things.
3. *What* he has done: "by him all things were created . . . and in him all things hold together" (1:16, 17).
As Creator, Christ *sustains* all things.

As the image of God, Christ is over all because he created it all, so he deserves it all.

Discussion and Application

1. Describe some circumstances in which you have wanted to know, "Who's in charge?" What tends to determine what we think about who is in charge? Why do people want to talk with the person in charge?
2. If you had only the universe and history to inform you, what might you conclude about who (or what) is in charge of the world? In many cultures, both ancient and modern, people have believed in many gods (polytheism). Given the nature of our world, what makes sense about that perspective?
3. Paul was writing to a culture in which people worshiped many gods. Although most Americans do not embrace polytheism, we do have strong beliefs about the power structures of society (who controls what). What does Colossians 1:15-17 teach us about these power structures?
4. The term "firstborn" does not mean that the Son of God came into being at a certain point in time (see John 1:1). Rather, it refers to Christ's unsurpassed rank and eternal



preexistence. Because he is the unsurpassed creator of all, Christ has authority over all other powers. Why is it important to know that Christ has authority over these powers?

5. The structure of this poem teaches us that Christ is both Lord and Savior. We wouldn't want a lord who refused to be our savior, and we don't want a savior who couldn't be our lord. How does the fact that Jesus is both Lord *and* Savior shape our affections for him, our allegiance to him, our adoration of him?