

LSB Colossians 1:18 - 23 Jesus Supreme Over Cosmology & Soteriology

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

We have two instances where Paul writes to people that he himself did not lay the foundations of their particular faith. Romans and Colossians. And in both cases, Paul, since he is unsure of their knowledge of foundational doctrines, since it wasn't him that walked in there and taught them in the beginning, he takes some extra time laying a foundational teaching and doctrine of what theologians call soteriology.

Now, it's 2025, and no one likes big words, and we all want a dumbed down faith at the lowest possible common denominator, but you picked the wrong guy for that, so sit still for a minute and let me unpack first a big word, and second, what the big word is about.

The word soteriology comes from the compound greek word, soteria. The term comes from the Greek words sōtēr (savior) and -logia which is argument or teaching. Thus soteriology is the doctrines that define both sin and the problem of all people being captured and enslaved by sin, and the process of redemption, or being set free from sin by a saviour, who is

Christ, the Lord.

And thus this section is totally soteriological. Ok. 7 syllable word. One more syllable and that word would be a V8. Only about 3 minutes in and we got the 7 cylinder word out of the way, the rest is all downhill from here. Just kidding.

In fact the opposite is true. I don't expect any more kill words but you'll need to keep your thinking caps on for a while because this section is one of the deepest and most glorious sections of scripture ever written.

Paul isn't sure of these folks background, so in an economy of words, he unloads the full doctrine of Who God's Christ is and what Jesus has accomplished and continues to accomplish. Because from beginning to end, from creation to un-creation, it's all about Him. He is the prime mover. He is the cause and effect. Everything that is, is about Him and for Him.

And somewhere in the middle of all that, He came to earth and rescued sinful men. The section begins in vs. 13 and goes all the way to at least vs. 23. But actually this entire epistle is about the the superiority and supremacy of Christ in all things.

We've already spent two previous Sundays in this section, and those studies are available to you on line, if you missed those. So we're going to pick up the exegesis in vs. 18, but so that you have the full context, let me read, again, beginning at vs. 13.

13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Roughly 110 words and the pronoun for Jesus is used 11 times in there. Every 10th word looks back to tell us something about Jesus. Everything we need to know about Jesus is right here. Paul is spelling out the doctrine of Christ and the church in a very compact and concise way for us here.

Why is it important. By way of review. Vss 13 and 14. We wouldn't be here otherwise.

We were helplessly and hopelessly captured by a world that is condemned because of sinful rebellion and on it's way to judgement. We were born into a rebellion and held into an inescapable slavery to the consequence and judgement of sin. This world and it's ruler, Satan, is slated for destruction.

If you want to know what will happen to this world in the future there is a micro picture in the Bible. A tiny window where God shows us what the ultimate judgement will look like. It's in Genesis 19.

24 And Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh out of heaven, 25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

An area of a few square miles. But that kind of judgement is slated for the whole earth. So when Paul talks about rescue, in vs. 13 and 14, it isn't just hyperbole to cause an emotional response based in theory. Paul means, we are literally snatched from the fire.

13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

It's a pretty simple dichotomy. Those who have no forgiveness for sins are

slated for judgement, and those who, in Christ, have had their sins removed, by the once for all time completed work of Christ on the cross, are transferred into the kingdom, the authority to reign, of Jesus.

That's the immediate connection of us and Christ. But Paul launches into the depths of who Jesus is, not just in the rescue of helpless sinners in this world, but Who He is in the Godhead, and how He is related to all creation, and how He is over and above everything.

He created everything, it all belongs to Him. That's in verses 15 - 17.

15 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

The preeminence of everything is Christ. He made it all. He owns it all. Anything or any one in rebellion against Him will be judged and removed in eternal punishment away from God. He is King of kings, Lord of lords.

But now Paul wants to talk about our relationship to Him as redeemed people, purchased out of the rebellion, saved from our sins by His death in our place.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

In vss. 15 - 17 Paul defines Christ as pre-eminent over all cosmology. That is He is pre-eminent head over all creation. That's cosmology. Headship and ownership of the cosmos.

Now in vss. 18 - 20, Paul is going to show us that Christ is pre-eminent over soteriology. That means He is head of all redeemed peoples forever

and ever.

He owns and rules all of the universes. 15 - 17. And He owns and rules over all redeemed, forgiven, regenerated from death to life by the forgiveness of sins people. That's the definition of the church, universal.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; And Christ is pre-emminent head over His church. Headship is where all function derives. A body can live on if it loses limbs. We meet people who have lost fingers, toes, arms, legs, whatever else, and they keep going. But the body cannot live without the head.

Christ has that relationship over all believers. We make up the various body parts that form a body. But Jesus is the head where all functions derive from. He is the brain that tells the heart to beat.

Then Paul says something interesting about the entire designated class of redeemed peoples.

and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Jesus is the first person to die, beat death, rise up again from death to life, and live eternally. He conquered death.

Again, first born here doesn't mean created and somehow less than God. It means he is the pre-emminent person, the rightful heir who inherits everything, the owner, the first.

He owns death. He reigns over death. He rose from the dead, alive forever more.

You know, Lazarus, and the widow's son, and the Centurion's daughter, who Jesus raised from the dead during His miraculous ministry, they continued a normal life and then died. He is the first who conquered death

and rose again to live eternally.

We all who have had sins removed and who belong to Him, will likewise rise from the dead and live with Him for ever and ever. But He blazed that trail. He is first born in that sense, of many brothers, from the dead.

so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

He owns creation. He owns the universes, all things that **are** belong to Him. And He owns death and resurrection. He owns all who are raised from the dead into everlasting life, with Him. He owns His church. He owns everything. *first place in everything*

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him,

He is premier, preeminent by determinative design. The Father caused the Son to be the one who has all the fulness dwelling in Him. It pleased the Father to give to the Son the preeminent fulness and glory. That was the Father's design and it gives Him pleasure.

The word fulness directly relates to God the Father who has poured out that fulness of Who He Is in the Son. The fulness of the Godhead, the fulness of deity, Col. 2:9, dwells in Jesus the Son.

John 14:8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all so long and have you not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father;

That's the fulness. The fulness of God dwells in Jesus. All eyes in the universe are on Jesus. The Father delights in that, and the Spirit directs everything to that.

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in

*Him,
20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace
through the blood of His cross;*

The Psalmist asks the question, *Why do the nations rage.* Psalm 2:1

We looked at the answer in some depth the week Charlie Kirk was murdered. It's in vs. 13 and 1 Jn. chapter 5.

*13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness
1 Jn. 5:19 We know that we are of God and that the whole world lies in the
power of the evil one.*

Satan pulled a temporary coup on God's creation which rightly belonged to Jesus the Creator. By causing sin to enter into the creation, in the garden, Satan gained ruling control of this earth, because after Adam, we all sinned, and all who sinned are dead to God, and He to them.

There is a very real sense in which, by introducing sin, which removes men from a relationship with God, Satan gained control of this world, because all sinned. In a way he stole the planet. But that problem is temporary, because, through the power of the cross to forgive sins of all who believe, God through Jesus is reconciling the planet back to it's rightful owner. That's the entire story of this book.

Vs. 20 looks beyond individual reconciliation through faith in Christ Jesus and the forgiveness of the sin that separates us from our God, to the ultimate deposing of Satan and evil from this world and the re-taking of this planet, by Jesus.

There is a sense that when Christ returns and deposes Satan and rules here on this earth, that the whole creation is reconciled to Christ. In that sense, verse 20 makes sense.

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace

through the blood of His cross;

Paul tells us the whole creation groans, waiting for that day, when Christ will be revealed in heaven, with all His saints, coming to judge evil and restore the creation to it's Edenic splendor and glory.

In this age, Christ is reconciling individuals to God, one person at a time from every kindred and nation on earth. He forgives our sins and He comes to live inside our hearts. We leave Satan's kingdom behind, although we still dwell here in it, and we are placed into Christ's spiritual kingdom. A people set apart unto Christ right here in enemy territory.

But in that age where He reconciles all things to Himself, the curse will be reversed and the world will thrive. No evil. No Satan. 1000 years of glorious millennial reign on David's throne in Jerusalem.

Christ's blood bought that. Both the individual forgiveness and reconciliations in this age, and the global restoration of paradise that we will enjoy, with Christ, on this planet, in the future. All of it looks back at the cross.

Now don't buy into some kind of "universalism" that heretics will try to use this verse to support. A reconciliation of all things is not universalism. It is the single source of any reconciliation that is reconciled.

All things that are reconciled, are reconciled because of the cross. We get into the discussion of free will here. I have a much more limited understanding of free will than most Christians.

Arminian Christians believe that salvation teeters on the individual's free will to hear the gospel and choose Christ. But the Bible sees free will slightly differently.

Biblically, all humanity is ***ordered*** to ***obey*** the gospel. Here comes free will. God gives us the free will to reject and disobey the gospel. Free will

is the freedom to reject God and the free will to instead of bowing the knee in submission to Christ, by our free choice, we sin. We are free to rebel against God. Free to reject His blood bought redemption. Free to keep the sin we love more than Him.

That said, all who bow the knee in obedience to the gospel, will be reconciled to God.

The word reconcile is important. Isaiah 59:1,2 are crystal clear about the rebellion we were born into.

*1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short
That it cannot save;
Neither is His ear so dull
That it cannot hear.*

*2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your
God,
And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not
hear.*

The folks at Josh's bible study laughed at me the other friday night. I guess they thought I was a little bit outrageous. Over the top. The question was posed about non christians praying. How should a non christian pray. And my answer was, don't bother. Don't waste your time praying if you're a non christian. This verse says God won't listen.

Sin separates us from our God. The only prayer God will listen to is the prayer of repentance from sin asking for His mercy and forgiveness.

God will reconcile you to Himself if you ask for forgiveness. Christ's death and shed blood bought that reality of reconciliation. In 2 Cor. 5, Paul uses the word idea of reconciliation 5 times. Those who were formerly separated are reconnected.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Sin separates us from God. Sin removes God far away from us. But grace and mercy and the payment at the cross reconciles us back to God.

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Anything on earth, or in heaven; This categorically says anything, anywhere, in creation, that was in rebellion against God, that can be reconciled back to God, will be reconciled by the power of the completed work of Christ, on the cross.

I take that to mean all of the elect, all of the saints that died before the cross, who were looking by faith for redemption by God's annointed one, to be accomplished in the future, these also are reconciled to God by Christ's blood shed for them on that cross.

Job, the most ancient recorded voice perhaps in all the Bible with the possible exception of Jude, quoting Enoch, who was seventh generation from Adam, Job says that he will stand upon the earth, in his flesh, and see his redeemer with eyes.

25 But I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end He will stand upon

the earth. 26 Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. 27 I will see Him for myself; my eyes will behold Him, and not as a stranger. How my heart yearns within me!...

Job, was looking for his redeemer, perhaps 3000 years before the cross of Christ. The blood of Christ, shed when He died on that cross, reconciled Job and every believing old testament saint who looked forward to the cross from afar.

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

We're back to our big word. Soteriology. These words describe that process that takes us from being hostile alien's who are at war with God, to reconciled sons, presented to God as holy, because of Christ's substitutionary atonement in our place, we are presented to God with Christ's holiness and Christ's blamelessness accounted to our accounts.

He takes our sins upon Himself. He dies the death we deserved. He gives us, in their place, His righteousness. We stand before God on judgement day, not with our condemning sin, that is removed at the cross and put upon Jesus. We stand before God on judgement day with a righteousness, not our own, but the righteousness of Christ, accounted to us, so that in Him, we are beyond reproach.

With one caveat. One modifier that Paul must add to all these glorious promises. One conditional caveat;

23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and

not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Two Friday nights ago at Josh and Kristina's home, Josh taught on the great "if's" of the bible.

This, if not the scariest if, must be in the top 3.

I've been a christian 55 years and still counting. I asked Jesus to come into my heart when I was 18. I can't tell you how many so called christians I've seen come, and then leave, over the long years.

“Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 “And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 “But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 “And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 “And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

Four scenarios given. One rejects altogether. But 3 have a positive response. Something begins to grow as a result of the gospel. But sadly, of the 3 responses that take root and begin to grow, only one completes the process and bears fruit.

I have this discussion with people all the time. Half the people in Tonopah are christians. Just ask them. But where are they? We'd need to build a church to seat 900 people if all the "christians" (in scare quotes) in Tonopah were bearing spiritual fruit.

21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond

*reproach— 23 **if indeed you continue** in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

We're about 25 short of the 40 people this church could hold comfortably. We sputter along at 35% of capacity. But we're here, and God allowed us to buy the property, and we enjoy incremental growth. Here a little, there a little.

Christians need other christians. Young christians need old christians, and of course vice versa or it'll be game over in short order. Those of us who have a "like precious faith" need the fellowship and the spiritual gifts that we bring to each other.

And the community around us need to see Christ in us individually and corporately. We are to be distinct. Salt and light. Corporately and individually, we have and hold the ministry of reconciliation.