



The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians

Christ in You, The Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:12-21 | Jesus The Exalted

COLOSSIANS 1:12-21

Have you noticed the trend in our world today that makes good evil and evil good? You would have to be living under a rock to not notice it. It is nothing new. Since the fall of man, after Creation, the world has been on a downward spiral. The prophet Isaiah, 2,700 years ago wrote (Isaiah 5:20),

“Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”

Solomon wrote (Ecclesiastes 1:9),

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

The evil that we see all around us today has always been there. It simply goes underground during certain seasons. When a culture exhibits a Biblical morality and worldview, the evil still exists, but its effect is diminished because of the strength of God’s Word. When a society loses or even relaxes its Biblical moorings, evil surfaces in all its ugly glory.

Today, many of the largest corporations which sell us goods and services are embracing this evil, whether it be the transgender movement, the LGBTQ+ crowd, child pornography. They want you to see it as normal behavior, and when they promote those things, they are making evil good. And conversely, those who speak against it are made out to be evil.

Amazon, for example, with millions of subscribers to their Prime Video, has produced an R-rated animated series about Hell. The series makes Hell look good, and the Devil is made out to be the good guy. It is the Angels who are the baddies.

One reason corporations do this, and many people go along with it, is to justify their own immorality and perversions. If they can make their deviance the norm, it takes any form of guilt away from them. In a sense, they are creating their own morality—it is a morality of human will. There is nothing new under the Sun. It happened the same way at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. They didn’t want to follow God’s morality. They wanted to create their own. It is the same playbook today, just a different page.

It is easy for believers to get sucked into this vortex of cultural norms that reject God’s plan for humanity. That is why Paul instructs believers to *put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil* (Ephesians 6:11). The word *wiles* means the devil *lies in wait* to trip us up. With Amazon’s new program, what better way than to put it in innocent cartoon form?

But we have hope because we have the Word of God. Paul’s letter to the Colossians can help us. In it, Paul presents us with a picture of the exalted Jesus Christ. If we can keep Christ exalted before us at all times, we can keep from being swayed by the devil’s wiles. If we *set our affection on the things above* (Colossians 3:2), and keep Christ exalted, we can win any spiritual battle we become engaged in. We become, as Paul stated in Romans 8:37, “more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

Turn in your Bible to Colossians, chapter one. We have seen until this point the Colossians' faith in Christ, their love for other believers, and their hope of everlasting life. Paul imparted to them grace and peace and encouraged them to "walk worthy of the Lord" and to be "fruitful in every good work" and to "increase in their knowledge of the Word of God."

Verses 12-14 —

Paul starts this section by confirming their position in Christ, both him and Timothy. Notice the pronouns in these verses, **us** and **we**. Paul is giving a personal testimony to encourage the Colossians. He first gives thanks to God and then tells them, look at what God has done for Timothy and me:

1. **He has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light** (vs. 12). The word **meet** means to **make able, or to make sufficient**. Paul's point is that because God saved Timothy and me, we can now share in the kingdom with the rest of Israel. The Jews are those who inherit the Kingdom. Not just any Jew, but those Jews who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Jesus said in the Gospels, that those who rejected their Messiah would have *their house left to them desolate* (Matthew 23:38). Paul would have been one of those left desolate, had he not seen Christ on the road to Damascus, as would Timothy had he not met Paul and heard the gospel message. And Paul is giving thanks for that meeting with Christ.
2. Paul and Timothy (vs. 13) **were delivered from the power of darkness, and were translated into the kingdom of his dear son**. In other words, they had a change in their standing before Christ, and they would be welcomed into the future Kingdom of Christ.
3. Paul and Timothy received **redemption through the blood of Christ**. That **redemption is the forgiveness of sins**. While Paul is only speaking of his testimony, and Timothy's, in other passages, we see that we, too, can make this application for ourselves. For example, a verse that applies to us and all who believe, Romans 3:24:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Verses 15-20—

Now that he has told the Colossians of the benefits he and Timothy have received from the Lord, he adds a parenthetical thought in verses 15-20.

If we were to skip verses 15-20 and go right to verse 21, we can see that Paul's thought naturally continues.

But first he adds six verses.

This parenthesis is significant in Scripture as it comprises six verses that exalt Jesus Christ.

I have listed ten characteristics of the glorified, exalted Christ. We will only look at a few of them.

1. Jesus is the image of the invisible God (vs. 15). Just like the head of a king on a coin, so Jesus Christ is the "image of God." In the book of Hebrews, it states that Jesus is *the express image of God's person* (Hebrews 1:3). In the Gospel of John (14:9), Jesus said, *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."* Anyone who saw Jesus saw the visible manifestation of the invisible God and, therefore, has seen God indirectly. In His characteristics, Jesus Christ is the perfect resemblance and representation of God. Do you want to know God better? Then you have to know Jesus.
2. Jesus is the Firstborn of Every Creature (vs. 15). The word firstborn trips up many people. The Jehovah's Witnesses (J.W.'s), for example, make this verse to say that Jesus was the first created being, or "The firstborn in Creation." It could be translated that way, but it is not only the translation we have to

consider, but the context too! Context is always King. Here are some reasons from the context of this passage and others why Jesus could not be a created being.

1. The entire point of the passage is to show Jesus' superiority over all things; Jesus can forgive sins (vs. 14). A created being cannot do that.
2. Other statements made in vs. 15-20 show Jesus' priority and superiority over creation; He is the Creator (vs.16), and in Him all things consist (vs. 17).
3. The firstborn cannot be a part of the creation if He created all things. He can't create Himself. It is illogical. The J.W.'s know that it's illogical. They get around it by adding the word "other" in verse 17, "He is before all *other* things." The word *other* is not in the Greek; Paul didn't write *other*.
4. In Hebrews 1:6, the Firstborn is worshipped by angels, yet the Bible is clear in the ten commandments that creatures or images are not to be worshipped (Exodus 20:4-5).
5. Finally, had Paul wanted to show Jesus as the "first created" he would have used a different word. There is an actual Greek word for first created; it is *protoktisis*. But Paul wrote *prototokos*, a completely different meaning.

Then what does Firstborn mean?

A. Jesus preceded the whole Creation, and He is Sovereign over Creation. It has its roots in the Old Testament where a firstborn child had not only priority of birth but also the dignity and superiority that went with it (Exodus 13:2-15; Deuteronomy 21:17).

B. The term implies both Christ's **priority** to all Creation (in time), and His **sovereignty** over all Creation (in rank). The Jews reading this would have completely understood.

3. Jesus Christ Created All Things (vs. 16). He is not only the One through whom all things came to be, but also the One by whom they continue to exist (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2). We could say, The Father is the **Source**, and the Son is the **Cause** of the world. The Son was the master workman of Creation. He is the One who began the Creation of God (Revelation 3:14).

4. Jesus is the Head of the body, the *ekklesia*. (Vs. 18). This body was prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 16:18, and began its fulfillment in Acts 2.

5. The Beginning and the Firstborn from among the dead (vs. 18). The first to rise in an immortal body. His resurrection marked His triumph over death, and He became Lord of both the dead and the living (Romans 14:9).

6. Jesus has all of God's fulness dwelling within him. vs. 19). Translation: He is God in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

7. Jesus has reconciled all things unto Himself (vs. 20). Things under the earth (evil) are not reconciled.

Verse 21 —

Paul picks up where he left off in verse 14. **And you...yet now hath he reconciled.**

We are stopping mid sentence. We will complete the sentence next week.