

Jesus Glorified

6 REFLECTIONS FROM COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:15-20, 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 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.



Colossians 1:15

When you see a picture of a bright, far off nebula, you're looking at an image of the invisible.

All the extremes of light that our eyes can't see are captured and translated from one language into another, converted into colours we recognise, to make a picture both utterly familiar and completely different to anything we know on earth.

We study this picture and say "Wow! So this is what the universe really looks like."

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. The almighty creator; far above and beyond our comprehension, translated into our language. Familiar and different, human and divine, revealed before our eyes.

Study him. He is what God really looks like.



Colossians 1:16

Who is Jesus in relation to the universe? He is its source (in him), its method (through him) and its purpose (for him). Everything that exists, exists purely to serve and glorify him.

Yet in so many ways, this is not what we see. The powers that govern our lives - laws of nature, human authorities, spiritual forces - are corrupted. They were created for him, but they rebel against him.

So when we see sickness and pray for healing, we are asking that the laws of nature take their rightful place in submission to Jesus.

When we hear of oppression and pray for justice, we are asking that human authorities take their rightful place in submission to Jesus.

When we feel an atmosphere of despair and pray for hope, we are asking that spiritual forces take their rightful place in submission to Jesus.

When we pray "Your kingdom come, your will be done", we are really asking that the universe would come into alignment with its creator to fulfil its worshipful purpose.

And these prayers are not in vain, because that is exactly what will happen.

One day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. (Philippians 2:10)

In him, through him, for him: all creation belongs to Jesus.



Colossians 1:17

In John 1, Jesus is called 'the Word', but English doesn't capture the richness of what that means. In Greek it's 'Logos': the expression or embodiment of a thought, used to describe the divine order that underpins everything.

Jesus is the person, the underlying principle, the divine order that weaves all things together. Jesus' glory came before his humanity, and continues into eternity. He is the logic that governs the universe itself.

Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus sustains all things by the power of his word. He actively keeps it all going. In him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

Our Lord and Saviour continually speaks life over everything we see.

Over you.

Over me.



Colossians 1:18

Jesus had a body. A physical body that moved and rested and washed feet. This body limited him and even hurt him at times, yet it also enabled him to do all the ordinary and miraculous things his Father sent him to do.

Now, we the church, all of us, are his body, and as limited and hurt as we are, he sends us to do those same ordinary and miraculous things. Not on our own, but together. God has called me to my own life, but he has also called me to this communal life, where I am to bless and help these others, and be blessed and helped by them in turn.

Jesus was the first to die and to rise into a new resurrection body. Because of that we have hope that this damaged and divided church body will one day be resurrected too. Before his death he prayed for us 'that all of them may be one' (John 17:21), and so it will one day be.

When he calls us home, the unity and purpose which so often elude us on earth will be found at last.



Colossians 1:19

Here's something surprising we learn again and again in the Bible:

God wants to be among people.

So much so that he made himself small and became one of us.

In Eden he walked with the first human beings in a perfect world. Then in Jesus, he walked with human beings, AS a human being, in a fallen, broken world.

Philippians 2:6-7 tells us that though Jesus was God, he didn't cling to his power but humbled himself, limited himself to share our human experience.

And it pleased God to dwell in this human body. To eternally join himself to us through Jesus: fully God, fully man, once living on earth and now - still human, still God - sitting at his Father's righthand.

This is astounding. That God, rather than distance himself from his sinful creatures, would instead lean in and embrace us more tightly. That in Jesus he would forge this incredible, unbreakable union between himself and humankind.

In Jesus we see God's commitment to be among people, whatever it takes.



Colossians 1:20

Sometimes, when a bone is fractured and heals abnormally, it has to be broken again in order to be reset.

How can God die? And when he did die, how was the universe not ripped apart? It seems to me that what Jesus did somehow broke and reset the world. His death and resurrection actually healed and restored the life God breathed into his creation in the beginning. As he rose again, he brought all things back together and back into alignment with their creator.

Once again, this is something we don't yet see in full. The world is still in turmoil, but peace has been made. Peace between God and his creation, God and his people. A peace that we are invited into, to announce his victory to a world who has yet to meet him.

Last Christmas I was struck by the later verses of 'It Came Upon The Midnight Clear', written by Edmund Sears in 1849. I think it sums up the great hope we have in Jesus:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife
And hear the angels sing.*

*For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the age of gold;
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.*

Amen. Come Lord Jesus.