

Gems from Colossians

1 – Who Jesus Really Is (Col 1:15-20)

From the beginning of the Christian Church there have been people who thought faith and obedience to Christ were not enough. Some who were Jews said we should still keep circumcision and all the food laws of the Old Testament. Others, with their Greek philosophy and spirit thought that matter was evil so God could not have created the world and Jesus could not be both God and man. Paul wipes all this aside.

v.15-17: The whole created order, he says, was made by God in, through and for Christ. He is its origin and its true life and meaning. He is supreme and He is sufficient (v.19). Note the number of times the word "all" appears.

Not only so but Christ is God come among us in a form we can see, hear and understand. If we want to know what God is like we look at Him. If we want to understand what God is saying to us or what His purposes are, we look at Christ. He is one with God and superior to every power in heaven and earth.

v.18: Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church is to be God's new creation, a sample of the new humanity (Cf. 2 Cor 5.17). In Christianity God is seeking to remake human beings in His own image and with His own purpose. (For the picture of the Church as the Body of Christ see 1 Cor 12.12-27). The Church is totally dependent on Christ for its true life, its true nature and its purpose. Without Him it is simply a human gathering.

v.20: We live in a fallen world, a world in a state of disharmony. The break between God and man has dislocated the whole created order. Brokenness and evil are there instead. (Rom 8.18f). The whole creation was intended to be like a mirror, reflecting back the beauty, order and goodness of God as He looked upon it. However, with man's disobedience and fall the mirror was shattered into fragments and reflects God now only at a thousand crazy, unrecognisable and broken angles. And we cannot put it right. Only God can and He wills to do it in and through a new People (Christians) in whom His Son lives and is at work and in whom his character is made visible.

Questions for discussion:

1. How many times does Paul use the word "all" in verses 15-20? List them.
2. In what ways today does the Church reflect Jesus and in what ways does it not?
3. Christ is the Head of the Church. How are we to get to know what His orders are and to make Him and His character known?
4. Here Paul speaks of Jesus as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, Ruler of all creation. Put this beside Philippians 2.5-8 and John 13.3-9. What does this say to you?
5. Most commentators think Col 1.15-20 was an early Christian hymn – some think by Paul himself. What hymns in our hymnbook speak of who Christ is?
6. Other religions have had their founders and teachers (Buddha, Moses, Mohammed etc.). In what way is Christianity different?