

Jesus: The Focal Point of History

(Colossians 1:15-23)

Jimmy Adcox

TO FIND meaning and fulfillment in a world competing for our attention, we must put our faith in Jesus who is the Source, Sustainer, and Purpose for which all things exist.

Our world is constantly competing for our minds in commercial advertising, community projects, religious philosophies, local and world affairs, and family and work problems. Thus we get caught up in a maze of competing stimuli that makes life complex and loose-ended.

What ties life together? Is there purpose to it? How do I determine what deserves my focus and preoccupation? How can I be sure that I am really God's person in this world?

These questions to twentieth-century Americans are not new. Christians in first-century Colossae were grappling with similar concerns.

At an earlier time, Colossae had been a prominent city, but by the time of this letter it was a little town in the Lycus valley of Asia, about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. Paul had never visited these people personally, but he was familiar with them through Epaphras, a fellow Christian and a companion of Paul during part of his imprisonment (1:7, 8; 2:5).

Paul had heard about their faith, love, and growth. He had rejoiced in their firm faith in Christ (1:4-6; 2:5). However, he understood the many forces and ideas competing for their attention. He knew that their desire for assurance could cause them to look away from Jesus. He reminded them that in Jesus are found all the riches of assured understanding and knowledge.

In 1:9-13, Paul revealed his deepest prayer for these brethren. He wanted to remind them that

the spiritual blessings are found only in Christ.

But who is this Jesus concerning whom Paul promised so much? Colossians 1:15-20 is a highly structured text packed with meaning about the identity, person, and work of Jesus. It may well have been used as a hymn in the early church. Let us see the Jesus upon whom all things converge.

HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (1:15)

"Image" means likeness and implies a resemblance, representation, and revelation of God. As the image of God, Jesus is the exact representation (Hebrews 1:3). The term "invisible God" is true not only in the sense that He cannot be seen, but it is also true in the sense that He cannot be discovered or understood by unaided reason, intellect, or imagination. The TEV translates it: "Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God."

Jesus is the revelation of God to us.

Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9).

"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (John 1:18).

Because of Jesus, God is not merely some "unmoved mover," "the absolute," or "the unknowable." He is a personal God seeking us by

revealing Himself through the God-Man, Jesus.

HE IS THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS (1:15-17)

The “first born of all creation” was not the first one created, for He created (v. 16). He was “first born” representing priority in time and supremacy in position.

Notice His relationship to creation (v. 16). He is the source—“in Him.” He is the agent—“through Him.” He is the goal—“for Him.” The all-inclusiveness of His rule (v. 16) is also shown: heaven and earth, visible and invisible, and thrones and powers. He is the continued Sustainer of all things (v. 17).

Jesus is in control of all things. All things rely on Him for existence and order (Hebrews 1:1-3). He is the reason why it all exists; He is the reason why it is what it is. Toward Him all movements and realities converge. He is the focal point of all things—past, present, and future.

HE IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (1:18-23)

Jesus is the “head of the body.” The body is directed, nourished, united, and empowered by the head. Jesus is actively involved in accomplishing His purpose in the church just as He has been actively involved in creation. He is “the beginning, the first born from the dead.” He is not just the first, but the Source. Jesus was first to rise never to die again. “First” implies that others will follow; this is the promise of the resurrection. “First” is not just priority; it suggests sovereignty.

He has been raised that “in everything He might be pre-eminent.” Our first question is: Over what? Creation, powers, the church, and death! Our second question is: How? In Him the sum total of the powers and attributes of God dwell. They dwell in Him permanently, not temporarily. For what? “To reconcile to Himself all things.” Both human and cosmic significance is affected. He was “making peace by the blood of His cross” (cf. Romans 5:1, 2).

God is moving in His purpose for the church to subdue all things unto Himself:

... a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things ... in Him (Ephesians 1:10).

And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the one

who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

... that at the name of Jesus. ... (Philippians 2:9-11; cf. Colossians 2:15).

CONCLUSION

In a world competing for our attention, we must recognize Jesus as the focal point and center of all things. Everything must be evaluated and judged through the reality of the Son. He must be pre-eminent in our lives and thoughts. His power is sufficient to meet our needs and fulfill life’s purpose. All history will converge on Jesus. His purpose in God’s time will be accomplished.

We have a choice either to share in His triumph by being reconciled in His body now, or reject Him now and be a part of the creation forcibly brought under His power and rule later.

Jesus is pre-eminent in everything. Will you acknowledge Him as pre-eminent in your life?

Try Again

Now if at first you *do* succeed,
Try again.
Life is more than just one deed,
Try again.
Never stop with what you’ve done,
More remains than you have won,
Full content’s vouchsafed to none —
Try again.

If you’ve won a bit of fame,
Try again.
Seek a still more honored name,
Try again.
Sit not down with folded hands,
Cramp not hope with narrow bands,
Think what prowess life demands —
Try again.

If at first you *do* succeed,
Try again.
For future harvest sow the seed,
Try again.
Rise with sacred discontent,
Realize that life is lent
On highest searches to be spent —
Try again.