

Last week we saw Jesus, the image of the invisible God. We saw that He is the Creator and sustainer of all things and that all things were created for Him. In our passage today we move from the first creation to the new creation. It's going to get a bit mystical and maybe out of our comfort zone, but we are going to try to follow Paul into these realms.

Jesus is not only the creator and sustainer of the first creation, but He is also <sup>18</sup>... *the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.* Let's look at each of these three descriptions of Christ in the new creation. He is the head of the body. Though Paul has referred to the church being like a body in some of his previous letters (Romans 12:5; 1Corinthians 12:12), this is the first time he refers to Jesus as the head. (Ephesians 1:22) From the head comes direction to the members of the body and the will that determines what the body will do. Paul probably had more in mind as we will see in 2:19. The head is the life giving source and in the mind of that age, the source of growth. The pituitary gland within the head does in fact regulate growth.

In the next chapter, the leader of the false doctrine is said to have lost connection from the head (Jesus) and therefore had not grown along with the rest of the body of believers.

The next declaration is that **Jesus is the beginning**. To understand the depth of this word (*arche*) "beginning", we need to see its use in Scripture. The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. The Greek version uses the same word Paul is using here. The Gospels of Mark and John both start using this word in their opening line just as in the book of Genesis. (Mark 1:1; John 1:1; Genesis 1:1) **Jesus is a new beginning. He is head over the old creation, but He is also head of the new creation, the new beginning.** That is why in the book of Revelation He declares that He makes all things new. (Revelation 21:5) **All things are yet to be made new. We do have the beginning however, Jesus! There is also the new creation of the church, the bride of Christ.**

I have long seen that God's purpose has been to reverse the effects of the fall (Genesis 3:16-19), but there is something more. God was not surprised by the fall. For the full purposes of God to come to fruition, God had to enter creation and take upon Himself our nature. We were meant to be more than a "living soul". (Genesis 2:7) The destiny that God planned for man was that we might receive His "life-giving Spirit". (1Corinthians 15:45) **When a soul receives the redemptive work of Christ, they become a part of the new creation** that Jesus began in the resurrection. That is why the third description of Jesus is "firstborn from among the dead".

**Commented [Paul1]: Romans 12:5 (NIV)**

<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

**Commented [Paul2]: 1 Corinthians 12:12 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

**Commented [Paul3]: Ephesians 1:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

**Commented [Paul4]: Colossians 2:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

**Commented [Paul5]: Mark 1:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**Commented [Paul6]: John 1:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**Commented [Paul7]: Genesis 1:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**Commented [Paul8]: Revelation 21:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

**Commented [Paul9]: Genesis 3:16-19 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

**Commented [Paul10]: Genesis 2:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

**Commented [Paul11]: 1 Corinthians 15:45 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

When Jesus was raised, it was not like any previous resurrection in which the person aged and eventually died. He was raised in a transformed body that was the beginning of the new creation that cannot die. (Romans 6:9) Each new believer is spiritually transformed within to be a part of the new creation. That is why Jesus told Martha and Mary that the one who believes in Him will never die. (John 11:25-26) The body may perish, but we have become a part of the new creation that is eternal life; thus the saying, "even though he die yet shall he live!" We are in Christ. But as the passage goes on to indicate, this is just the beginning.

**Commented [Paul12]: Romans 6:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

**Commented [Paul13]: John 11:25-26 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

We live in world where the old creation and the new exist side by side. The day will come when creation will be redeemed, but in the end the old things will pass away and all things will be made new. That day is already here for believers spiritually. (2Corinthians 5:17)

**Commented [Paul14]: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

He is the firstborn from the dead, the beginning, the head of the church. Jesus is Creator and the One who began all things is bringing about the new creation. That is why He is preeminent in all things. He is not one of a number of ascended masters or intermediaries, He is all in all.

Heresies always attempt to describe Jesus as something less than He is, the preeminent One, the Creator of both the old and new creation. The false teaching that was being offered to the Colossians was trying to make Jesus something far less than what He is, and Paul was saying He is so much more than even the Colossian believers understood Him to be. I would dare to say He is so much more than we in this life will ever comprehend Him to be! How magnificent is Jesus to you?

In case the reader couldn't understand what Paul had written to this point, if they didn't understand to what extent Jesus was the image of God, Paul clarified it further. <sup>19</sup> *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,*

The combination of the verbs pleased and dwell are only found in one other place in Scripture, Psalm 67:17 LXX. It is not the same in our Bibles, but it was the version of the Old Testament often referred to by the New Testament authors. A direct translation would be as follows: "God was pleased to dwell in it. The Lord will dwell forever in the holy place." The New Testament authors saw Jesus as the new tabernacle, the place where God resides with man, the place where we go to meet with God, and the place where sin is atoned.

All the fullness of God was pleased to be at home in the sanctified holy place of Jesus. "Fullness" was a favorite term of Gnostics. Paul was saying that Jesus didn't just have fullness of wisdom or secret knowledge but that ALL the fullness of God was pleased to

live in Him. (Hebrews 1:3) And He invites us to be in Him! (John 15:4) That is so much more than what the false teachers were offering.

Paul was clarifying the choice that was before the Colossians. They were offered a so-called secret knowledge or they could continue to be in the One in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Once the choice is clarified, we shouldn't have a problem deciding. It is the same for us. **Everything the world has to offer, whether relationships, pleasure or possessions pales when we compare it to what is offered to us in Christ!** We need to make a real comparison. We need to see the temporal nature of everything of the old creation. (1John 2:18) We also need to see Christ in His glory, the wonder of His character, and the love and grace He offers. Both cannot be first in our life. The old creation is to be enjoyed in the boundaries of God's will, but it is the new creation that should by far be the joy of our heart and reason for living. He must be preeminent in our desires. (Deuteronomy 6:5) There is no fullness in life outside of Christ. The old always leave you wanting more. Only Christ can fully satisfy our longings for all the fullness of God is at home in Him.

You've often heard me say that Jesus is our example in everything. How does that relate to this incredible fact that all the fullness of God is pleased to be at home in Him? Everything of God finds a place in Jesus. All God's justice, righteousness, holiness, grace, mercy and every other attribute finds itself without resistance in Jesus.

Are the attributes of God at home in you? If we are in Christ, a part of that new creation, they certainly should be at home in us. We are not perfected. We are still a work in progress, but grace should be at home while unforgiveness should be out of place like an uninvited guest. Love should be at home in our heart while apathy should like a mangy mutt that wondered in unwelcomed. That's the assurance that you are a part of the new creation in Jesus.

God was pleased *...through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* The old fallen creation will be reconciled to God. The word for "all" in the Greek is neuter, meaning this is referring to physical objects not living souls. The fallen state of the universe will be undone and we will experience it as it was originally created, at least for a time. (Matthew 24:35)

Universalists would like to read into this passage that all people and angels will be reconciled to God. That ignores the rest of Scripture. (John 3:36) Certainly God will reconcile all people that will accept what Jesus has done. The blood of the cross reconciles all who will have that change of mind and heart that the Bible calls repentance, but it will also have an effect on all of creation that is presently groaning to be delivered from its bondage to decay. (Romans 8:21-22) Jesus' blood shed on the

**Commented [Paul15]: Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

**Commented [Paul16]: John 15:4 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

**Commented [Paul17]: 1 John 2:17 (NIV)**

<sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

**Commented [Paul18]: Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV)**

<sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

**Commented [Paul19]: Matthew 24:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

**Commented [Paul20]: John 3:36 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

**Commented [Paul21]: Romans 8:21-22 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.  
<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

cross defeated death and hell and gave Him a right to take back the Lordship over creation that was lost when man fell. The right was restored to man, the God man, Jesus. (Revelation 1:18)

The verse tells us that this is how God was pleased to make peace. The universe has been at war. You don't have to take it by faith, just look at the newspaper or turn on the news. It is one non-stop reporting of the war that is taking place. It is a spiritual war that is manifest in the physical creation. (Ephesians 6:12) It is a war that started when Satan decided he wanted God's throne. His pride prevailed in his thinking and then was manifest in his actions as he drew a third of the angels to follow him in his rebellion. (Revelation 12:4) He was able to seduce man into joining that rebellion as well with the same temptation to which he succumbed. "You shall be as gods!" (Genesis 3:5) The war has raged on ever since.

God worked through the rebellion to help man understand that God is loving and good and to resist Him is evil and death. He provided the victory through the blood of the cross. God gave us the Old Testament system of sacrifice to give us an idea of what was taking place. Substitution is the basis. There is a foundation for it in the first chapters of Genesis when God provided an animal skin as a covering for Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:21) The covering of glory that they lost when they sinned exposed them. They tried to cover themselves with leaves but still knew they were exposed. Then the Lord provided a covering. Some animal died to provide a covering. In that picture, we have the outline of what God would one day do for mankind in providing a covering (atonement) for the sins of mankind, peace through the blood of the cross.

The author or Hebrews puts it like this: *<sup>8b</sup> At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.* Hebrews 2:8b-9 (ESV) The old creation is not yet in subjection to Jesus, though He has certainly claimed the right to subject it and will do so at the time of His choosing. (1Corinthians 15:25) But being in wonderful subjection to Him can begin right now in all who will receive Him tasting death for you. That means your life is no longer your own. You become a servant of the living God and that is why we call Him Lord.

This is why it is so difficult for people to make the choice to surrender to Jesus as Lord. They still fall for the lie that we can be our own god. They don't realize that they are remaining as a part of the old creation which is fallen and under a curse. They don't realize the benefits of being a part of the new creation and knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, the beginning, the head of the church, the firstborn from among the dead.

**Commented [Paul22]: Revelation 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup>and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

**Commented [Paul23]: Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

**Commented [Paul24]: Revelation 12-4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

**Commented [Paul25]: Genesis 3:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup>For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

**Commented [Paul26]: Genesis 3:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup>And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

**Commented [Paul27]: 1 Corinthians 15:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Firstborn from among the dead means those in Him are guaranteed to follow Him in physical resurrection for we are a part of that new creation. (1Corinthians 15:52)

The verses we have gone over these past two Sundays (15-20) are believed by some to be an ancient hymn of praise to the glory of Jesus. We can't be sure, but it is a beautiful expression of His majesty and preeminence over the original creation and the new creation of which He is the beginning. If there is one thing I would like you to take from this, it is that what we have in Jesus is incomparable to anything, anything! (Romans 8:32) And in Him we have all things eternal!

As we continue to pray for the full knowledge of His will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, I believe we are going to see that God's will is for us to know Jesus, to know Him in a deeper and richer and more surrendered way than we have known Him to this point. The more you see of Him the more you will love Him. The more you love Him the more you will love those He loves. In serving others you will see that you are serving Him. (Matthew 25:40)

These few verses are rich with theology that we have only scratched the surface, but the point is this, Jesus is the Supreme One. He is the head of the church. The elders are his undershepherds but He is the head. Good ideas have no place. We need the head to give us direction. Our will has no place. The head must share with the body His will. We must learn to wait upon Him and not go off on our own, at our own whim or at the leading of any individual or program that presents itself as the answer. That is why the elders pray together to discern what the head is saying to the body. **Jesus must be the preeminent One in the church.**

**He must be the preeminent One in each of our daily lives, in how we spend our time, in how we order our thoughts, and in each of our families.** He must be preeminent in our work and leisure. Jesus must be first and foremost in our worship, in our music, in our missions, in our service. Most of all He must be the preeminent love of our life, and He will be if we will see Him as He is, the image of the invisible God, the Creator and sustainer of all things, the firstborn of creation and the firstborn from among the dead, the head of the church, the beginning. His blood has reconciled us to God, and for that we owe Him everything!

Are you a work of His new creation? Are the attributes of God at home in you? If not, you can be transformed today by accepting the reconciliation that the blood of the cross made possible for you. Just come to Him and let Him to be your loving Lord and Savior.

Questions

**Commented [Paul28]: 1 Corinthians 15:52 (ESV)**

<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

**Commented [Paul29]: Romans 8:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

**Commented [Paul30]: Matthew 25:40 (ESV)**

<sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

- 1 What are the implications of Jesus being the head of the body?
- 2 What is the connection with "beginning" in Genesis and Mark and John?
- 3 What could be more than reversing the fall?
- 4 How is Jesus' resurrection different from all others?
- 5 What was the choice the Colossians had to make? And ours?
- 6 Are the attributes of God at home in us?
- 7 What are the "all things" reconciled to God through the cross?
- 8 What was the earliest picture of atonement?
- 9 Why do people have such a hard time receiving Christ as Savior?
- 10 What is one way to serve Jesus?