

The Invisible Creation

Colossians 1:13 - 23

Sermon Discussion Guide

April 26, 2020

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STUDY NOTES

The domain of darkness (1:13)

Darkness is an appropriate image for the influence of the hostile spiritual forces (v. 16) since their domination only leads to spiritual and moral blindness (Luke 22:53; John 1:5; Ephesians 5:8 – 14). Using the metaphor of the exodus, Paul reminds the Colossians that these astral powers are not more a threat to the Christian than Pharaoh was to the Israelites after the incident at the Red Sea!

Image of the invisible God (1:15).

“Image” does not mean a second-hand representation (such as a photograph is an image of a person), but a complete representation. All that god is, Jesus is (John 1:18; 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:4

You probably know someone who claims to see things which do not exist. Even if you don't, you may have seen a movie with a character who was invisible or perhaps you had an imaginary friend or pet as a child. The truth of the matter is that there are things which are seen and not seen in this world. You can't see the air, but we breath it. You can't see emotions, but you can see how they impact a person's behavior. Part of God's creation is invisible and the things not seen most definitely impact our lives every day. Therefore, we need to know how we relate to what is seen and unseen.

Read Colossians 1:13 – 23.

1. Matt shared three ways in which we relate to God: 1) Creator, 2) Ruler, and 3) Redeemer. According to Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” What are some of the difficulties we have in trying to know and relate to an invisible God?
2. How has Christ's incarnation overcome these difficulties?
3. Christ is also “the firstborn,” which means the one who is first (or Lord) over all creation (1:15). In what ways are His lordship and supremacy indicated in Colossians 1:16 – 20?
4. How does this portrait of Christ enlarge your view of Him?
5. According to Colossians 1:16, what is the purpose of all created things: nature, people, “rulers” and “authorities”?



STUDY NOTES

– 6, Heb. 1:3). One need not look anywhere else but to Christ in order to fully know God.

He is before all things (1:17).

Jesus Christ's preeminence means he is Lord overall.

The head of the body (1:18).

This emphasizes the organic, living relationship between Christ and his people.

The mystery (1:26).

The "mystery" of the gospel is revealed by God to all – including Gentiles – who believe. It is not a secret form of spiritual power but the hope for eternity guaranteed by the presence of Christ within the believer.

Mature in Christ (1:28).

Each Christian is perfect in Christ. He stands wholly righteous for us before God. We mature in our relationship with Him through obedience moving toward the goal of the completed work of Christ in us.

6. How should this affect our attitude toward life – including our possessions, relationships and goals?
7. Christ is also "the head of the body, the church" (1:18). How should Christ's authority make a visible difference in the church and your small group?
8. How does Colossians 1:20 help us to understand God's overall plan and goal for the universe?
9. According to Colossians 1:21 – 22, what has God done to enable us to participate in His plan?
10. What kind of response does he expect from us in Colossians 1:23?
11. Colossians 1:18 summarizes the overall thrust of this passage: "so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything." In what areas does Jesus not yet have first place in your life? What steps can you take to submit these areas to his lordship?