

Intro

Is there a reason why we exist? Is there a reason for the trees, the mountains, the lakes? For the moose, the lobster, the bees? Is there a purpose behind these things?

Where is our world headed? Does the story end well? Does the story end in self-inflicted disintegration? Is there hope for change in humanity? Are we doomed to be broken forever? War after war. Racial conflict. Death by disease. Senseless shootings. Slaves to our own passions.

God, through the apostle Paul, speaks to these matters. And he speaks to these matters by telling us about his Son Jesus.

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

Paul packs a lot in here. First we'll explain these six verses. Then we'll unpack some points of application.

Passage Interpretation

1:15 picks up on 1:13-14. The Father has transferred God's people (the Colossians) into the kingdom of his beloved Son. A domain where blindness, hardness, ignorance, inability to obey is removed. A domain where there's a love for God's Word and divine strengthening to do what God commands. Forgiveness of sins. Peace with God. All this rescue comes through Jesus. And only Jesus.

But who is Jesus? Verses 15-20 tell us.

“the image of the invisible God”

“image” = a representation of something else. In this case Jesus is found to be representing one whom he shares deity with: the Father.

Image speaks to the fact that Jesus is the revealed, physical manifestation of the invisible God. The invisible God became visible in Jesus.

“firstborn of all creation”

▪ Jehovah's Witnesses take this to mean Jesus is the first created being. They believe Jesus isn't eternal and he's not God.

“for” begins 1:16. Meaning 1:16 is an explanation Jesus as firstborn. Paul's explanation rules out the JW interpretation.

“by him all things were created”

“*all things*” = everything. Everything in heaven. Everything on earth. Everything visible. Everything invisible (angelic realm). Thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities likely mean angelic beings, both good and bad.

“*by him*” = Jesus played a part in the creation of all things.

Since he created all things, he can’t be a created being himself. Jesus is distinct from the “*all things*” that were created by him.

“all things were created through him”

“*through him*” = instrumentality. The Father created the heavens and the earth in association with, in union with, the Son.

“and for him”

“*for him*” = everything that exists, exists for Jesus’ sake.

So in 1:16 we have Jesus participating in the creation of all things and all things existing for Jesus’ sake. This doesn’t sound like a created being. Everything exists for God. If Jesus wasn’t God, it would be idolatry to say everything exists for Jesus. Jesus is God the Son!

back to “*firstborn*”

So firstborn doesn’t mean “first created being.” “firstborn” refers to Jesus’ rank. Jesus possesses supremacy over all created things. This is the firstborn concept in Psalm 89:27.

Psalm 89:27 *And I will make him [David] the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*

“And he is before all things”

“*all things*” = every created thing = Jesus existed before the heavens and the earth and everything else. Long before he was in Mary’s womb. Before the foundations of the earth. Before time began. In eternity past.

“and in him all things hold together”

This speaks to Jesus’ work in continuously preserving and sustaining every created thing. Earth and the heavens. The universe’s very existence depends on Jesus’ ongoing activity. Douglas Moo puts it like this:

“Without him, electrons would not continue to circle nuclei, gravity would cease to work, the planets would not stay in their orbits.” – *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, 126

Jesus is sustaining the universe right now as we speak!

“And he is the head of the body, the church”

This is how Jesus relates the redeemed, forgiven people. Head speaks to Jesus’ authority and lordship. Jesus is the authority the church submits to.

“He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead”

“beginning” speaks to first in time. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead will be followed by many others. Those who’ve found redemption in Jesus will be raised to glorified bodies like Jesus was.

“that in everything he might be preeminent”

Preeminent speaks to highest rank, superior status. Why was Jesus raised before us? So that he would have first importance. Jesus deserves our praise.

“For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”

“For” = explaining Jesus’ preeminence. The fullness of God dwelled in Jesus during the incarnation. Pleased as past tense ≠ this fullness no longer dwells in Jesus. Per 2:9, after the resurrection, *“the whole fullness of deity”* still dwells in Jesus. *“fullness”* = extent. Not lacking. Not partial. Completely God. Like God desires our knowledge of his will to be complete, not partial. Jesus isn’t lacking any aspect of the divine nature. Jesus is fully God.

“and through him to reconcile to himself all things...making peace by the blood of the cross”

Reconciliation speaks to reestablishing interpersonal relationships after a period of disruption. Two friends have a sharp confrontation and cut off contact. Later they confess their sin to one another and restore the friendship. It’s the making of peace where hostility exists. The literal restoration of human relationships is used figuratively of what Jesus does with the physical universe. What does Jesus reconcile to himself? *“all things, whether on earth or in heaven.”*

This goes beyond forgiving sinners and saving them from the final judgment. This extends to all things that exist in heaven and on earth. Trees. Mountains. Land animals. Sea creatures. Romans 8:21 speaks of a future day when *“the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the children of God.”*

God’s creation marred by the fall will be restored and this has been accomplished by Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus’ death restores God’s creation.

Paul has shared who Jesus is, what he’s done, what he’s doing, and what he will do. Let’s now consider four points of application that emerge Paul’s teaching.

Point 1: We exist for Jesus (1:16)

What exists for Jesus? *“all things were created through him and for him.”* All things include:

- 1) Trees, mountains, rivers.
- 2) Moose, horses, dogs, trout, bees.
- 3) The sun. The moon. The stars.
- 4) Angelic beings.
- 5) Men and women.

In what sense do these things exist for Jesus? They exist for his praise. To make him look glorious. How do these things make Jesus look glorious? Romans 1:18-20 puts it this way.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his **eternal power** and **divine nature**, have*

been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

All men are without excuse for failing to worship God as we should. Because God has testified about himself through the things he made. To his eternal power and divine nature.

Trees, deer, the sun, angels, humans all testify to God's eternal power. He created all things when nothing was. So he's powerful and eternal. These created things are majestic, beautiful, complex, meticulously designed. So God's nature must be divine. Given his spectacular powers, it's natural and proper to celebrate God. Jesus participated. Jesus' power and nature are on display in creation.

Mankind

As men and women, we exist to reflect God. God created us in his image. Image meaning being like God. Similar to God but not identical to God. Having a sense of right and wrong. A soul with capacity to learn and reason and love and hate. Capacity for fellowship with God and other humans (i.e., marriage). Designed to rule over the world he created. Procreation. Nurture. Building. Inventing.

We possess these abilities because God wanted us to reflect himself. His creative skill, his relational joy, his rule. Why do you exist? To reflect God. To reflect Jesus.

Illustration: We're like a fractured mirror; we're like a carnival mirror = distorted picture

If we're to reflect Jesus, we need to learn from Jesus. If we're to obey what we learn, we need divine strengthening ("glorious might").

God created the world so that we would behold his glorious works and delight in him. Creation calls out, praise Jesus.

Delight in Jesus! Treasure Jesus! Learn from Jesus! Live for Jesus!

The human problem is we live for the wrong things. **We're fighting against our function!**

Point 2: Jesus preserves (1:17)

"And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

What are you afraid of? Nuclear war. Global warming. A global pandemic. Alien invasion. Gas prices. Inflation. The tense of the verb "hold together" speaks to a past action with present effects. Paul says Jesus has always preserved creation, Jesus is preserving creation, and Jesus will continue to hold all of creation together. Jesus is preserving what he created.

We see hints of this in Scripture. In the Noahic covenant, God promised that never again would he send flood waters to destroy the earth (Gen 9:11). The promise in Genesis 8:22 stands out.

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Without God, there wouldn't be a creation. Without God, the creation wouldn't be sustained. With God, creation is sustained as God works out his purpose. Jesus sustains our world while he builds his church (Matt 16:18).

Jesus' ongoing preservation work = fear not. Trust Jesus.

The human problem is we trust in the wrong things.

Point 3: Jesus receives submission (1:18)

“And he is the head of the body, the church”

Jesus’ headship over the church speaks to his authority over the church. The church belongs to him.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. – Ephesians 5:22-24

Christ’s headship over the church is analogous to a husband’s headship in the home. Wives submit to husbands like the church submits to Jesus.

Headship in the home can be glorious. Headship in the home can be horrific. It depends on the character and wisdom of the husband. The more transformed the husband, the more life-giving the headship.

Church speaks to the universal church. Every believer scattered throughout the world. At the same time, Jesus is the head of every local church scattered throughout the world. Like Palermo Christian Church.

My point is this: headship implies submission. Jesus as head of Palermo Christian Church = Palermo Christian Church submits to Jesus, not to cultural standards. Yes we obey government insofar as government doesn’t command us to sin or prevent us from obeying God. But Jesus trumps government and culture. Jesus is the head of the church, not government or cultural opinion. Jesus is the one who informs our moral convictions, not government or cultural opinion. Jesus is the one whose promises shape our lives, not the promises of government and culture.

This is why the Great Commission involves *“teaching them to observe all that I [Jesus] have commanded you”* (Matt 28:20). This is why we need to *“be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”* (Col 1:9).

If Jesus is head, Scripture shapes the church. Not tradition, not experience, not whatever we think will work. Palermo Christian Church takes its marching orders from Scripture. Like plurality of elders and church discipline and the apostles’ doctrine. Like continuing in the truth when it isn’t culturally convenient. This is treating Jesus as head.

The human problem is we want to do what right in our own eyes. We submit to the wrong things.

Point 4: Jesus restores (1:20)

“and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross”

Jesus’ death on the cross achieved multiple things. One being saving sinners from the power of sin and the penalty of sin. Another being the restoration of creation itself.

When Jesus returns the created order will be restored to what it was before the fall.

Are you troubled by the world today?

- 1) Russian invasion of Ukraine – approximately 7 million Ukrainians fled the country and 8 million displaced from their home

- 2) Robb Elementary School (Uvalde, Texas) – 19 children and 2 teachers dead
- 3) George Floyd – suspected of using a counterfeit \$20 bill, he's cuffed and a police officer proceeds to kneel on his neck until Floyd dies
- 4) George Floyd protests – riots, looting, arson, confrontations with police, Minneapolis third precinct police station overtaken and burned down, curfews enforced
- 5) COVID – deaths and disruption of life (hospitals overwhelmed, isolation, businesses shut down, etc.)
- 6) Not to mention tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes take lives, end businesses, and displace families
- 7) Not to mention drug trafficking, addiction, and death in Maine

I could go on and on. My point? Our world and its people are broken. We are not living according to our function: reflecting the character of God in our skillful use of God-given abilities. We die. Nature and animal life pose danger.

Jesus' death purchases redemption, forgiveness of sins. Jesus died as substitute such that if we repent and believe, if we turn from rebellion to trust, our sins are forgiven on account of Jesus dying in our place. If we believe, Jesus took the punishment we deserve. If we persist in rebellion, we remain broken and judgment awaits us in the life to come.

Jesus came to rescue sinners. To make peace between us and God. To free us from these broken patterns. To move us from brokenness to a life that flourishes under divine instruction and enablement.

Jesus also came to restore the universe to its original beauty. To end death. To end sin = believers perfected and unrepentant sinners consigned to hell with Satan and his demons. Nature restored. Animal life transformed. All accomplished by Jesus' blood on the cross.

On account of Jesus' death, everything and everyone will properly submit to Jesus' rule (Phil 2:8-11). That's how the story ends.

Conclusion

The human problem is we're broken. We need to be fixed. Do you see brokenness in your life? Jesus came to end our brokenness. Turn to him. Christian, Jesus wants to further your progress. Non-Christian, Jesus wants to make you new so that you reflect him well.