

He Gives Us A New Picture

Study Questions

July 3, 2016

Colossians 1:15-23

ICE BREAKER

Discuss: Have you seen all the *Lord of the Rings* movies? Which was your favorite? Why?

LESSON REVIEW

In the video, JD said his childhood picture of God was one of an angry headmaster. He said, "If I stepped out of line, God was ready to strike. He was concerned about what I did, but not really concerned about my heart."

Discuss: What changes a person's perception of God?

A Picture of Supremacy

Andy explained that Paul's letter to Colossians reveals a more comprehensive picture of Jesus than the gospels did. He said, "Paul reveals the full identity of Jesus after the resurrection. It was latent in the gospels, but revealed in the epistles."

Read Colossians 1:15-19.

Andy did two short word studies from verse 15.

The Greek word translated "image" is "iconium." It means stamp or icon. Jesus was the radiance of God's glory in human form. As Charles Wesley wrote, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate deity."

Read John 14:9.

The Greek word translated "firstborn" is "prototokas." It refers to the authority that came with a birthright in ancient Hebrew culture. Paul isn't saying that Jesus was the first to be created. He is saying that Jesus has primacy over everything that was created. He is the prince of all creation.

Jesus was present at creation and continues to hold all creation together. Andy noted several ways that Jesus' ministry reflected his action in creation: he created bread and fish *ex nihilo*. He created order from chaos on the Sea of Galilee.

Read John 1:1, Mark 6:41-44 and Mark 4:39.

Discuss: Can you think of other parallels between Jesus' ministry and his creation?

A Picture of Reconciliation

Paul's picture of Jesus included not just his identity, but his mission – not just who he is, but what he has done.

Read Colossians 1:20-23.

Discuss: According to these verses, what did Jesus accomplish on the cross?

In verse 20, Paul says that God reconciled all things in creation to himself through the cross. It's interesting that Paul extends the scope of God's reconciliation beyond human hearts.

Discuss: What do you think Paul means here? How do "all things" – even things which haven't sinned – need to be reconciled to God?

The astounding polarity of the gospel message is that God is both supreme and sympathetic. Jesus is the almighty prince over all creation, and the tender shepherd of his creatures. He is the God who created the stars, and the friend who lets you rest your head on his chest.

Read John 13:21-25.

Discuss: Imagine that tender picture of laying your head on Jesus' chest. How does that image make you feel? What parts of life do you need to bring into intimate contact with Jesus?

APPLICATION

In the book *The Return of the King* by J.R.R. Tolkien, the town crier at Mina Tirith shouts:

*Here is Aragorn son of Arathorn, chieftain of the Dunedain of Arnor,
Captain of the Host of the West, bearer of the Star of the North, wielder of
the Sword Reforged, victorious in battle, whose hands bring healing, the
Elfstone, Elessar of the line of Valandil, Isildur's son, Elendil's son of
Numenor. Shall he be king and enter into the city and dwell here?*

Andy said that's a picture of Paul's proclamation in Colossians. The righteous king has been disguised in flesh, but now his true identity and mission have been revealed. The only remaining question is whether we will invite him to rule in our hearts.

Discuss: Recall JD's testimony from the video. Has your understanding of God changed over your lifetime? How so?

Close by praying for someone you know who has not yet invited Jesus to reign in their life. Pray for them to receive a new, clearer, bigger picture of Jesus.