



# THE SCROLLS

Helping one another mature so we can impact our world for Christ

**Christ: Before All Things**

For the week of July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005

### Beliefs

- ? Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

### Practices

- Worship
- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving My Time
- Giving My Money
- Giving My Faith
- Giving My Life

### Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility
- Forgiveness

## What Does God Look Like?

One day a little boy was sprawled out on the floor working feverishly with pencil and paper. His mother, who was busy working only remotely noticed her son's intense activity. Knowing he was not normally so quiet for such a long period of time, she stopped her work to see what he was doing. As she glanced over her son's shoulder she realized that he was drawing something – or someone. Now curious, the mother asked her son, "what are you drawing?" He said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." "But no one knows what God looks like" she said. "They will when I'm done!" the boy replied. There is a rather profound truth in that story if we apply it to Jesus. By the time Jesus was done living his amazing life, he had given us a precious picture of God. We have no idea how blessed we are to have that picture. Those who preceded Christ longed for the day when Messiah would come. Well, he has come. And he has given us a marvelous image of God. If you want to know what God looks like, look to Jesus. This is what the Apostle Paul wanted the Colossian believers to do. He knew, that as young believers, they were in danger of losing a crucial component of their faith – namely, a clear and dynamic vision of Christ. It was essential for them and it is essential for us.

## Monday – Vibrant Faith

Please read Colossians 1:1-20 (focusing on verses 15-20).

1. Once again, let's remember that Paul is writing this letter from prison. Why do you think he was able to write so energetically and enthusiastically about his Savior Jesus Christ given his situation?
2. What other bible characters come to your mind that were able to maintain a vibrant faith in the midst of difficulty and trials?
3. Read Hebrews 11. What did these people possess in character that enabled them to excel in faith?
4. One thing they possessed was a clear image of the God they served. How do verses 15-20 help us create our image of God?

## Tuesday – Image of the Invisible God

We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. **Col. 1:15 (The Message Paraphrase)**

Please read Colossians 1:15-20 (focusing on verse 15).

1. There is a play on words in this verse. "Image" and "Invisible" are near opposites. In your own words, what is Paul trying to say?

**Text Insight** – What Paul meant when he called Jesus "the firstborn over all creation" has been debated for centuries. "Firstborn", likely refers to Christ's preeminence over creation. He is the heir, owner, and possessor of all creation. Verses 16-20 bear this out.

2. As you consider the text insight above, how does Paul's second phrase (*firstborn over all creation*) give greater meaning to the first phrase (*image of the invisible God*)?
3. Why do the Colossians, as young believers, need to know what Paul is telling them about Christ? Why do we need to know this? How can this truth help you today?

## Wednesday – Christ the Creator

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. **Col. 1:16 (The Message Paraphrase)**

Please read Colossians 1:15-20.

1. What does verse 16 say about Christ's creative work?

**Text Insight** - This verse tells us that not only did Christ create the cosmos but it was created "for him". He is not only the agent of creation, he is the purpose of creation.

2. How does this truth about Christ change the way you think about the creation? How does it change the way you think about Christ?
3. When Paul writes about creation, what things does he include? Usually when we think about creation we only consider the visible realm. Why is it essential for Christians to realize that creation extends well beyond just what we can see?

**Closing Prayer** – Lord Jesus, we confess that when we think about you often we think of you only in terms of what you have done for us as Savior. Please open our eyes and expand our minds to realize that all of life is sourced in you. That you are bigger and grander and greater than we've ever imagined you to be. In your name we pray, Amen.

## Thursday – Holding it Together!

He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. **Col. 1:17 (The Message Paraphrase)**

"Creation, of course, involves the work of the whole Trinity. It is proper to say that the Father willed there should

be a creation. All the initiatory movements of history begin with the Father. He willed it. The Son, then, planned it. He programmed it and designed it, even to its slightest detail as its Architect and Designer. The Spirit is the executor: He carried it out. He made it actually appear, according to the plan and program of the Son.” Ray Stedman

Please read Colossians 1:17.

1. Now read Genesis 1, knowing that Christ was present and active in the creating act of God, how does this deepen your understanding of Genesis 1?
2. Scientists tell us that there is a force or power holding the universe together which science cannot explain. What does verse 17 tell us about this mystery?
3. We often imagine that Jesus is primarily involved with the spiritual matters of life. How does Col. 1:15-20 expand our view of his present role in the world?

## Friday – Christ is Supreme

*And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.*

*He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. **Col. 1:18 (The Message Paraphrase)** “As I travel about I have noted the way people think about their church. I am afraid that the most widespread concept is that the church is a religious country club, operated for the enjoyment and benefit of the members; it makes its own rules and exists for its own purposes. That is a far cry indeed from the New Testament description of the church. Others look upon the church as a collection of emotional misfits who are waiting for the first bus to glory. I fear some of us give them good reason to think that! Then there are those, like the Colossians, who are a group of eager beaver religious fanatics, running after every new doctrine that comes along, especially if it offers a good feeling and has a sense of magic and mystery about it. That, to many is the church. But here the apostle corrects these false ideas and declares that Jesus is the Head of the body, which is the church....” Ray Stedman*

Please read Colossians 1:15-20.

1. Still talking about Christ, we move from his role in creation to his role in the church. What is his role in the church worldwide? What is his position in relation to the church?
2. How does his role in creation relate to his role in the church?
3. How highly did Paul think of Christ? How does that compare with the way many Christians think of Christ?

## Saturday – Spontaneous Gratitude

*So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross.*

**Col. 1:19-20 (The Message Paraphrase)**

Please read Colossians 1:15-20.

1. How does Paul link Christ's deity with his work of reconciliation?
2. How far does Christ's work of reconciliation extend?
3. Who is Christ being reconciled with?
4. This reconciling work is glorious indeed! Read 2 Cor. 5:18-19 and thank God for the privilege of joining him in his work!

Book Recommendation: Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters by Tom Wright



### Homegroup Discussion

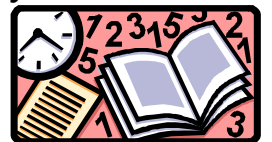
*This section is designed for Home Groups and Small Groups who would like to discuss the Scrolls together. Begin by reading Colossians 1:15-20 and the opening introduction, “What Does God Look Like?”*

1. Once again, let's remember that Paul is writing this letter from prison. Why do you think he was able to write so energetically and enthusiastically about his Savior Jesus Christ given his situation?
2. There is a play on words in this verse. “Image” and “Invisible” are near opposites. In your own words, what is Paul trying to say?
3. How would you describe the picture of Christ that Paul is painting in this passage?
4. What stands out to you about this picture?
5. How is Christ's creation of work related to his work in the church?
6. Why was this stirring picture of Christ so important for the Colossian believers to have? Why is it so important for us to have as well? Close your group time with a time of grateful praise and thanksgiving.

### Family Time with Kids

*Families can use these kid-friendly questions to help your children learn what you studied this week. Begin by reading Colossians 1:15-19.*

1. Word search: Find the word that means statue, portrait, photograph or picture in verse 15. Have you ever wondered what God is like? Share some pictures that come to mind when you think of Jesus?
2. True or False: Has anyone ever seen God? Hint: Read John 1:18.
3. What is the tallest mountain in the world (hint: Look on a map with China & Nepal)? What is the smallest bird in the world? Did Christ create the world's tallest mountain, the smallest bird and everything in between? Who did Jesus create these things for? (Hint: Look at the end of v 16). Which is God more concerned about in your life, if we do things for Him or for ourselves?
4. Please Circle how important Jesus is in your life: 1 3 5 7 10
5. If you did not circle 10, share two ways you can begin having Jesus as the center of your life. Here are some ideas to get started: Accept Christ today as your savior, pray before you study for an exam, start reading the Bible to learn more about Jesus and how he would handle life today.



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