



**Looking Inwards** (15 mins)  
*Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



**Looking Outwards** (15 mins)  
*Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

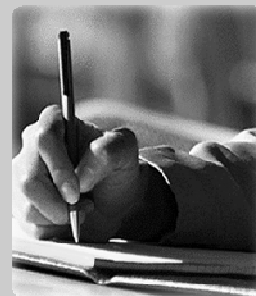


**HG75: Living In Christ (2/6)**  
*Christ Exalted*

**Colossians 1:15-23**

**Home Group Study Notes**

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012 - Revd Tom Loh



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)  
*Ice Breaker*

Some people say that every story written is in some way about Jesus and the gospel. What is your favourite film, book or story? Can you see Jesus and the gospel in it?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)  
*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1: How do you think the Colossians might have been losing focus on who Christ was?

2: What do you think Paul means by the following terms:

“The image of the invisible God”? v15

“The firstborn over all creation”? v15

“The head of the body”? V17

3: What is Christ’s relationship with creation (verse 16-17)?

Through marriage Christ united himself to this sinful woman and in doing so took upon himself her sin, debt and brokenness, whilst the woman came to share in Christ’s righteousness and riches. Thus Christ died in order to pay her debt, and to set his bride free. And all she had to do was say “yes”.

### ... Therefore do not be moved from the gospel ... (vs23):

To know Christ and to except what he has done for us is salvation. There is no more to be said, no more we can offer than what Christ has already done. The Colossian church needed to know that their identity in Christ meant that through the gospel their sins were forever more dealt with. They had no need to look elsewhere to strengthen their salvation or gain more confidence before God. Today, we too can often drift from our faith in Christ and become Christians whose confidence before God rises or falls on our performance; how much we have done for God, or how sinful we feel. We must constantly remind ourselves of the gospel, and never be moved from it. As Luther tells us,

*It is impossible now that her sins should destroy her, since they have been laid upon Christ and swallowed up in Him, and since she has in her Husband Christ a righteousness which she may claim as her own, and which she can set up with confidence against all her sins, against death and hell, saying, "If I have sinned, my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned; all mine is His, and all His is mine."*

Salvation, then, is not about being “good enough” for God, but about saying, “yes” to the marriage offer of Christ. What God has joined together let no-one put asunder. Irreversible. Unbreakable. Our union with Christ is forever. Not even death can do us part. For, Jesus is the firstborn from the dead and the saviour of the church.

### Footnotes

1. Interestingly, Scripture makes it clear that God has physical appearance, see Daniel 7:9, Ex 33:23, Rev 4:2-3)
2. This has led many theologians to conclude that any human relationship with the Lord God in the Old Testament was only ever through an encounter with Christ (a Christophany), the eternal Word and image of God (e.g. 1 Cor 10:1-4).
3. 0 AD was when Christ, the eternal Son of God took on human flesh and became one of us. Before then he eternally existed as the pre-incarnate Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1-14).
4. This is an ancient heresy of the fourth-century made popular by Arius. He taught that Jesus was not the eternally begotten Son of God, but the first creature God made, and the highest of all the angels. Today, Jehovah’s witnesses use this verse to re-hash the same heresy.
5. Interestingly in childbirth the hardest, most painful part of delivery is the baby’s head. Once the head emerges, the body easily follows. So it is with Christ and the church. As our head Christ underwent the pain of death and resurrection that we might easily follow.
6. Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 1520.

**... He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead ... (v18):**

When Jesus rose from the dead, he became the first human ever to return from the grave. He is the beginning of a new human race that is no longer living under the shadow of death. Jesus, as the head of the church, has led the way for the rest of us. Where he has gone as our head, so we will follow as his body.

**... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ... (v19):**

From eternity the Father has always been pleased to give life to his beloved Son. However, through his incarnation, death and resurrection we see the fullness of the Father's life revealed in Jesus. Through Jesus we see the fullness of what it means to be God (Col 2:9). Thus Jesus is able to say, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ... Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me." (John 14:9,11).

**... And through him to reconcile to himself all things ... through his blood...(v20):**

It can seem strange that given the eternal majesty and glory of Christ, God sends his Son to a gruesome, bloody and godforsaken death. However, when we understand the nature of God's life - that it is one of self-sacrificial love - then we begin to see that God is bestowing upon Christ the highest honour: the honour of dying for someone he loves. Jesus is entrusted with the impossible, sacrificial and dangerous task of reconciling a lost world back to God. And Jesus - being full of love for his bride, the Church - gladly accepts.

The Colossian church needed to know that their salvation, reconciliation and peace with God did not come from religion, superstition, or powerful angelic beings, but from the spilt blood of God's Son. Being fully God and fully man, Christ was the only one who could deal with the alienation the Colossians (and the rest of the world) had with God.

**... Once you were alienated from God and were enemies...(vs21-22):**

The problem between God and humanity is often played down in our own minds, and by the world. We often think a good deed here or a kind thought there might keep us on the right side with God. Paul reminds the Colossians that before Christ was in their life, they were enemies of God and alienated from him because of their evil lives. No amount of good will or religion was going to change that. This does not just apply to the Colossians but the whole human race that is under the power of sin (1 Kings 8:46, Gal 3:22). The truth is we effected our own alienation from God, yet we cannot effect our own reconciliation. That is the work of the Father through his Son. Through Christ's broken and blemished body on the cross he was able to reconcile an alienated world, and present us before the Father as holy, without blemish and free from accusation.

For Christ, this was his duty as a loving husband: to lay down his life for his beloved and present her as a radiant bride, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Eph 5:27). Martin Luther, the fifteenth-century reformer, once famously compared the church to a poor, defiled and unfaithful woman to whom Christ happily extended his hand in marriage.

4: Paul uses marital language to describe the relationship between Christ and Christians (verse 18 and 22). Think of marriage vows. How can we use the language of marriage to explain the gospel?

5: How did the Colossians' relationship with God change, according to verses 21-22?

6: Has this passage helped expand your view of Jesus, or deepened your understanding of the gospel and the world? If so, in what way?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## HG75: Living In Christ (2/6) *Christ Exalted*

Colossians 1:15-23

### Home Group Sermon Notes

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012 - Revd Tom Loh

#### Introduction:

The problem with the Colossian church is that they did not have a big enough view of Christ, nor of what he has done for them, and so were turning to man-made religion, superstition and worldly powers to bolster their faith. In this section of the letter Paul is determined to set the record straight and have the church won over again by the supremacy and the love of Jesus. Like them, we also need a daily refresher of what Paul is about to say.

#### Christ is the image of the invisible God ... (v15):

This is just another way of saying that Jesus is the Son of God. The word *image* takes us back to the beginning of the Bible where we are told that humanity was made in the image of God (Gen 1:26). This word *image* is in reference not only to the fact that we are like God, but also in the sense that we are children. When Seth is born to Adam and Eve, the scriptures say that Adam “had a son in his own likeness, in his own *image*” (Gen 5:3, emphasis mine).

We are not to deduce from this that Paul is saying that Christ was at some point born of God, but rather in the same way that the life of Seth flowed from his father Adam (and mother Eve), so also the life of Christ comes from his Father, not in a moment of time - like human child bearing - but eternally begotten of the Father, as we say in the creeds (“...God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father...”). In other words, the source of Jesus’ life is eternally flowing from the Father. Jesus is not created, nor is he an individual wholly independent from God, but **begotten** of the Father.

When Paul describes God the Father as the “invisible God” he is not commenting on God’s physical appearance, or rather his lack of it. No, Paul is referring to the fact that God the Father is completely unknowable by sinful humans. Scripture frequently affirms that no-one has ever seen God the Father (Matt 11:27, John 1:18, John 14:6, 1 Tim 6:15-16, Ex 33:20). By this the Bible means that no-one has ever met the Father face to face in a relational way. Therefore, the only way to get to know the (invisible, unknowable) Father is in and through the (visible, knowable) Son. This is what Jesus means when he says that he is the way and the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6).

Jesus also says that if you have seen him and know him, then you have seen and know the Father (John 14:7). This is a radical Biblical truth. Paul here is saying that God has made himself known **only** through his eternal Son, Christ. This has big implications for religions that claim to know God, yet reject Jesus. For, if you do not know Jesus, then you cannot come to know the Father.

#### ... the Firstborn over all creation ... (v15):

It is easy to slip into the habit of thinking that Jesus only turns up half way through history at around 0 AD, and forget that Jesus was around long before that, in fact there was never a time that he wasn’t around. However, the term *firstborn* seems to suggest that there was a time when Jesus came into existence. Though if we are careful to follow theme of firstborn sons throughout the Scriptures we quickly see that the “firstborn” refers to Christ as the rightful heir to the Father, the only begotten Son to whom all things belong (Psalm 89:27, Psalm 2:4-9, Hebrews 1:2), rather than to a moment when Christ came into existence. In fact, the whole of creation was made through Jesus and for him, as Paul goes on to say. As the firstborn Son of the Father, Jesus was at the Father’s side when all things were being created (Prov 8:22-36). Jesus was there before anything had ever been made, before heaven itself with all its mighty angels. Not only was it through Christ that the Father made everything, but also Christ stands in authority over everything as God’s appointed king (Psalm 2:4-9). Through his death, resurrection and ascension Christ has now laid claim to his inheritance, and when he comes again he comes to enter into it and enjoy it with his people for evermore.

#### ... all things were created by him and for him ... (v16-17):

Thus, Christ is the origin and goal of creation; the beginning and end; the creator and heir. The whole universe exists by and for Jesus Christ. Yet, Christ reigns supreme over all creation not so that he can lord it over the world like some human despot, but rather so that he can lovingly and sacrificially serve his people as the good king (Mark 10:42-45). Paul tells us that all creation was made “for” Christ. This is a wonderful reminder that we were not created to be mere servants in the King’s house, but rather God created us in order that we might be the friend and bride of His Son, Jesus (Ephesians 5:25-26). As the bride of Christ we will enjoy and inherit creation alongside the firstborn Son, and live in his house forever.

#### ... And he is the head of the body, the church ... (v18):

Paul goes on to describe the church as the body of which he is the head. This is not only to show Christ’s authority over the church, but also the organic and mutually dependent nature of our relationship with him. The bodily language used here is another reminder of the marital relationship Christians share with Jesus. Just as the husband is the head of the wife, the wife is the body of the husband (Eph 5:23). This is a wonderful image of the union we have with Jesus. In Christian marriage we come to share everything we have with one another. What is of the husband becomes of the wife, and vice versa. Through marriage to Christ the church becomes utterly united to Jesus and consequently one with him to the extent that there are no longer two, but only one. Just as a body cannot live without its head, neither can a head live without its body.