

JSM Newsletter

July, 2006

A Word from the Word. With all of the recent frenzy over *The DaVinci Code* it is refreshing to turn to the Word of God and read what Paul has to say about our Lord Jesus. We find it recorded in **Colossians 1:15-18**. In this passage Paul relates Jesus Christ to (1) the **Father**, (2) to the **created universe**, and (3) to the **new creation** (the church . . . born-again believers).

In relation to the Father (Col. 1:15a), Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the perfect **likeness** and **manifestation** of God . . . He is the **image** (εἰκὼν) of the invisible God! What Paul means is that if we want to know what kind of person God is **we should look at Jesus Christ**. Our Lord Jesus is very God of very God . . . as one of the ancient creeds expresses it. That is, He is just as much God as the Father is God! The evangelist Luke had no problem with identifying Jesus Christ as God in **Luke 8:39** when Jesus told the demon-possessed man who had been healed to "Return to your own house and tell them what great things **God** has done for you . . . and he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things **Jesus** had done for him." For Luke the terms "God" and "Jesus" can be substituted, the one for the other!!

This word "image" also contains the thought of **manifestation**. In short, Jesus of Nazareth is the revelation of the unseen God! Someone has said, "Jesus Christ is the great and final theophany!" Lord Byron commented that, "If God is not like Jesus Christ, then God **ought** to be like Jesus Christ!" Why is this so absolutely necessary . . . that Jesus Christ should be God? We could never really know that God loved us **and** was faithful to the message proclaimed by His representatives **if He did not ultimately come Himself!** That is why it is insufficient to have a word from a prophet or an apostle **alone**. We must ultimately have some word from God Himself! No one can stand as a final representative of God, except God! That is why the incarnation of God Himself had to occur. That is why the second person of the blessed Trinity came . . . **to sign His Name to the promises** that had been given through the prophets and the apostles. Thus He guaranteed every promise of God as "Yea and Amen" in Christ.

In relation to the created universe (Col. 1:15-17), we read that Jesus Christ was the "firstborn of all creation." That does not mean nor imply that He was a created being. "Firstborn" here refers to **rank**, and **position**, and not just first in time. In other words, of all beings he is **primary** and **transcendent** . . . He is sovereign over all creation. Then, with three prepositions in verse 16, Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the **architect** ("by Him"), the **builder** ("through Him"), and the **owner** ("for Him") of the created universe. Not only is He the architect, the builder, and the owner, but He is also the **sustainer** of the universe (1:17b). One scholar has said, "Every twinkling of the eye, every beat of the heart is dependent upon His sovereign goodness." Eadie writes, "His arm upholds the universe and if His omnipotent power were withdrawn, all would fade into their original non-existence."

In relation to the new creation, the church (Col. 1:18) He is the **head**. The head of the church does not dwell in Nashville, nor in Tulsa, nor in Montreat (NC), and certainly not in Rome. The church does not wait for some white plume of smoke to ascend from a Vatican chimney before we know who our head is. He is pre-eminent over all things in the new creation. He is the **head** of the church which was created by His death and authenticated by His resurrection. Praise His holy Name!!

A Word from the Ministry. As you may have heard by now, we were unable to make the trip to Seattle to speak at the Park of the Pines Bible Conference. Some blood pressure problems (now under control) precluded the trip. We were disappointed, of course, since this would have been our 12th year. But God has compensations. Almost immediately we received invitations to speak at a retreat for a local church (Philadelphia Baptist Church) in September and the Knollwood Presbyterian Church in August and September in Sylacauga, AL. We also have committed to teaching Hebrews at the Anniston Bible Church (Anniston, AL) once a week for 10 weeks starting in September. Needless to say, Ginny and I request your prayers for these ministries.

Ginny still uses her cane, but she gets along quite well. We both send our love and gratitude to each of you. As the Middle East keeps heating up, let's keep looking up!! From our hearts to yours, in Jesus Name!

John & Ginny Sproule