

Readings

Scripture

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.
- Colossians 1:15-20 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

It is true that you just can't write this stuff! The majesty of the patient and forgiving love of this story defies words. The implications of this birth are not only transformational to the cosmos, but also eternal in their extent. This is the story of Jesus, born in a barn in Bethlehem. The Messiah the earth cried for now cries to be held by Mary and will soon cry in torment of the cross of salvation. He came to suffer because he came to save. The angels sang because finally hope had come.
- Paul David Tripp, *Come Let Us Adore Him* (p. 17)

It would be wrong to think in physical terms here, as if Paul were asserting that the Son had a physical origin or was somehow created (the classic Arian heresy) rather than existing eternally as the Son, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the Godhead. What Paul had in mind was the rights and privileges of a firstborn son, especially the son of a monarch who would inherit ruling sovereignty. This is how the expression is used of David: "I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." (Psalm 89:27)
- English Standard Version Study Bible, Notes on Colossians

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6 (*English Standard Version*)

Sermon Outline

Our Lord
Colossians 1:15-20

What Child is This?
Brad Anderson

Our Father has made Jesus the heir and Lord of all things... (Colossians 1:18)

What is the extent of his inheritance?

He is the heir and Lord of creation... (Colossians 1:15-17)

- As the image of the invisible God
- As the firstborn over all creation
- As the creator of all things
- As the goal of all things
- As the one "before" everything
- As the sustainer of all things.

He is the heir and Lord of redemption... (Colossians 1:18-20)

- As the head of the body, the church
- As the beginning
- As the firstborn from the dead
- As the possessor of all God's fullness
- As the agent of God's reconciliation

Reflection Questions

 (*taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- The "firstborn" have the rights of an heir. What rights does Jesus have in Colossians 1:15-18? What is his relationship with "all things"? Why stress this?
- What is his relationship to God and the church? What does "fullness" imply?
- How would you define "reconciliation" in ordinary terms? How did Jesus achieve this? (Look back at Colossians 1:13-14)
- From this passage, what would you say to someone who asked you, "How can I get to know God?"
- What people (or forces) sometimes seem to be more powerful than Jesus? Why? How do you respond to the fact that even these things are under Christ's authority?
- How does the Lord's Prayer and the petition "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" relate to these exclusive claims made of Jesus?
- When we don't yet see all things brought into submission to Jesus it can be challenging to live out his lordship in all things. How does Jesus help you in your weakness? How does prayer (as a means of grace) help us as we face this challenge? How does the community of faith help us as we face this challenge? How does the word of God help us as we face this challenge? How does worship with God's people help us as we face this challenge?