



Colossians 1:18

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Reflection

One of the major pursuits in modern science is finding the ‘theory of everything’, also known as ‘final theory’, ultimate theory’ or ‘master theory’. The ‘theory of every-

thing' is a hypothetical single, all-encompassing, coherent theoretical framework of physics that fully explains and links together all physical aspects of the universe. It's the holy grail of science, the search for the simple set of laws that explain every complex detail in our universe. And yet, in Colossians 1:15–20, we have had this unifying theory of everything for nearly two thousand years. His name is Jesus Christ. He is the point of convergence between the cosmic activities of our transcendent God and human history. He is the interpretive key for understanding the meaning of creation, the purpose of life, and its goal. He is the key who unlocks the meaning and purpose of the universe and the hinge on which all eternity swings. Let's read this section of Scripture again, Colossians 1:15–20, the mystery revealed,

the unifying theory of everything,

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 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 and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on

earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

These verses represent some of the highest teaching about Jesus Christ in all of Scripture. We've been savouring them verse by verse over the past few days, trying to simply get our head around their dizzying heights. Many divide them down the middle emphasizing Jesus' Christ's pre-eminence over creation (verses 15–17) and new creation (verses 18–20). So far in verses 15–17 we've seen Jesus' cosmic supremacy. In and through and to Jesus Christ are all things; and in him all things hold together. This means that not only are all things created in Jesus and through Jesus, or that all things are his rightful possession and find their end and goal in

him, but that right now Jesus Christ is actively sustaining all things – holding everything into being by his powerful word. Our minds struggle to conceive of such immense power and sovereignty and yet to begin to think of Jesus in this way is to merely see the realities of universe more clearly. Jesus Christ is the unifying theory of everything, he is the first cause and the final goal, the alpha and the omega, the one who right now reigns supreme over the created order and who's life and teachings uniquely brought together the divine and human realms that we might truly understand how this universe works and our place in it.

In today's verse Paul steps down out of the stratosphere to move us into the human realm. Jesus Christ is supreme over

both creation and new creation, his work amongst us here and now. He takes precedence over all creation and re-creation, and just as he was appointed by God the firstborn and head over creation, so too he was appointed by God the firstborn from the dead, and the head over new creation, the church, and ultimately the new heavens and new earth which are to come. And so reading today's passage, just one verse again today, Colossian 1:18,

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

From creation to new creation, down out of the stratosphere in which Christ reigns

supreme, and into human history. Not only is Christ supreme over the created order he is also the supreme head of the church. And in doing so, Paul teaches us that the church and the trajectory of the whole created order is now bound up tightly together with Christ as our common head. New creation which began with Jesus' death and resurrection and will culminate in the new heavens and the new earth has the church as its vehicle. Which again must give us pause, as we once more try and get our heads around the magnitude of this statement. God's design for his church far outstrips the way we often fall into thinking about church on Sundays. The church does not exist to meet the needs of its members, or to ensure its institutional survival, but to fulfil the redemptive purposes of Jesus Christ, its head. Through the

church Jesus Christ continues his ministry to our world, reconciling all things to himself, as his kingdom advances through our ministry and mission. Viewed in this light, there can be no more important institution than the church. Jesus Christ chose to enter his own creation, he chose to take on a body created and sustained by his power, to die, and then to undergo resurrection, in order to give birth to his church, through whom he would transform our world. And just as the head is organically part of and sets the direction for one's body, so too is Jesus Christ the control centre and heart of the church. We are in him and he is in us as we advance his kingdom in our world.

Think

Meditate today about the church's place

in the unifying theory of everything that is offered to us in Colossians 1:15–20. Just as our view of Jesus is too small, so too, often our view of the Christian church is too small. Far from being a declining institution that sits on the margins of modern society the church of Jesus Christ is the vehicle that Christ is using to usher in new creation in our world. How does this way of thinking transform your outlook on the ministry of your local church both gathered on a weekend and scattered throughout the working week? How can you increasingly be agents of new creation transforming our world with gospel of Jesus Christ in action and in truth, in word and in deed as a member of your church? What impact does your local church currently have on your local community? How can you do so more and more?

Pray

And once you've let the truth of Colossians 1:18 sink in and challenge you at a personal level why not pray today for your church and the work of the universal church in our world today? Pray that both locally and globally we might be salt and light. Praise God that right now through his church he is reconciling all things to himself and that his glory echoes into the heavenly realms through our very existence (Eph 3:10). Pray for Jesus' continued presence amongst us by his Holy Spirit that we as his church might grow more and more like him so that we can more effectively carry his work on in our world. And pray that our world would be healed and our numbers grow by his strength and to his glory. Ask God

today in prayer what more you can do for him and for those he loves as a member of his church.