

Colossians 1:15-20 All Around the Altar Service 7th Feb 2021

Well I'm sure you've heard the story of the Sunday School teacher who asks a question of her class? She says, *"Okay boys and girls, What's brown, eats nuts and lives in a tree?"* And the class are completely silent. Stumped. And then a boy puts his hand up and says, *"Miss, I know the answer is Jesus, but it does sound awfully like a squirrel."*

Today, I'm going to look at some really big questions and actually the answer to all of them is Jesus. Oops, I've already told you the answers, but let's see if you agree

You see I believe this passage shows us that Jesus is the one who is the answer to all of life's biggest and most profound questions.

So today, I'm going to try to show you how Jesus answers no less than **six** of life's biggest questions. All from that marvellous passage we just read from the book of Colossians.

The book of Colossians is a letter Paul wrote in the 50s AD to the church in the city of Colossae to encourage them to live faithfully because of how amazing Jesus is.

So, let's think about our big questions and here's the first one.

1) What does God look like?

What do you think?

Could you draw me a picture of God?

Would your God look like this?

Well if we read our Colossians passage verse 15 tells us...

We look at the son and see the God who cannot be seen....or as the NIV reads "Jesus is the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15)

But what does that mean?

One of Jesus' disciples, Philip, once said to him,

"Lord, show us the Father..." and Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:8-9)

But what does it mean to **see** the Father? What does it mean that Jesus is the "image" of God?

If I showed you a photograph of my children, it would be an image of them, right? And perhaps there are some family resemblances.

But just because you've seen a picture of my children you wouldn't know what I looked like.

God is not just Jesus' dad sitting up in heaven. No, it means something more. God is much bigger than that.

So, what does it mean? If we see Jesus we see God?

Does Jesus help us see what God is like? His character? There's definitely something in that...

But let's take a look at some other big questions before we come back to this one and finally decide.

So here's our second question:

2) Where does the world come from?

Now you know the answer to all these questions. Yes, the answer is of course Jesus.

Here's v16:

Everything, absolutely everything above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank of angels – everything got started in him

Or as the NIV says; "all things were created by him." By Jesus.(Col.1:16)

Just think about that for a moment. It's telling us that Jesus created the entire universe. You see, Jesus didn't come into existence in a stable in Bethlehem in the year Zero or whenever the historians think it was.

Jesus was around before the world was created. He existed before time began. Which means he's eternal, just like God the Father.

Before the world was created, indeed, before anything had been created, before there was anything: there was God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

One God in three persons – Father Son and Holy Spirit. A perfect loving community existing outside of time because they hadn't decided to invent time yet.

Long before Jesus was born a human being, he was there very much involved in creation. That's why John's gospel – which we'll read at Christmas – tells us –
*"Through him (Through Jesus) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."
(John 1:3)*

So when we talk about the birth of Jesus – it's vital we remember that Jesus Christ did not begin to exist when Mary fell pregnant. Instead, he has been the master and owner of the universe, since he helped make it. This is tricky stuff, but it's important.

You see at Christmas we aren't celebrating the birth of the founder of Christianity. We're celebrating the birth of the founder of the universe.

This is big stuff...are you with me so far?
Let's look at a third big question.

3) Why does the universe exist?

The answer...yes the answer is of course, for Jesus. But it's tucked away at the end of v16 and it's easy to miss. The NIV reads

*"All things were created by him and **for him.**" (Colossians 1:16) or as we heard Alex read from the Message...everything finds its purpose in him.*

So why was the world made? It was made for Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate meaning of creation. Which means he's also the ultimate meaning of our lives. If all creation was made for Jesus, then it stands to reason that **we** too were made for Jesus.

If everything in creation finds its purpose in Jesus, then how can we ever claim to know the purpose of our lives, if we don't know Jesus for ourselves?

Those who say Jesus brings them peace, know this well – As St Augustine said Our souls are restless until they find rest in Him.

Let's look at a 4th big question:

4) Why does science work?

The answer is of course, Jesus.

Verse 17 - Jesus was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment.

Jesus holds creation together. The fabric of the universe, the stuff of our bodies, our houses, the ground on which we stand, it's all held together by Jesus, it's all sustained and kept going by Jesus. If Jesus wasn't doing that, the universe would disintegrate. It would cease to exist.

Now, all you budding scientists – maybe thinking

“But surely its the laws of physics that holds the universe together”

And I’d have to say, yes you’re right. But scientists didn’t invent the laws of physics – they just worked out how Jesus created the world. The laws of physics hold constant because Jesus holds them constant. That’s what *“in him all things hold together”* means. And because he holds them constant, we live in a predictable, measurable, observable, universe.

Now I don’t know about you, but I know architects work out how to hold big buildings from falling down... I’ve heard of great generals leading and keeping their armies together, I’ve heard of great political leaders who manage to hold countries together, but who has ever heard of a man who can hold an entire universe together?

That’s Jesus....he’s bigger than we could ever imagine...

Let’s do a 5th big question.

5) Why does the church exist?

The answer is of course, Jesus.

“he organizes the church and holds it together, like a head does a body...the NIV says ‘He is the head of the body, the church.’

You know, we often talk about “my church” or “your church”, don’t we? Or we talk about “St John’s Church” or “Pip and Jims” or whatever. But actually, every church is Jesus’ church. Every church should be called Christ’s church.

Because the church is God’s family here on earth and the church belongs to Jesus, He is head over it.

Not Andrea, sorry Andrea, not the Bishops or the Archbishops or the Pope.

Only Jesus is head over the church. It’s his spiritual body, his spiritual family.

Wow, we belong to one, world-wide family. We have brothers and sisters across the world because Jesus is head of the whole church.

Let’s just pause and recap what this passage is telling us.

- What does God look like? Like Jesus
- Where does the world come from? From Jesus
- Why does the universe exist? For Jesus
- Why does science work? Because of Jesus
- Why does the church exist? For Squirrel. I’m just kidding. For Jesus.

So, when our passage calls Jesus the image of the invisible God, He is clearly way, way more than just a picture. But how much more?

So, we come back to the original question...

Who is Jesus?

Well v19 answers the question.

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus].” I love the message version.....

Let’s just think what the statement means. **This cup of water** represents God,

the water if you like is the fullness of God – it's what he is. And God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus. **[Pour water into Jesus cup]**. So now Jesus is the fullness of God too. What's he saying? That all of God's fullness dwells in Jesus.

Or to call a spade a spade: that Jesus is God.

Cast your minds back to Easter. Every Easter we tend to read the chapters of John's gospel that cover the resurrection. Especially chapter 20. And at the very end of it you get all that business with Doubting Thomas. And when Thomas finally realises Jesus has risen from the grave – what does he say to him? He says,

"My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

In other words, he calls Jesus "God." And says it to his face. And what does Jesus say in response? Does he say

"Hold on a minute you've missed the point"?

No. He accepts the praise. Because he's God.

When Jesus came to earth as a man it says in Philippians chapter 2..

He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave.

He was still God but humbled himself, even allowing himself to die for us.

Time for one last question.

6) Who defines good and evil? Who defines what is right and what is wrong?

Nope it's not the BBC, it's not Facebook or Instagram

No – you've got it....it's Jesus. The creator of the universe has spoken plainly to us, in his word, in the Bible.

Jesus speaks about good and evil,

He speaks about right and wrong,

About how we should live.

He speaks about how we should live every area of our lives,

And deep down we know we've not lived up to those standards, and that creates a barrier between us and God, that spoils our relationship with him, and with one another.

And that makes what our passage talks about last of all, even more remarkable.

'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.

He will make all things well, he is our saviour,

People sometimes ask, don't they? How can the death of one man do all that? How can the death of one man reconcile our broken, bruised rebellious world to God?

Well, the answer is that it can only accomplish it, because Jesus was far more than a man. Jesus was a man who was also fully God.

And he allowed himself to be crucified because he loves us. He loves you. And he wants each and every one of us to know that love so that we can know the Father for ourselves, so that we can be forgiven for not living up to God's love.

I said it before, I'll say it again. "Jesus is the answer."

Shall we pray?