

# THE WHOLE BIBLE: Colossians – 1 Thessalonians

## COLOSSIANS

- written in response to false teachers in Colossian church
- false teaching was combination of pagan and Jewish beliefs

### Colossians 2:16-19

<sup>16</sup>Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

<sup>18</sup>Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup>and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

## The gospel is the supremacy of Christ over all things

### Colossians 1:15-20

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

<sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

## Jesus is the head of *creation* and *new creation*

- what was lost in Fall (creation), restored in Redemption (new creation)

### Creation

- “image of God” | “firstborn of all creation
- “thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities”

### New creation

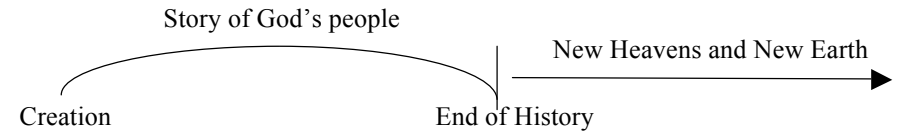
- “he is the beginning” | “firstborn from the dead”
- “head of the church” | “reconciliation of all things”

## 1 THESSALONIANS

- major theme is the Second Coming of Jesus

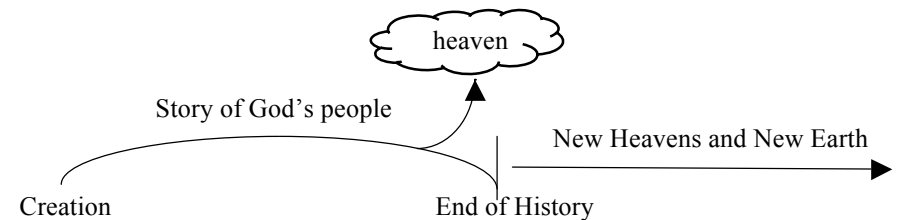
### Introduction to Eschatology

- story of Bible ends with the renewal of all things

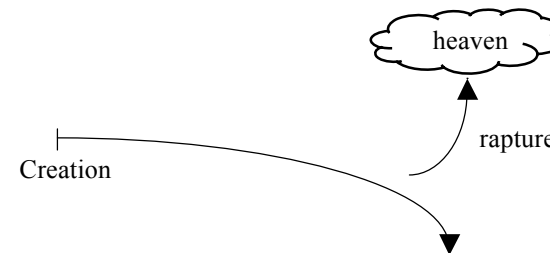


### What about heaven?

- heaven is to be with Jesus, but still waiting until Resurrection
- two-age eschatology: *this present age* and *age to come*



### Not “two-world” eschatology



### 1 Thessalonians 4

<sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

<sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

**Paul is addressing the fate of two kinds of believers:**

- “those who have fallen asleep” – believers who have died
- “we who are alive” – believers still alive when Jesus returns

**“coming of the Lord”**

- Greek – παρουσία (*parousia*) | “appearance of a king”
- in ancient world, conquering king returns to city in triumph

**v. 17 – “then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”**

- “caught up” is Latin “*rapere*” – rapture
- raptured believers go to heaven, leaving earth in disarray and chaos

**Two major problems with this interpretation:**

**[1] Why does death and evil continue after the return of King?**

**Colossians 3:4**

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**[2] The return of the King (*parousia*) is a triumphal entry**

- people do not come out of the city and leave the city
- illogic of a U-turn in the air

**Eschatology gives us hope and empowers us for action in this life**

**1 Corinthians 15:57-58**

<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

## Notes

### Introduction to Colossians

- written in response to false teachers in Colossian church
- not sure of what false teaching was | listening half conversation
- false teaching was combination of pagan and Jewish beliefs
- taking Colossian believers away from the centrality of Christ

#### Colossians 2:16-19

<sup>16</sup> Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup> Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

#### The gospel is the supremacy of Christ over all things

- Paul wants the Colossian believers to hold fast to the Head – Christ
- when we meditate on Christ, everything else comes into focus

#### Colossians 1:15-17

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

#### He is the image of the invisible God

- Second Commandment – “no graven images of God”
  - not because God is invisible
  - but man is prohibited from imaging God on his own
  - for God will provide the perfect image: Jesus of Nazareth

#### Jesus is the “image of God”

- human beings are also made in the “image of God” (Genesis)
- lost in Fall, now restored in Christ
  - Eph. 4:24 – “put on new self, created after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness”

– Col. 3:10 – “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator”

#### “firstborn of all creation”

- Jesus is not a created being
- metaphor of preeminence | first-born sons were most important
- Christ is supreme over all creation

#### “all things were created through him and for him”

- Jesus is the creator of all things (beginning)
- all creation is for Jesus (end)
  - creation exists for glory of Christ

#### “in heaven and on earth”

- totality of created order – visible realm and invisible realm
- echoes Gen. 1:1 – “in beginning God created heavens and earth”
- and Rev. 21:1 – “then I saw a new heaven and a new earth”

#### “thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities”

- these are spiritual powers | angelic realm

#### 1 Corinthians 15:24

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

#### Ephesians 1:20-21

seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,

#### Colossians 2:15

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

#### Modern world doesn't acknowledge dark spiritual powers

- but Bible says demonic forces exist | spiritual warfare
- don't forget, Satan is the prince of this age
  - systems of oppression and injustice

### **Ephesians 6:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

#### **“He is before all things”**

- pre-existence of Christ | deity of Christ

#### **“in him all things hold together”**

- God is not clock-maker who winds up the universe and walks away
- rather, Christ upholds the universe, moment by moment
- every breath, every ray of sunshine – is a gift from Jesus

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

#### **“he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead”**

- parallel to v. 15-17: creation | new creation
- this goes to the heart of the gospel
  - gospel is not just saving souls from sin | but new creation!
- Jesus is at head of creation (universe) and new creation (church)

#### **“he is the beginning”**

- firstfruits of Resurrection | his own, and the future
- Jesus stands at the head of the resurrected world to come | founder
- “already but not yet” | still waiting for this future world

#### **Doctrine of New Creation**

- redemption of Christ is to reclaim and recover what was lost
- bodies, Earth, creation, culture, arts, learning, cities, everything good
- not just forgiveness of sins | but restoration of whole world

#### **Against the idea of “rapture” – escape from this world**

- not “abandon sinking ship”
- but rehabilitation of crime-ridden, broken neighborhood
- gospel incentive to be involve in humanitarian projects, environmentalism, social justice, etc

#### **Doctrine of Church**

- church is firstfruits | colony of heaven
- Philippians 3:20 – “our citizenship is in heaven”
  - not: earth is not our true home, heaven is, so don’t settle down
  - Roman/Greek citizens lived throughout world in colonies
  - Roman colonies were pieces of Rome | little Rome
  - purpose is to make world like Rome, spread Rome everywhere

#### **“he is head of church”**

- 1 Corinthians 12 – church is body of Christ
- body is connected to head | union with Christ

#### **In the church, Christ fulfills creation mandate**

- Genesis 1:28 – “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”
- church spreads out to whole world – every tribe, tongue and nation
- Matthew 28:19 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”
- Hab. 2:14 – “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea”
- importance of church – cannot obey without being in church
- importance of missions | beyond just local evangelism, whole world!

#### **“through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross”**

- reconciliation is the heart of gospel
  - goes beyond forgiveness (unilateral)
- reconciliation is restoration of broken relationship
  - requires truth and change

#### **Not just vertical reconciliation (God and man)**

- but horizontal reconciliation – broken friendships, families
- and broken societies, racial exclusion and injustice

## Ephesians 2:14

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

### Reconciliation of “all things”

- beyond just souls, but whole world will be rescued
- worldwide shalom | “making peace”

### True reconciliation is costly – “by the blood of his cross”

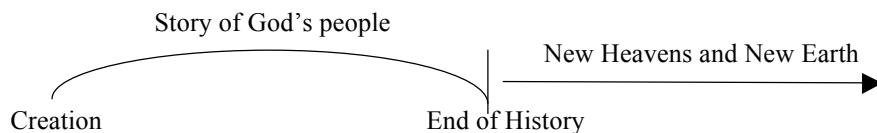
- only the cross can create reconciliation and peace

## Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

- major theme is the Second Coming of Jesus | every chapter
- some members of the church had died
  - b/c of misunderstanding, fear these believers miss Second Coming
  - Thessalonian believers were in hopeless grief

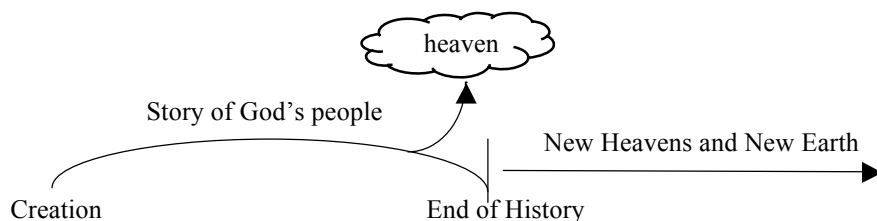
### What is eschatology?

- eschatology is how the Bible’s story ends
- story ends w/ beautiful renewal of all things | **two-age eschatology**

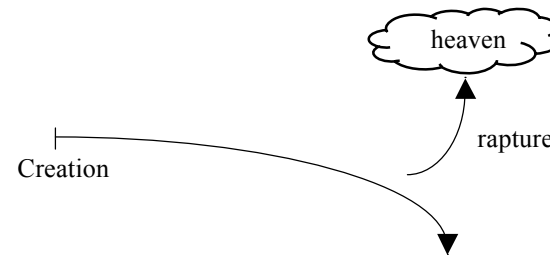


### What about heaven?

- heaven is dwelling place of God
- after die, our spirits go to heaven
- but temporary waiting place – “intermediate state”
- heaven is where *we wait* with Jesus for the end of history and our final destination – God’s resurrected world
- heaven is not our final goal



## Not “Two-World” eschatology



## 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

<sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.

### v. 14 – “those who have fallen asleep”

- Christians who have already died (souls in heaven)
- “fallen asleep” – death is not end, but one day, “wake up”
- Jesus will bring with him these believers at his return

### v. 15 – “we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord”

- Christians still alive on earth when Jesus returns

### “coming of the Lord”

- Greek: *parousia* | technical word: “appearance of king”
- in ancient world, conquering king returns to city, triumphal celebration

### v. 15 – “will not precede those who have fallen asleep”

- alive believers will not meet Christ ahead of dead believers

**v. 16 – “for the Lord himself will descend from heaven”**

- in Ascension of Jesus, in Acts 1, angel tells disciples:  
“this Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven,  
will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”

**v. 16 – “with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel,  
and with the sound of the trumpet of God”**

- these are all aspects of the Parousia – triumphant return of king

**v. 16 – “dead in Christ will rise first”**

- believers who “fallen asleep” | saints in heaven gain back bodies
- “rise” – resurrection | experience Resurrection first – renewed bodies

**v. 17 – “then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up  
together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”**

- “caught up” is Latin “rapere” – rapture
- theology of rapture: these raptured believers go to heaven
- life on earth continues | but full of darkness and destruction  
– “*This is the End*” with Seth Rogan and James Franco
- drama of 1,000 years | until final Second Coming of Christ
  
- Matthew 24, Luke 17 – “two men in field, one taken, one left”  
– “just like in the days of Noah” | reference to Judgment Day  
– one taken is wicked | one left is righteous

**Two major problems with this interpretation**

**[1] Why does death and evil continue after the return of king?**

- even after the return of the King, and the Resurrection
- no renewed cosmos | war and death continue to ravage earth

**Colossians 3:4**

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-54**

<sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

**(2) The return of the king (parousia) is triumphal entry**

- people come out of city and line the streets to welcome the king
- this procession would bring the king into the city – sit and reign
- people do not come out of the city and leave the city
  
- idea of rapture means the King turns back from his creation
- illogic of a U-turn in the air

**Rapture promotes escapist theology**

- why rearrange deck chairs on the Titanic?

**But theology of Resurrection, first, gives us hope**

- nothing good will be lost in this life
- death is not the end | only going to sleep, waiting to be woken up

**Second, empowers us for action in this life**

- all acts of justice and beauty and truth will be consummated

**1 Corinthians 15:57-58**

<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.