

Youth Teaching Resources

November 24, 2019



Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

All Saints Day

Ephesians 1:11-23 – “At Home with the Saints”

Random Readings

Luke 20:27-38 – “Trick Questions”

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 – “Right Things”

Colossians 1:11-20 – “Blown Minds”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Blown Minds

Colossians 1:11-20

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

We see people claiming to be “#1” all of the time whether it be in sports or the first chair in band. We have expectations to be the best. Sometimes this drive can take us too far and we can put other things first. Our priorities can become out of balance and what should be the most important are not.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the commercial for MovieComm entitled “Priorities”. If you are unable to show the ad, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) The ad makes the following statements: “key to life is to have a balance in life”, “family first”, how does it use these to sell Moviecomm videos?
- 2) What does moviecomm want you to make a priority?
- 3) What other ways influence the priorities you should have in your life?
- 4) How have you seen your priorities change?
- 5) What should be your first priority? Explain.

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Colossians 1:11-20. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why did Paul consider all Christ followers to be saints?
- 2) What assurances does Paul give to the people of God?
- 3) What does Paul encourage the people of God to do?
- 4) What options does Paul say we have when we are presented with Christ?
- 5) How does Paul describe Christ? What does this description of Christ mean for the church?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Where was Colossae?
- 2) Where are we to see God?
- 3) What authority do we have in our lives?
- 4) What is the body of Christ to Paul?
- 5) Why is God a mystery to Paul?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": What did Paul mean by calling Jesus "the firstborn from the dead?"

Transformation

Conclude your session by leading the group through the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina*. If you have not led a group through this practice, familiarize yourself with the practice before leading the group. As you lead the group, allow for plenty of time for the students to be in silence and listen for God. When the practice has been completed, allow for students to share what they heard from God.

Close with a prayer asking that we put God first in our lives.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Colossae—Colossae was a small city in the southwest part of Asia Minor (now Turkey), in an area known as Phrygia, about 100 miles inland from the port city of Ephesus. Colossae was near the head of the Lycus River, a tributary of the Meander River (the source of our English word “meander,” referring to a wandering track), and not far from Laodicea and Heiropolis. Colossae was famous at one time for its textile industry, which featured wool products from local sheep dyed a deep red color.

By the time Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colossae, the town was in decline, but still had a cosmopolitan population of local Phrygians, Jews, Greeks, and Syrians. The diverse population held to a variety of religious traditions, out of which a syncretism emerged that Paul saw as a threat to the Christians’ dependence on Jesus alone.

Thanksgiving—One has to admire a man who could sit in prison, having done no wrong, and yet find reason to rejoice. Paul wrote this letter while being held captive by the Roman authorities on charges that his preaching was dangerous to the government.

Paul wrote to a church that was facing hardships of its own. Yet, Paul exuded a spirit of gratitude and encouraged the Colossians to “endure everything with patience while giving thanks to the Father ...” (vv. 11b-12a).

In his commentary on Colossians for the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Smyth & Helwys, 2013), Nijay K. Gupta cites a book by Ellen Charry called *God and the Art of Happiness* (Eerdmann’s, 2010). Charry notes that we have a natural tendency to base our sense of happiness on circumstances, and when conditions are bleak enough, our only hope of real joy gets pushed into an anticipation of heaven.

But Charry argues that believers can have true happiness now, even in the midst of trouble, when we realize that the saving relationship we have with Christ is not just about a blissful eternity, but involves “growing into the wisdom of divine love and enjoying oneself in the process” (Charry, p. x; cited in Gupta, p. 75).

A hymn?—While both stylistic and linguistic evidence support the position that vv. 15-20 are poetic in nature, its intended structure is not altogether clear. It is likely that the introductory words “He is the ...” followed in the next line by “The firstborn of ...” are intended to be parallel introductions to two sections, vv. 15-17 and vv. 18-20.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Seeing God—The Old Testament speaks of occasions when God took on a visible manifestation. We're familiar with the stories of how God appeared as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day to guide the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt. In other stories, God appeared in human form to Abraham (Genesis 18) and to Jacob (Gen. 32:22-30). These were special occasions, however, and people generally thought of God as too dangerous to look upon.

Authority—In patriarchal societies such as ancient Israel, firstborn sons occupied a special place in the family. They received a double share of the inheritance when the father died, and they took over his position of leadership over the remainder of the family. Thus, the first born was also in first place, given authority over his other siblings. This is why, for example, the conflict between Jacob and Esau was so fierce: they were twins, but Esau emerged first, and was thus had the “birthright” that would ultimately give him authority over his very slightly younger brother. Jacob, recognizing the significance (and the unfairness) of the situation, persuaded Esau to sell his birthright, and later fooled his father into giving him the firstborn blessing intended for Esau.

The meaning of “firstborn,” then, has its roots in birth order, but came to be used as a common term for whoever was in first place, for the one who had authority and power over others.

The body of Christ—Paul often spoke of the church as the body of Christ, as in Rom. 12:5: “so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” For similar affirmations, see Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 6:15, 12:12, 27; Eph. 3:6, 4:12; and Col. 2:19, 3:15.

Revealing a mystery—When Paul spoke of his message as a formerly hidden mystery that had now been unveiled, he was using language that was common to Jewish apocalyptic writings, and it is likely that the false teachers in and around Colossae were using similar language, too.

Paul believed the gospel message was a mystery that had been revealed, but he did not see it as a secret to be hoarded and parceled out to “true believers” who might pay for advanced courses in faith. Rather, the mystery was simply that God’s plan of redemption includes everyone, Gentiles as well as Jews, and he sought to proclaim it so widely that it would no longer be a mystery, but known to all.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

What did Paul mean by calling Jesus “the firstborn from the dead”?

In v. 18, Paul speaks of Christ by saying “He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.”

What does he mean by “the firstborn from the dead?” Some interpreters see “firstborn” as indicating priority in time as well as rank, thinking of Christ as the first person ever to rise from the dead. The problem with this is that the Bible speaks of other people being raised from the dead, including dead boys raised by Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:18-37), and two people that Jesus raised from the dead (the synagogue ruler’s daughter, Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; and Lazarus, John 11:1-44).

But Paul clearly had in mind a different kind of resurrection. When Jesus was resurrected after the crucifixion, he did not simply come back to life as a reanimated body, returning to the quotidian routines of daily life. Jesus arose in a resurrection body – however we are to understand what that means – rather than simply resuming his earthly form. In Acts 26:13, Paul testified of Christ as “the first to rise from the dead.” In 1 Cor. 15:20 he spoke of Christ’s resurrection as “the firstfruits of those who have died.” Paul was not alone. In Rev. 1:5, the elder John spoke of Jesus as “the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

In this sense, Paul’s expression seems to indicate a belief in the early church that Jesus’ resurrection and return to heaven opened the way for others to be resurrected in eternity, as well. If pressed too hard, this contradicts Jesus’ own teaching. In responding to a trick question from the Sadducees, Jesus had argued that God would not have self-identified to Moses as being “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” unless those early patriarchs were still living, presumably in the presence of God (Exod. 3:6, Luke 20:37-38). At the Transfiguration, as Jesus took on a different appearance, clothed in shining white, Moses and Elijah appeared with him, apparently in something other than an ordinary human body (Mark 9, Matthew 17).

Thus, one could cite texts to suggest that Jesus was not technically the first to live, die, and be resurrected to eternal life with God. Paul argued, however, that Christ was the firstborn of all creation (v. 15) as well as the “firstborn of the dead” (v. 18). From the perspective of believers, Jesus’ death and resurrection that opens the way for us to be saved makes him “the firstborn from the dead.”

From another perspective, we note that the word *prototokos* does not necessarily indicate birth order, as it appears, but can also refer to one’s priority in position and power. Paul wanted to convey that Christ is first in every way.