

## Study 6: All Things Reconciled

Jesus did not come in power in the way the Israelites anticipated. Rather than overthrowing the Roman empire, Jesus spent time with those in the margins of society, those the Israelites themselves avoided. Jesus brought spiritual and physical healing to Jews and Gentiles, echoed the indictment of the prophets in calling out the religiosity of devout Jews, and shared stories of the nature of God's kingdom. His life and ministry were marked by self-giving; even days before his murder, he washed his disciples' feet, modeling true leadership. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was about much more than a political power grab- today's text from the Bible is a letter written by a man named Paul. Paul's letter captures a glimpse of the cosmic implications of Jesus, God incarnate, willingly dying on the cross and coming back to life.

Consider the journey through scripture you have taken together so far. Remember the beautiful picture of God's intention for creation in Genesis, the multiplication of evil and injustice that grieved God's heart, God's response to injustice that brought liberation through Moses, the indictment against God's people for severing justice from spirituality, and God coming in the flesh through Jesus to proclaim the good news of liberation for *all*. As you study, ask what difference Jesus' death and resurrection make in addressing evil and injustice.

### Discuss

- Who or what do you think has the power to change the injustice in our world? Do those things give you hope? Why or why not?



Paul was known for persecuting Christians until an encounter with Jesus, the living God, changed everything (Acts 9). He preached the good news of Jesus to Gentiles and endured persecution himself. He wrote this letter from prison to a church in the Roman region of Colossae to clearly articulate the truth of the gospel in a cultural context where there was a “fascination with magic and with mystery cults”<sup>1</sup> and spiritual knowledge was viewed as power.

## Colossians 1:15-23

<sup>15</sup> The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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 and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— <sup>23</sup> if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

## Discuss

*Note: Consider previous studies as you discuss this text.*

- What are the implications of the reconciliation described in the passage (both in terms of how it is accomplished and the impact)?

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<sup>1</sup> Wintle, Brian. 2015. *South Asia Bible Commentary*, 1660. Rajasthan: Open Door Publications.

- What is it about Jesus that compels Paul to be a “servant” of this good news? Why does he call the church to hold out hope in this gospel?
- What difference does Jesus' death and resurrection make in addressing evil and injustice?
- What is the hope that Jesus offers in light of the injustice in our world? How might that motivate or encourage us in our pursuit of justice?
- Additional questions (optional)
  - What contrasts, repetition, imagery, and metaphors do you see in the text? (O)
  - What is significant about the statements Paul makes of Jesus in vs. 15-18? (I)
  - What is the hope held out in the gospel? Why is Paul telling the church to be established and firm in this hope? (I)
  - How does the nature of the supremacy of Jesus contrast to white supremacy or other forms of supremacy asserted in our world (vs. 18-19)? (A)
  - Reflect on what you have become a servant of; in other words, what determines your choices and way of life? Consider your daily choices (i.e. when you spend money; who you spend time with). Can you identify what or who guides your decisions? How does that guidance compare or contrast to what Paul has chosen to submit himself? (A)
  - What are your motivations for pursuing justice? (A)
  - Where do you long to see the reconciliation, be it “visible or invisible”? (A)

## Summary + Reflection

True power belongs to the One who has existed before all time, who has remained constant while kingdoms have risen and fallen, the source of breath and life that we saw in Genesis 1. To Jesus *alone* belongs the supremacy. What is the connection between justice and the gospel? God in the flesh has come through Jesus to put to death the evil and violence that multiplied across time and space because of humanity's actions, because of *our* actions. Humanity has

blood on our hands, and yet it is Jesus' blood that washes us clean. Jesus willingly puts his body on the line so that all things can be made right with God. The good news of Jesus is a threat to visible and invisible powers and authorities that seek to perpetuate evil. Jesus breaks the chains of self-interest that shackle us and through the Holy Spirit liberates us to flourish as God intended. We have hope, knowing that all things will be brought to account before a good, holy, and just God. Justice is who God is, and it's central to God's work in the world. We join God's work of seeking shalom for our broken world, anticipating when all things will be made right once and for all.

- Take a minute to pause and listen, reflecting on how God has spoken to your community throughout this series. Why is Jesus good news in light of the injustice in our world? Who might need to hear this good news this week?

If you get stuck, check out the Justice and the Gospel summary handout, or view it online at: <https://bit.ly/jbsgospel>. This summary is modeled after InterVarsity's "Big Story" diagram.

## Apply

### Spiritual Practice: Share good news of Jesus

Create a phone wallpaper that incorporates a phrase or sentence that captures the good news of Jesus in light of the injustice in our world (see examples in the JBS Phone Wallpaper folder). Set it as your lock screen image to remind yourself of the gospel this week. Post it to your Instagram stories to share your learning. Include a question or poll sticker to invite dialogue!

### Reflect + Share

Journal your responses to these questions, then share them with your group.

- What is the good news of Jesus in light of the injustice in our world?
- How is God speaking to you? How will you respond?

## Closing Prayer & Announcements