

Colossians 1:15-17
“He’s got the whole world in His hands”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 15 Jesus: What God looks like and what man was meant to look like

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I. Intro.

Charles Wesley wrote a wonderful Hymn: “*Hark, The Herald Angels Sing*”, in it is a line that comes right from this letter as Wesley wrote of Jesus: “*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the Incarnate Deity.*” These words capture the central truth of our Christian faith, every doctrine flows out of that great truth. It is for this reason that I’ve felt led by the Lord to share this passage for our Christmas message. As Paul wrote this truth to the Colossian believers for two important reasons.

1. Paul is concerned that these new Christians continue to mature: The point is that a person can’t “*Imitate Christ*” if they can’t see Him clearly? (1 Corin. 11:1) Far too often today in the Church Jesus has become invisible. The reason for this is that the Church has made the church the focus instead of Jesus.
2. Paul can’t help himself: As young man known as Saul of Tarsus he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a deliberate blasphemer who got what was coming to Him. Paul considered it an honor and mission in life to go after and take out anyone who believed what Paul believed were Jesus’ lies. But that all came to a screeching halt as he was on his way to Damascus, there 20 plus years earlier he heard a voice saying to him, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*” In amazement Paul cried out, “Who are you, Lord?” and here Paul states the answer he found to his own question 20 years earlier, “Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the Creator of all things.” Paul goes on to point out three truths about Jesus and two ways He demonstrated those truths in verses 15-17.

II. Vs. 15 Jesus: What God looks like and what man was meant to look like

Vs. 15a Christ's nature as God: What does Paul mean that Jesus is “*the image of the invisible God?*” Is it like the little boy who was drawing pictures one day when his mother asked him,

“What are you drawing?” And the boy replied, “I’m drawing a picture of God.” Hearing this, his mom said, “Honey no one knows what God looks like.” The boy never looked up and instead just said, “They will when I get through!” There are a lot of people who are drawing God as they think he is but that’s NOT what Paul is doing. **Paul says if you look at Jesus you will see two things:**

- ***He will be the exact photograph of God***
- ***He will show us what mankind was meant to look like***

Jesus Himself told Philip in John 14:9 saying, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” The word “**image**” here means “**an exact representation and revelation**” and combined with the word “**firstborn**” would bring the meaning of the word firstborn NOT to mean “time” but rather to “**status or place**”. **It is only in Jesus that the invisible God is revealed perfectly.**

Vs. 15b Christ’s work as Creator: Next Paul says that Jesus is “*The firstborn of all creation.*”

The Jehovah's Witnesses say that this phrase proves that Jesus was a created being and not God. The word “*firstborn*” in the Greek is a word that **doesn’t** speak of **chronologically** but rather of **priority**. In Exodus 4:22 Jacob is called the firstborn and in Jeremiah 31:9 Ephraim (Joseph’s youngest son) is also called the firstborn. In both cases they had older brothers chronologically but were **first in order of priority**. Paul **ISN’T** saying that Jesus was **the first created being** and therefore not eternal in nature. He is saying that **Jesus was first in priority as He created!** That’s what John said in his gospel in John 1:1-3 “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*”

III. Vs. 16 Jesus: The Plan, Power, and Purpose of creation

Vs. 16 This is again affirmed as Paul says Jesus created all things and therefore could not be created Himself. Now we know why the wind and seas obeyed Him, and death and diseases fled from Him, they had no choice! Saints the truth is everything exists **IN, THROUGH,** and **FOR** Jesus.

- *He is the Sphere **IN** which they exist*
- *He is the Agent **THROUGH** which they came into being*
- *He is the One **FOR** whom they were made*

For centuries, the Greek philosophers had taught that everything needed three things:

A primary cause: Or *the plan*

An instrumental cause: Or *the power*

And a final cause: Or *the purpose*

But when it comes to Creation Jesus Christ is:

The primary cause (*He planned it*)

The instrumental cause (*He produced it*)

The final cause (*He did it for His own pleasure*)

This verse reveals that Jesus cannot be part of God's creation, for all created things were created by him. Jesus is the originator of all life including what Paul describes here in verse 16 as “*thrones and rulers and powers and authorities*” all of these were created by him. The Colossians were being influenced by Greek teachers that the universe consisted of a “*hierarchy of divine beings*” like Hermes, Poseidon, Apollo, and Zeus and they had a kind of eastern concept of reincarnation. *It's strange how folks will reject Christianity with all the historical and archaeological evidence and then receive false concepts of reincarnation, horoscopes and astrology as influencing and governing their lives. Others go after Transcendental Meditation as the means of getting in touch with invisible beings that are to them Astral Teachers and Divine*

Masters to impart knowledge. Over time people have progressed and evolved into a complete state of ignorance of God and are lost to the gods of their own making. To all of this Paul proclaims that Jesus is above all creation in heaven or on earth, visible or invisible, thrones or dominions, principalities, or powers. As “***ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM.***”

IV. Vs. 17 Jesus: Holding everything together

Vs. 17 Here Paul declares two ways of how Jesus controls the creation: Time and Space or history:

1. Vs. 17a **Time**: “*And He is before all things*”: There is a mystery to me in men like Carl Sagan who worked in the field of astronomy, knowing the great secrets of the universe, breathed the air, ate the food, and relied upon the moment-by-moment heartbeat all of which God has supplied, yet still insisted on telling everyone that only man mattered! Jesus controls time because He has always been and therefore before time.
2. Vs. 17b **Space**: “*And in Him all things consist...*”: Jesus has the power to sustain and to prevent breakdown. The scientists, who work on the linear accelerator at Stanford University smashing the atom apart, know that it takes incredible power to do so, but what holds them together. The answer to that isn't a “What” but rather a “WHO” as the atom isn't held together by a something it's a Someone!

There is a law of science known as “***Coulomb's Law of Physics***” which describes the electrostatic interaction between electrically charged particles and is essential to the development of the **theory of electromagnetism**. The law can easily be tested with two magnets as two positive ends will repel each other where the opposite ends attract. But here in lies the mystery as the nucleus of an atom are packed full of only positive charged particles. Since all of creation is made up of atoms what is keeping it together instead of them doing what they naturally want to do, **REPEL**? You can study **Quantum Physics** and hear lots of theories, but the truth is no one in science knows what the **Atomic Glue** is that holds

the atom together with such force that to split causes a very big bang! I believe that 2 Peter 3:10 holds the answer as Peter wrote, *“the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”* You see the answer is that **Jesus is holding the atom together** and one day Peter says He will just let go and things will get very hot and there will be a very big bang! The things of creation is temporary, and Jesus is holding everything together so the next time everything is coming apart in your life just give everything to Him as He is very good at keeping things together.