



## **Colossians 1:15**

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

### **Reflection**

Colossians 1:15–20 may just be my favourite passage in all of Scripture. It is the most famous section of Paul's letter to the Colossians and represents the highest teaching about Jesus Christ in the Bible. It does not get any better than this! And so each

day we're going to read the whole section before taking it one verse at a time. Colossians 1:15–20, the supremacy of Jesus Christ,

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 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. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 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. 19 For God was pleased

to have all his fullness dwell in him,  
20 and through him to reconcile to  
himself all things, whether things on  
earth or things in heaven, by mak-  
ing peace through his blood, shed  
on the cross.

Colossians 1:15–20, the peerless, su-  
preme, all sufficient Christ, both the cen-  
tre of God’s work in creation and redemp-  
tion, and the exact representation of his  
very being. But for today, we’re just going  
to concentrate on the first verse, Colos-  
sians 1:15,

15 The Son is the image of the invis-  
ible God, the firstborn over all cre-  
ation

This verses teaches us that Jesus is both

the ‘image of the invisible God’ and the ‘firstborn over all creation.’ Let’s address each of these in turn.

Firstly, these majestic verses about the supremacy of Jesus Christ begin by telling us that Jesus is the ‘image of the invisible God’. The beginning of both John’s gospel and the letter to the Hebrews make similar statements about Jesus, John 1:18,

18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Hebrews, 1:3,

3 The Son is the radiance of God’s

glory and the exact representation of his being,

Jesus is the 'image of the invisible God', the exact representation of God, who came down and walked amongst us in order to make God known in a world that up until the first century had not seen God but now have seen him in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the Greek the word for image is *eikon*, from which we get the English word 'icon'. It means an image or representation. Sometimes the Greek word meant a picture, as when an ancient soldier sent a portrait to his father with the note, 'I sent you a little portrait of myself painted by Euctemon.' Jesus is image, the exact representation, the portrait of God. But the term means

even more than is, it's deeper than a mere copy or likeness. In Greek philosophy, the image has a share in the reality it reveals and may be said to be the reality. As the image of God, Christ is an exact, as well as visible, representation of God, illuminating God's essence and revealing the personal character of God. In Jesus we see who God is – Creator and Redeemer. In Jesus we see what God is like – a God of mercy and love; and what God does – one who sends his Son to rescue people from the dominion of darkness and brings reconciliation of all creation through his death on the cross. As Calvin said, in Jesus God shows us 'his righteousness, goodness, wisdom, power, in short, his entire self.'

Jesus is the 'image of the invisible God', and our verse continues, 'the firstborn

over all creation.’ Which at first glance in a little confusing. What does it mean that Jesus is ‘the firstborn over all creation?’ Are we to take this to mean, as the Jehovah’s witnesses do, that Jesus is a created being? That there is a time when Jesus was not, and that he was created by God as his ‘firstborn’ in creation? The answer, in short, is a resounding ‘no’. To interpret Colossians 1:15 in this way is to ignore its context, which makes Jesus Creator of everything, as well as to ignore the rest of the New Testament that teaches us that Jesus is eternal. But most of all Jehovah’s witnesses ignore the indisputable fact that while ‘firstborn’ can mean first child, in ancient times and in its usage in the Bible, the term very often simply means ‘first in rank or honour’, as is consistent with the importance the ancient world placed on

the firstborn son who would inherit both his father's estate and name. Perhaps the best example of this is in Psalm 89, which is also a Messianic psalm predicting the coming of Jesus, Psalm 89:27,

27 And I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.

Jesus has been appointed the 'firstborn over all creation'. The highest honour belongs to him. He is completely supreme in all creation.

And so in just one short verse, barely 14 words, we've been launched into the stratosphere in what some have referred to as 'nose-bleed' Christology, some of the highest teaching about Jesus in the



New Testament. Col 1:15,

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

## **Think**

And from this verse, as we move now to meditating over its implications, we can draw two main applications. Firstly, in Genesis 1:26–28, we read that God created humankind in his own ‘image’ – that word again. This means that Colossians 1:15 not only tells us about Christ – it also tells us about ourselves, because as Jesus is the image of God, he is what we were meant to be in terms of character. Jesus Christ is the perfect human being which means that we should aspire to be exactly like him. We

were made to his design, sin marred the prototype, and now through the redemptive work of Jesus the Holy Spirit is recreating us into Jesus' image and likeness, restoring and healing that which was broken at the Fall. And so firstly, created in the image of God and desiring to be like him our every aspiration as Christians should be to become increasingly like Jesus.

Secondly, Jesus has been appointed the 'firstborn over all creation'. The highest honour belongs to him. He is completely supreme in all creation. In everything he has the supremacy which means that we ought to give him first place in our lives. Consider today in both the practical outworking of your life and the desires of your heart if you are giving Jesus the pre-eminence he deserves. What else might be

taking his place? Could you be you consciously or unconsciously placing things above him and thereby ‘worshipping and serving created things’ (Rom 1:25) ahead of your creator? The rich blessings of modern life make this so easy to do and so insidious. But the Bible does not mince words, to do so in Biblical terms is known as idolatry which is a dangerous sin. How can you raise your vision of Jesus this week so that he might recapture the greatest desires of your heart and reclaim his rightful position in your day to day?

## **Pray**

Close this time of mediating over Colossians 1:15 in prayer. This verse calls for worship. Praise God this morning for the supremacy of Jesus Christ and the gra-

cious gift that he is to us. Thank God that we can know him intimately through Jesus and that by adopting Jesus' character and following his example the pathway to the best life possible on this earth has been opened up to us. And pray for help, for you and I, in raising Jesus Christ above all else in our lives and keeping our eyes fixed on this vision of him.