

The MYSTERY

Hidden for Ages

Is Now REVEALED

A Study of the Book of Colossians

LESSON 5

This Week's Passage:

Colossians 1:15-17

New International Version (NIV)

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.**

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:13-14

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ **For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,** ¹⁴ **in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

Day One: Read Colossians 1.

1. What does Paul say about the Son in verse 15?
2. Why did the invisible God choose to make himself visible in Jesus? (You may want to consider Jn. 14:8-10 and Heb. 1:1-3.)

Day Two: Read Colossians 1.

3. How is Jesus the perfect image of the invisible God? Mark 2:3-12

1 Jn. 1:1-2

Image

When we think of the word "image," we think of a picture or statue that copies the outward appearance of something or someone.

However, when Paul uses the word "image," he is not talking about outward appearance. He means instead that Christ's "essential being" is exactly the same as God's; in other words, Christ's being "the image of the invisible God" (v. 15) means that in Christ the Son, "nothing of God is lacking."¹

Jn. 17:7–8
Jn. 1:14; 17:24

Jn. 5:19–21; 10:37–38

Jn. 15:9

What other passages can you think of that show Jesus to be the perfect image of the invisible God?

4. Read what the early church fathers affirmed about Jesus in the Nicene Creed.²

We believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds:
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried;
and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead;
and whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets;
and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church;
we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
and we look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Day Three:
Read Colossians 1.**

Firstborn

“...firstborn refers...primarily to position, or rank. In both Greek and Jewish culture, the firstborn was the son who had the right of inheritance. He was not necessarily the one born first. ...firstborn clearly means highest in rank, not first created.”³

5. Jesus has always existed without beginning and end (Heb. 13:8). How do you think Paul is using the term “firstborn” when he declares that Jesus is “the firstborn over all creation” (v. 15)?
v. 16

v. 17

6. In verse 16, Paul could have just written, “For in him all things were created.” Why do you think he added the rest of the verse?
7. What else does Paul add to the fact that Jesus created all things? (v. 16b; Rom. 11:36)

What do you think this means? (You may want to consider Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 5:13)

Day Four: Read Colossians 1.

8. How should the fact that all things were created both THROUGH Christ and FOR Christ reorient our worship? (Consider Jer. 10:10–16; Rom. 1:25.)
9. How does “he is before all things” (v. 17) make sense given what Paul has just said in verse 16?

If you were Paul and you wanted to expand on “he is before all things,” what would you write?

10. Beyond creating all things and existing before all things, what else does Jesus do? (v. 17; Heb. 1:3)

11. Paul proclaimed that Jesus is supreme over all he has made AND holds all things together; this includes every person and thing in your life. Knowing this, list things that seem big or overwhelming right now as a statement of his power and supremacy over them.

Jesus Christ is supreme over _____.

Jesus Christ is supreme over _____.

Jesus Christ is supreme over _____.

In what ways does affirming this bring you encouragement, hope, and courage?

Day Five: Read Colossians 1—4.

12. Review verses 15–17 and count how many times Paul uses the word “all.” What point do you think he is trying to make?
13. Given the fact that there was false teaching circulating in the Colossian church, what does Paul’s initial teaching in verses 15–20 show is the best defense against error?



A Closer Look

Using your print out of Colossians, highlight with a new color the word “all” throughout the book.

Look back over the text you just highlighted and pick out one phrase using this word “all” that you think summarizes what Paul is trying to convey thus far.

_____ (Reference: Col. __: __)

¹ Everett F. Harrison, *Colossians: Christ All-Sufficient* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 32.

² *Trinity Hymnal* (Great Commission Publications: Philadelphia, 1990), 846. “The Nicene Creed originated at the Council of Nicea (325), and an expanded form was adopted by the Council of Chalcedon (451). It was formulated to answer heresies that denied the biblical doctrine of the Trinity and of the person of Christ.”

³ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Colossians and Philemon* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 46.