

## Identifying The Baby Jesus

Colossians 1:15-20

Intro: A song was heard at Christmas, To wake the midnight sky, Angels sang of a Savior's birth, who is Christ the Lord; Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men (Luke 2:14). Who was this baby born in Bethlehem's manger over 2,000 years ago? He was the Divine Son of God come in flesh—the union of deity and humanity!

The Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 1:15-20, that “Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. He is the Creator of all things spiritual and material, and in Him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body the church; and He is the first-born from the dead. It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness of deity to dwell in Him. And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

I would like to look at three marvelous truths from this passage about the person of our Divine Savior Jesus Christ:

1. His preexistence with the Father (vv. 15, 19; 2:9)
2. His prominence in creation (vv. 16-17) and
3. His preeminence in the Church (vv. 18, 20)

### **I. His Preexistence With The Father (vv. 15; 2:9)**

#### **A. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (v. 15a)**

v. 15—He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

The opening line of verse 15 describes Christ as “the image of the invisible God.”

Now, an image is a representation of what a person or thing looks like. When you look in a mirror you see an image, a reflection of yourself. In Jesus' day an image stood for a representation, like the image of Caesar Augustus reproduced on a coin, a portrait, or a bronze sculpture.

The meaning of Christ's representation as “the image of God” goes far beyond His merely representing the image of God, it also carries the idea of revealing the very essence or personal character of God. Jesus is not

just a portrait of God, He is fully God. Paul explains in Colossians 2:9 “For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” This is one of the strongest statements in the New Testament of the Deity and humanity of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

John explains in his Gospel in 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

In the beginning before time began, Christ existed eternally as God. He was with God, and yet is distinct from God the Father. He was and is eternally God, He is identical in essence or nature with God. John goes on in v. 14 to explain Christ’s incarnation—the taking on of humanity.

v. 14—And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. The eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, took on flesh and blood. He became a man. He is the God-man.

#### B. Christ is “the firstborn of all creation” (v. 15b)

Verse 15b calls Christ “the firstborn over all creation,” which at first sight might be taken as teaching that Jesus was the first person created. The term “first-born” can refer to a first-born child or animal. It is used in Luke 2:7 to describe the birth of Mary’s first-born son, Jesus.

The term “first-born” is most often used to refer to one who is preeminent in rank or honor. The background for this term comes out of **Psalm 89:27**, a Royal Psalm which speaks of God’s appointing His coming Messiah to be “the first-born, the most highly exalted over all the kings of the earth.”

We see the same thing in **Hebrew 1:2**: “In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, *whom He appointed heir of all things*, through whom also He made the world.” So, when Paul called Christ “the first-born over all creation” here in Colossians he meant that highest honor belongs to Him. **Christ is the supreme Lord over all creation!**

## II. His Prominence In Creation (vv. 16-17)

### A. Christ is the Agent of creation (v. 16)

**v. 16**—For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.

Jesus is the Creator of all things. **John 1:3** says, “All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” He created everything in the heavens and on earth. He created everything visible and invisible, whether thrones or realms or rulers or authorities. The Scriptures and Jewish literature reveal that these four descriptions “thrones ... realms ... rulers ... and authorities” refer to four classes of angelic powers, with the last two referring to the highest orders of the angelic realm. Jesus is the Creator and Lord over everything.

#### B. Christ is the goal of creation (v. 16)

Christ is not only the Agent of creation, but He is also the goal of creation: “all things were created by Him and for Him” (v. 16b). This is an astounding statement. Everything began with Him and will end with Him. All things sprang forth at His command, and all things will return to Him at the consummation or His second coming. He is the beginning and the end—the *Alpha* and *Omega*. He is the eternal Son of God. There never was a time that Jesus didn’t exist. According to **Micah 5:2** “His goings forth, are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”

#### C. Christ is the Sustainer of creation (v. 17)

**v. 17**—And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Christ is superior in creation because He is the sustainer of creation: “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” The eternally existing One is holding the whole universe together.

Scientists are perplexed over what keeps the planets in orbit, when, because of repulsion, they should fly off into outer space. They say the planets are held in orbit by the inherent attraction of matter. The only problem is, they can’t agree on what force causes the inherent attraction of matter.

Paul tells us that Jesus causes the inherent attraction of matter. In Him all things hold together. What a stunning revelation this is! Christ not only created us—He sustains us, and we are made for Him. We need to submit our personal problems to Him, for He knows how to fix them.

### III. Christ's Preeminence Over The Church 1:18, 20)

#### A. Christ is head of the body, the church (v. 18a)

v. 18—He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Christ has become the head of the body, the church. He is sovereign over the Church, just as He is sovereign over creation. The church is made-up of all born-again believers in Christ from the Day of Pentecost to the present. When a person places their faith in Christ, they become part of Christ's corporate Body through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Romans 12:5 informs us "So in Christ we who are many form one body." As members of His Body we are totally dependent upon the Head, Christ, for direction. He desires to control and direct us by His indwelling Holy Spirit.

#### B. Christ is firstborn from the dead (v. 18b)

The reason for Christ's exalted position in the Church is that "He is the beginning, the first-born from among the dead" (v. 18).

v. 18b—He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead with a glorified body. He triumphed over death, which held man in its bondage. Christ's resurrection provided the hope of life beyond the grave. As the first-born from the dead, Christ is the source of spiritual life and power to all who believe in His name. Without His resurrection there could be no resurrection for believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20ff.).

#### C. Christ provides reconciliation (v. 20)

It was the Father's good pleasure to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of Christ's cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

The sacrificial death of Christ on the cross has provided for fallen and sinful man to be reconciled to God. As the writer to the Hebrews says in Hebrew 10:10, 12, and 14 His once for all sacrifice for sin has perfected for all time those who are sanctified—made right with God because of their faith in Christ.

Conclusion:

Christmas is about the Divine Son of God, Jesus Christ, coming into the world to pay the penalty for sin and pave the way for salvation. The prophet Isaiah wrote: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light ...” (Isaiah 9:2). The Light of the World continues to shine for all who will choose to believe, take up their cross, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lew Wallace, a famous literary genius, was an avowed atheist. For two years, Mr. Wallace studied in the leading libraries of Europe and America, seeking information to write the book that according to him “Would forever destroy Christianity.” While writing the second chapter of his book, he suddenly found himself on his knees crying out to Jesus, “My Lord and my God.”

Because of solid, irrefutable evidence, he could no longer deny that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Later, Lew Wallace wrote *Ben Hur*, one of the greatest novels ever written concerning the times of Christ.

Similarly, the late C. S. Lewis, professor at Oxford University was an agnostic who denied the deity of Christ for years. But he, too, in intellectual honesty, submitted to Jesus as his God and Savior after studying the overwhelming evidence for his deity.

May God help all of us to believe in His Divine Son this Christmas. He came to pay the penalty for sin, and to provide the sacrifice whereby lost men may be saved. If you are here this morning and have never accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin and death, I would invite you to receive Him as I close in prayer. To those of us who have accepted Jesus as our Savior, have you asked Him to be the Lord of your life? Do you take up His cross daily in service to God and one another. If not, ask God to help you live the rest of your life in His service.

Pray with me.

Closing song by Cherye Fulks