

# GOD AND CHRIST (PART 1): THE PERSON OF CHRIST COLOSSIANS 01:15

## *Introduction*

This Scripture is one of the most important passages ever written. It does two very significant things.

=> It destroys false teaching and false thoughts about God and Jesus Christ.

=> It reveals exactly who God and Jesus Christ are.

This was the very purpose of Paul. False teaching had seeped into the Colossian church, false teaching that attacked Jesus Christ. It was called Gnosticism. This was one of the major reasons the pastor of the Colossian church (Epaphras) had visited Paul: to get Paul's advice in dealing with the heresy. The unfortunate thing is this: the teachings of Gnosticism have continued to plague the church down through the centuries, even today. In one form or another similar teachings are always being used to attack the church. Because of this, the teachings of Gnosticism and its *modern counterpart* will be dealt with in the points where they apply. The point to remember is this: throughout this passage Paul is answering the false teaching that had seeped into the church. And there is no better way to counteract false teaching than to present the truth. The false teaching was an attack against Jesus Christ, against both His work and Person. Therefore, Paul takes up the pen and proclaims God and Christ (Part I): the Person of Christ.

I. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (v. 15).

II. Jesus Christ is above all things (v. 15).

## ***I. Colossians 01:15 Jesus Christ, the Image of God***

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. The word *image* (eikon) means the exact image, the very person of God.

=> It means that Jesus Christ was the very *representation of God* — *God in every respect*. Wuest quotes Lightfoot as saying that “image” means a mark or figure burned or stamped on (something)...a precise reproduction in every respect.

=> It means that Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation or revelation of God. God is invisible or unseen, but Jesus Christ reveals God to the world. He reveals God as the exact image, as the perfect representation of God.

The impact of this truth about Jesus Christ has explosive repercussions for man. It destroys all false teaching about God and Christ, and it reveals God to man. It shows man who God is and what He is like. As stated in the introduction, this was the very purpose of Paul. False teaching had seeped into the Colossian church, false teaching that had attacked who Jesus Christ was. Note how forcefully the truth destroys the error.

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1. Gnosticism said there were many intermediaries — many mediators (emanations) — between God and man, that Jesus Christ was not the only mediator.
  - a. The parallel with false teaching down through the centuries is clearly seen. There have been and always will be those who proclaim...
    - that Jesus Christ is not the only person who can bring us near God; that He is not the only mediator between God and man; that there are other mediators and intermediaries of God — other great teachers who are just as important as Jesus Christ — who can bring us in touch with God. (See Buddha. Mohammed, and other leaders of various cults, and self-proclaimed messiahs.)
  - b. However, note how the truth destroys this false teaching. Jesus Christ, who lived and walked among men, is the express image of God, the very Lord of the universe. This means a most significant thing: God is not what most men think. He is not an unconcerned and distant God who is off in outer space someplace. He is not separated from man by a host of intermediaries, by many different ways to reach Him. God is not out of touch with the world; He has not made it difficult to reach Him. He is close at hand, so close that He has come to earth and lived as a Man among us. And in doing so He has done two great things for us through the Lord Jesus Christ. First, He has shown us exactly who He is and what He is like; and second, He has shown us the way to reach Him.

Think for a moment about all that Jesus Christ shows us about God.

- => The fact that He came to earth shows us that He and He alone is the Supreme Person who can take us to God.
- => The fact that He came to earth shows us that God is near.
- => The fact that Jesus Christ lived as a Man, ministering and helping, shows us that God cares.
- => The fact that Jesus Christ died at the hands of men shows that God is love — He willingly sacrificed Himself. Being God He did not have to die. As Scripture says, He could have called down a host of angels to deliver Him.
- => The fact that Jesus Christ proclaimed salvation to man shows that God is a Saviour.
- => The fact that Jesus Christ proclaimed judgment upon evil and warned men of destruction shows that God is a just Lord.

The list could go on an on, but the point is clearly seen. God is not so unconcerned and far away from man that He has left man to grope and stumble through life on his own seeking after God. God loves and cares so much for man that He has shown man exactly who He is and what He is like and the way to reach Him. Jesus Christ alone is the image of God, the Supreme Person of the universe. He alone is the Mediator between God and Man. God is as close as Jesus Christ is.

**John 14:6** *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

**Eph 2:18** *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

**1 Tim 2:5** *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

**Heb 8:6** *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. (see Heb. 12:24)*

**Heb 9:15** *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant.*

**Heb 9:24** *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

**Heb 10:20** *[Christ] by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.*

**1 John 2:1** *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

**Heb 12:24** *To Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

**Col 1:19** *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.*

2. Gnosticism said the human body was evil. This teaching resulted in two different attitudes toward the body and life.
  - => Some said the body needed to be disciplined, controlled and taken care of as much as possible. By controlling its urges and appetites and keeping it fit, the corruption and evil of the body could be mastered more easily.
  - => Others said the very opposite: what was done with the body mattered little, for it was evil and doomed to death. Therefore, once a person took care of his spirit, he could then eat, drink and be merry.
    - a. The parallel with the false teaching of today is clearly seen.
      - => Some concentrate upon the body and its health through recreation, discipline and strict living, seeking to overcome the evil, that is, the corruption, disease, aging and dying of the body, as much as possible.
      - => Others live as they please, eating and drinking and partying as they wish, thinking that it matters little how they live. Just think how many people feel they can do their own thing — what they want, when they want — just so they believe in God and worship and do a good deed here and there.

The point to see is this: each gives attention to the spiritual only as he wishes, only as much as he feels is necessary to keep his spirit in touch with God. But his concentration is the body and its pleasure, whether the pleasure is the exhibition of discipline and control or the stimulating of the flesh.

- b. Note how the truth destroys this lifestyle and teaching. The human body is not evil; Jesus Christ shows us this. He is the image of God — the very Son of God Himself — who came to earth in a human body. Therefore, the human body could not be evil, for God cannot be touched with evil.

The human body has to be honourable or else Jesus Christ would not have wrapped Himself in a human body and come to earth. The conclusion is shocking and convulsive for the life of man. Since the body is honourable, it means that everything a man does with his body is important to his spiritual welfare. What he does with his body determines his relationship and destiny with God. It is totally impossible to keep one's spirit right with God and let one's body go its own way. A person is a person, both spirit and body. Therefore, he is to honour God with *both his spirit and body*, just as Jesus Christ did *in the body* given him by God. (See Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:12-20.)

**Rom 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**1 Cor 6:13** *"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" — but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

**1 Cor 6:19-20** *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

**Col 1:22** *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.*

3. Gnosticism said the way to God was through learning a certain amount of knowledge and certain key words that would assure the opening up of spiritual insight. The emphasis was upon the intellect and learning, knowledge and insight, personal improvement and self-effort in achieving acceptance with God.
- a. The parallel with so much of man's natural thinking is evident. So many feel safe and secure if they...
- know about God and religion
  - know religious phrases and words and can talk in pious and religious language
  - are religious enough to learn about God and religion

But note: knowing about someone is not knowing the person; it is not personal knowledge.

- b. The truth revealed by Jesus Christ strikes at the very foundation of such thoughts and teachings. God does not save a person because he thinks about God and knows some things about religion and God. God saves the uneducated as well as the educated, the simple as well as the intellectual, the ignorant as well as the knowledgeable, the poor as well as the rich, the young as well as the adult. This is seen in that Jesus Christ, who is the image of God...
- came to earth as a baby.
  - was reared by simple, poor parents.
  - was not educated at a university or any other school beyond the local community synagogue.
  - always ministered and reached out to the needy of the world — those who had need, regardless of age, simplicity, suffering, ignorance or any other unfortunate circumstance.

Jesus Christ reveals that God saves all who come to the Father through Him — through Him who redeems us and forgives our sins (Col. 1:14).

*Mat 22:9* 'Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'

*Rom 10:12-13* For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

*Col 1:28* We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

*1 Tim 2:4* Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

*Rev 22:17* The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

*Isa 45:22* "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

*Isa 55:1* "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

The conclusion is forceful: Jesus Christ is the express image, the exact representation, the perfect manifestation, the very Person of God Himself. There is no other person who can bring us near God and no other life-style to follow in reaching God. Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Majesty of the universe who came to earth as God to save men.

*2 Cor 5:19-21* That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**1 Tim 3:16** *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

## **II. Colossians 01:15 Jesus Christ, the Supreme Being**

Jesus Christ is the firstborn above all things. The word "firstborn" does not mean that Jesus Christ was the first created being of the universe. It means *priority, superiority, pre-eminence, supremacy*. It means that He existed before all creation as the Supreme Being of the universe. All creation is His heritage. (See *Jesus Christ, Eternal*, Col. 1:16; 1:17. See Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18.)

**John 10:30** *"I and the Father are one."*

**John 14:9-10** *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."*

**2 Cor 4:4** *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

**Phil 2:6** *[Christ] Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.*

**Heb 1:3** *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ■*