

LESSON 4

THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST

A transition occurs in the letter to the Colossians in 1:15–20. Paul ended his greeting and his discussion of the prayers that he and his companions offered on behalf of the Colossians. Then he began to extol the greatness, nature, and position of Jesus.

1. What ten things does Paul say that Jesus “is” in verses 15–20?
2. What are two different ideas about what this transitional section could have been intended for?

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD AND THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION (1:15)

Jesus came to reveal the Father to mankind (Jn. 1:18). Those who see Jesus also see the Father (Jn. 12:45; 14:9). In all things He is the same substance, nature, glory, and character of the Father. He portrays God’s very being.

3. What does the Greek word for “image” mean, and how is the word used in this verse?
4. Why is God not to be represented by physically crafted works of artisans?
5. What is the significance of the term “firstborn,” both in Hebrew history and as Paul uses it here to describe Christ?

THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS (1:16)

After showing that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation (v. 15), Paul turned to the majestic truth that Jesus is the Creator of all things.

6. What role did Jesus play in creation?
7. What basic arguments does the bible present for a created universe?

8. What might the word “heavens” refer to in verse 16?
9. What is the significance of saying that creation was “for” Christ?

**THE ONE WHO HOLDS
ALL THINGS TOGETHER (1:17)**

The fact that Jesus is **before all things** means that He is not a part of the things that were created. Jesus sustains what He brought into existence.

10. What are the two meanings behind the word “before” in this verse?

**THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH
AND SUPREME (1:18, 19)**

At this point, Paul turned from his discussion of Jesus’ relationship to the universe to His relationship with the church. Jesus is not only the Ruler of the universe but is also over the church.

11. How does Christ, as the head of His body, parallel the literal head of a physical human body?
12. How is the word “church” used in the New Testament, and how does Paul use the word in verse 18?
13. What does Paul mean by saying that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead?
14. In what sense does fullness dwell in Jesus?

**THE BASIS OF RECONCILIATION
(1:20)**

After stating that the fullness of God is in Christ, Paul gave assurance that through Jesus the Father has made reconciliation possible.

15. What two truths are implied by Paul’s saying, “And through Him to reconcile all things to himself”?
16. How does reconciliation between God and man take place?
17. How is man separated from God?
18. How have some misunderstood Paul’s use of the words “all things” in this verse?

19. How can we explain Paul's use of the word "things" in verse 20 when only humans can be reconciled to God?
20. Who "in heaven" might need to be reconciled according to this verse?