

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE BEGIN THE NEXT MAJOR PARAGRAPH OF COLOSSIANS.

▶▶ Paul's mention of Jesus in [verses 13-14](#), ~ leads to a discussion in [verses 15-20](#) ~ about the Person and work of Jesus.

▶▶ This paragraph ~ is one of the most, ~ if not the most, ~ definitive passages on the Person and work of Jesus in all of Scripture.

IN THIS PARAGRAPH, ~ PROFOUND AND SWEEPING ASSERTIONS ARE MADE ABOUT the Person and work of Jesus.

TO AID US IN KNOWING WHY PAUL ADDED THESE ASSERTIONS ABOUT JESUS, ~ recall why Paul wrote this letter.

▶▶ Recall that false teaching was threatening the church in Colossae. ~~ And Paul wrote to refute the false teachers.

AND HERE ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFICS BEFORE WE GET INTO THE DETAILS OF THE ¶.

▶▶ The false teachers ~ emphasized ~ the supremacy of knowledge ~ and that salvation came through knowledge, ~ and not by faith.

▷▷ This knowledge was attained ~ through astrology and magic ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and was available ~ only ~ to those who had been initiated into the Gnostic system.

▷▷ In contrast, ~ in this paragraph, ~ Paul openly proclaimed the way of salvation ~ to be through Christ alone. ¶¶ 1/13

▶▶ The false teachers taught that ~ all matter is inherently evil ~ and only the spiritual and nonmaterial is ~ of itself ~ good.

▷▷ This led to the idea ~ that God could not have created the world ~ and would have no contact with it. ⇨⇨ Expand on this next week. ~ So that's all I'll say about this now.

▷▷ And based on their belief that all matter is evil, ~ the heretics taught that ~ God, ~ in Christ, ~ never could have become a human person.

↳↳ Their thinking was, ~ if matter is evil, ~ how could God ~ ever be united ~ with a human body?

↳↳ Thus ~ the heretics denied ~ either ~ the humanity ~ or the deity ~ of Christ.

→→ In their view, ~ he couldn't have been both.

▷▷ Paul proclaimed that Jesus was God in the flesh ~ and that he created the universe.

▶▶ The heretics said that Christ was not the unique Son of God ~ ¶¶

▷▷ but rather one of many intermediaries between God and people.

↳↳ Paul shows that ~ to be totally unbiblical.

## FALSE TEACHERS ~ IN EVERY AGE ~ TRY TO REDEFINE JESUS.

▶▶ They proclaim a Jesus ~ who is not the Jesus of the Bible.

▶▶ E.g., ~ false teachers preach a Jesus who is not quite God and never quite saves, ~ as the cults teach.

▷▷ A Jesus who wants you healthy and wealthy, ~ as preached by many televangelists.

↳↳ Or a Jesus whom you ask into your life to make you feel good. ¶¶ 2/13

▶▶ In Galatians, ~ Paul has a stern warning for those who preach a different Jesus.

▷▷ Gal. ~ 1: ~ 8-9, ~ "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, ~ let him be accursed."

▷▷ Then, ~ in case we didn't get it the first time, ~ "As we have said before, ~ so now I say again: ~ If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, ~ let him be accursed."

↳↳ "accursed" ~ means a person or thing doomed to destruction. ⇔⇔ 2 Jn. 7-11 . . . .

IN SUMMARY, ~ THE HERETICS WERE ATTACKING AND DISTORTING THE PERSON AND work of Christ.

▶▶ And in this paragraph, ~ Col. ~ 1: ~ 15-20, ~ Paul lays out the truth about the Person and work of Jesus.

▶▶ He presents ten assertions about Jesus' Person and work. ⇔⇔ 1<sup>st</sup> two today.

WE LOOK TO VERSE 15a ~ FOR THE FIRST ASSERTION ABOUT THE PERSON AND work of Jesus.

HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. ⇔⇔ Now, ~ this is very hard to understand.

▶▶ And boiling it down to include in a 30+-minute message, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ which gives us something like 15 minutes or so on it, ~ probably does not do it justice.

▶▶ But hopefully by how I explain this ~ it will make sense to you.

▶▶ Also, ~ because of the nature of this, ~ it will get a little technical.

▶▶ Basically, ~ we can say that I'll get you started on this, ~ and you can study it more fully on your own. ¶¶ 3/13

## GOD IS INVISIBLE.

▶▶ In an emphatic declaration in his gospel, ~ John says, ~ " God ~ no one has seen at any time."

▶▶ In 1 Tim., ~ Paul wrote ~ that God "alone has immortality, ~ who dwells in unapproachable light, ~ whom no one has ever seen or can see."

▶▶ In his essential being, ~ God is invisible to the human eye.

## YET THERE ARE OT PASSAGES THAT EXPLICITLY AFFIRM ~ THAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE seen God.

▶▶ "Ah" says the critic, ~ see ~ the Bible contradicts itself."

▷▷ Our answer to him, ~ "not at all."

▶▶ What they saw ~ were theophanies, ~ or perhaps more accurately, ~ Christophanies ~ ¶¶

▷▷ preincarnate appearances of Jesus in visible form ~ for the purpose of communication.

▶▶ When God Himself spoke to man, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ he used anthropomorphic expressions, ~ such as hands and eyes, ~ to describe His strength and sight.

▶▶ These divine manifestations were unique and temporary.

▷▷ They did not and could not ~ reveal God's essential being.

## IN HIS ESSENTIAL BEING, ~ GOD IS INVISIBLE TO THE HUMAN EYE.

▶▶ What does Paul mean by ~ Jesus "is the image of the invisible God"? ¶¶ 4/13

▶▶ In our language, ~ we probably have in mind a copy of something.

▷▷ In our thinking ~ an image is not the reality, ~ only a copy of it.

▶▶ A photograph is an image captured of some reality, ~ maybe a sunset or mountain scene.

▷▷ It is not actually the sunset or mountain scene ~ but an image of it.

▶▶ But, ~ what may be true in our language ~ can be completely different in the Greek used in the NT.

▶▶ In Greek thought ~ an image shared in the reality of what it represents.

▷▷ Indeed, ~ it is the reality.

↳↳ The symbol brought into focus the actual presence of the object it represented.

▶▶ IOW, ~ Jesus didn't just represent God. ~ ~ Jesus is the very presence of God.

▷▷ In his paraphrase of the NT, ~ J. B. Philips put it this way: ~ ~ *Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God.*

THIS IDEA OF "IMAGE" ~ IS SIMILAR TO THE WORDS USED BY JOHN IN THE OPENING of His gospel.

▶▶ John ~ 1: ~ 1, 14a ~ "In the beginning was the Word, ~ and the Word was with God, ~ and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

▶▶ Jesus, who is God the Son, ~ is equal with God the Father.

▶▶ Jesus is God in human form, ~ the visible expression of the invisible God.

▶▶ The unseen God became seen, ~ when God the Son, ~ the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity, ~ became human and took up residence among us. ↴ ↴ 5/13

FURTHERMORE, ~ WHEN JESUS IS CALLED "THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD," ~ ¶¶

▶▶all the emphasis ~ is on the equality of the image with the original.

▷▷Jesus, ~ himself, ~ shows us both his equality ~ and the fact that he is the visible expression of the invisible God.

↪↪Jn. ~ 10: ~ 30, ~ I and the Father are one.

↪↪And in Jn. ~ 14: ~ 9a, ~ responding to Philip's request to see the Father, ⇔⇔ "Jesus said to him, ~ "Have I been with you so long, ~ and you still do not know me, ~ Philip? ~~ Whoever has seen me ~ has seen the Father."

ANOTHER PARALLEL PASSAGE TO PAUL'S STATEMENT IN verse 15a of Col. 1 ~ is Heb. 1:3a.

▶▶the author writes that Jesus ~ " is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature."

▶▶That is to say, ~ Jesus has all the brightness of God's own glory ~ and is exactly like God the Father in every way.

AND ANOTHER PARALLEL PASSAGE TO PAUL'S STATEMENT IN VERSE 15a of Colossians 1 is found in Jn. ~ 1: ~ 18. Lit. Trans.

▶▶God ~ no one has seen at any time, ~ the one and only God, ~ the one who is in the bosom of the Father ~ [means, ~ who is in closest fellowship with the Father], ~ ¶¶

▷▷that one ~ [emphatic, ~ meaning "he and no other"] ~ has made him known."

▶▶Jesus made visible the invisible nature of God.

▷▷By his person, ~ words, ~ and actions ~ Jesus has revealed the Father to us. ¶¶ 6/13

## WANT TO KNOW WHAT GOD IS LIKE? ~~ LOOK AT JESUS.

▶▶ Want to know what God thinks about you?

▷▷ Look at Jesus.

▶▶ Want to know how much God loves you?

▷▷ Look at Jesus.

## IN VERSE 15b ~ WE FIND THE SECOND ASSERTION ABOUT THE PERSON AND work of Jesus.

### THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION.

▶▶ Ok, ~ here we must insert a Greek lesson before we develop this, ~ so you understand this as much as possible.

▶▶ The Greek grammar indicates that "of all creation" ~ means "over all creation."

▶▶ John MacArthur makes the point, ~ and I agree, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that the word "over" is a better translation than the word "of."

▶▶ And many Greek scholars and some translations translate it as "over all creation."

▶▶ And here's why it's a better translation.

▷▷ Unless one understands the Greek grammar behind it, ~ or studies it out, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ at face value the phrase "of all creation" could be confusing. ¶¶ 7/13

▷▷ From outward appearance, ~ someone possibly could mistakenly assume ~ 77

↳↳ that "of all creation" means that Jesus is part of creation.

→→ Something so far removed from what Paul is saying, ~ it's not even funny.

▷▷ And I'll always do my best ~ to help you not make those kinds of mistakes.

▷▷ The phrase "over all creation" is the better translation ~ 77

↳↳ because it points more closely to what Paul is getting at.

▷▷ Just by implication, ~ the word "over" should give you a good idea of the point Paul is making.

▷▷ So keep this in the back of your mind as we develop this today.

NOW, ~ A GOOD DISCUSSION OF THIS ASSERTION BY PAUL ~ 77

▶▶ that Jesus is "the firstborn over all creation" is in order ~ for 2 basic reasons.

▶▶ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ in order for you to get a firm grasp on this.

▶▶ And 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ because of those very friendly and polite people ~ who show up at your door unannounced.

OVER THE YEARS THE TERM "FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION" has been misinterpreted,  
~ creating doctrinal heresies.

▶▶ E.g., ~ the Jehovah's Witnesses, ~ those very friendly and polite people who show up at your door, ~ 77

▷▷ understand the phrase to mean that ~ Jesus was the first created being. 77 8/13



▶▶ They conclude that Jesus is not eternal ~ and therefore, ~ he is not God.

▶▶ The, ~ wait for it, ~ context ~ will not support this understanding.

## IN FACT, ~ THE IMMEDIATE AND WIDER CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE ~ ¶¶

▶▶ makes this impossible for five reasons.

▶▶ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ part of the point of the passage is to show Jesus' supremacy over all things.

▶▶ 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ other statements about Christ in this passage, ~ as we'll see, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ clearly indicate he is not part of creation. ~ He is not the "first created."

▶▶ 3<sup>rd</sup>, ~ the "firstborn" cannot be part of Creation if He created "all things," ~ ¶¶

▷▷ which he did, ~ as Paul asserts next in verse 16.

▷▷ One cannot create himself.

▷▷ Jehovah's Witnesses wrongly add the word ~ "other" ~ ¶¶

↳ six times ~ in this passage in their New World Translation.

↳ Thus they suggest that Christ ~ created "all other things" after He was created!

↳ But the problem for them is ~ the word ~ "other" ~ is not in the Greek text.

▶▶ 4<sup>th</sup>, ~ There were other Greek words Paul could have used ~ if he simply meant ~ "first-created." ¶¶ 9/13

▶▶ And 5<sup>th</sup>, ~ the wider context of Scripture refutes the notion that Jesus was the first created being.

▷▷ Speaking of Jesus, ~ Heb. ~ 1: ~ 5-6 says, ~ LEB ⇔⇔ For to which of the angels did he ever say, ~~ "You are my son, ~ today I have begotten you," ~~ and again, ~~ "I will be his father, ~ and he will be my son"? ~~ And again, ~ when he brings the firstborn into the world, ~ he says, ~~ "And let all the angels of God ~ worship him."

▷▷ But creatures are not to be worshiped.

▷▷ When Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus ~ ¶¶

↳↳ if Jesus would fall down and worship him, ~ LEB ~ ¶¶

→→ Jesus said to him, ~~ "Go away, ~ Satan, ~ for it is written, ~~ 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

▷▷ Deut. ~ 5: ~ 6-7, ~ LEB ~ ¶¶

↳↳ I am Yahweh your God, ~ who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ~~ There shall not be for you other gods besides me.

▷▷ And look at Rev. ~ 22: ~ 8-9.

↳↳ I, ~ John, ~ am the one ~ who heard and saw these things. ~~ And when I heard and saw them, ~ I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ~~ but he said to me, ~~ "You must not do that! ~~ I am a fellow servant ~ with you and your brothers the prophets, ~ and with those who keep the words of this book. ~~ Worship God."

▷▷ And yet, ~ God the Father commands the angels to worship Jesus.

▷▷ And beyond that, ~ recorded in the gospels is the fact that people worshiped Jesus.

↳↳ And he accepted their worship. ¶¶ 10/13

↪↪E.g., ~ Jn. 9:35-38.

→→Jesus heard that they had cast him out, ~ and having found him he said, ~~ "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ~~ He answered, ~~ "And who is he, ~ sir, ~ that I may believe in him?" ~~ Jesus said to him, ~~ "You have seen him, ~ and it is he who is speaking to you." ~~ He said, ~ "Lord, ~ I believe," ~ and he worshiped him.

▷▷So we see ~ that the immediate and wider context of Scripture ~ ¶¶

↪↪refutes the notion that Jesus was the first created being.

NOW, ~ PLEASE UNDERSTAND. ~~ THE TERM PAUL USES ~ CAN MEAN FIRSTBORN chronologically.

▶▶We usually associate the term firstborn with birth, ~ and it connotes to us the first child.

▷▷This meaning occurs in Luke ~ 2: ~7a. ⇨⇨ And she gave birth to her firstborn son.

▶▶This is the literal meaning of the word.

BUT PAUL'S USAGE OF THE WORD FOR "FIRSTBORN" ~ HAS A QUITE DIFFERENT sense.

▶▶Figuratively, ~ the Greek word for "firstborn" ~ points to status or rank.

▶▶Although Esau was born first chronologically, ~ ¶¶

▷▷it was Jacob who was the "firstborn" and received the inheritance.

▷▷When Rebekah was pregnant with Esau and Jacob, ~ ¶¶

↪↪the Lord said to her, ~ recorded in Gen. ~ 25: ~ 23, ~~ "Two nations are in your womb, ~ and two peoples from within you shall be divided; ~~ the one shall be stronger than the other, ~ the older shall serve the younger." ¶¶ 11/13

▶▶ Israel was called God's firstborn in ~ Exodus ~ 4: ~ 22 ~ and Jeremiah ~ 31: ~ 9.

▷▷ Though not the first people born, ~ nor the first nation created in the world, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ they held first place in God's sight among all the nations.

▶▶ The church is described as firstborn in Heb ~ 12: ~ 23, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ referring to the unique status of the church as coheirs with Christ.

▶▶ In all the above cases, ~ firstborn ~ is clearly used figuratively ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and means unique status or rank, ~ not first created.

▶▶ And this is how Paul is using the word "firstborn" ~ in Col. ~ 1: ~ 15b, ~ figuratively.

THE PSALMIST, ~ IN PSALM 89: ~ 27, ~ REINFORCES THE FIGURATIVE USE ~ ¶¶

▶▶ and actually gives us the correct interpretation of what Paul is talking about in Col. 1:15b.

▶▶ In this verse, ~ God says of the Messiah, ~ Jesus, ~ LEB ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "I will also make him the firstborn."

▶▶ Then the psalmist defines what He means: ~ "the highest of the kings of the earth."

▷▷ I.e., ~ "firstborn" ~ means ~ the highest in rank, ~ supremacy.

▶▶ So in the passage before us, ~ Col. ~ 1: ~ 15b, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ in which Jesus is called "the firstborn over all creation," ~ ¶¶

↳↳ the principal emphasis falls on Christ's sovereignty. ¶¶ 12/13

## IN CALLING JESUS "THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION," ~ 17

▶▶ Paul is simply indicating that Jesus is supreme over all of creation.

▶▶ A point clearly made by Jesus ~ when he gave us the great commission. ~~ Matt. 28:18b.

▷▷ All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

▶▶ And a point Paul vividly points out in Phil. ~ 2: ~ 8-11.

▷▷ And being found in human form, ~ he humbled himself ~ by becoming obedient to the point of death, ~ even death on a cross. ~~ Therefore ~ God has highly exalted him ~ and bestowed on him ~ the name that is above every name, ~ so that ~ at the name of Jesus ~ every knee should bow, ~ in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ~ and every tongue confess ~ that Jesus Christ is Lord, ~ to the glory of God the Father.

▶▶ Jesus stands supreme over all creation.

### CONCLUSION.

WELL, ~ PAUL HAS GIVEN US MUCH TO THINK ABOUT IN JUST THESE first two assertions about Jesus.

▶▶ And we have eight more to go!

▶▶ I encourage everyone to continue reading . . . .

LET'S PRAY . . . . 13/13