

ISN'T HE WONDERFUL

Colossians 1:15-20

- ¹⁵ *Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.
He existed before anything was created
and is supreme over all creation,*
- ¹⁶ *for through him God created everything
in the heavenly realms and on earth.
He made the things we can see
and the things we can't see—
such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers,
and authorities in the unseen world.
Everything was created through him and for him.*
- ¹⁷ *He existed before anything else,
and he holds all creation together.*
- ¹⁸ *Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body.
He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead.
So he is first in everything.*
- ¹⁹ *For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,*
- ²⁰ *and through him God reconciled everything to himself.
He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth
by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

This week's study is Paul's uplifted *Hymn to Christ!*

It is not a break from what has gone on before as he continues the sentence he began in verse 9. But what follows has a certain lyrical tilt in the Greek language which seems to indicate a poem which could be even be set to music.

The *New Living Translation* has not tried to maintain the rhythmic elements, but instead has tried to put forth the meaning as clearly as possible what is said.

What things are said about Christ (1:15-20)?

See if you can briefly arrange these under the following headings?

Christ and Creation (1:15–17)

Christ and Church (1:18–20)

This hymn has some distinctive features which includes “unusual words, distinctive theological expressions” such as “image of God” (1:15), “visible” and “invisible” individually and in contrast to each other (1:15, 16), “thrones” (1:16), “dominion” (1:16), “be established” (1:17), “beginning” (1:18), “preeminent” (1:18), “making peace” (1:20), “dwell” (1:19), and “reconcile” (1:20).¹ Let’s consider the meaning of some of the statements.

What does it mean to be “the visible image of the invisible God” (1:15; Matthew 22:20; Genesis 1:27)?

Many translations use “firstborn” the NLT choose to explain rather than translate directly.

What is meant by “firstborn” in each of these verses (1:15, 18; Luke 2:7; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 1:6; 11:28; 12:23; Revelation 1:5)?

What does it mean for Christ to be “head of the body, the church” (1:18; Matthew 5:36; Luke 20:17; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 2:10, 19)?

How is He “the beginning” and “supreme = preeminence” (1:18)?

What does it mean that “all the fullness of God” dwells in him (1:19)?

How did God reconcile all things to himself (1:20)?

How do you think what is said here in this hymn prepared the Colossians to deal with the errors they were facing in chapter 2?

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¹ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991).