

Colossians 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Analysis

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. This verse begins the magnificent Christ hymn (1:15-20), possibly an early Christian hymn Paul quotes. "Image" (eikōn, εἰκών) means exact representation, not mere resemblance. Christ perfectly reveals God's nature; seeing Jesus is seeing God (John 14:9). This counters any teaching suggesting mediating beings between God and humanity—Christ alone fully manifests deity.

"The firstborn of every creature" (prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) has sparked controversy. "Firstborn" doesn't mean first created but holds the rights of primogeniture—supremacy, authority, preeminence. Psalm 89:27 uses "firstborn" for David's royal supremacy. Christ isn't part of creation but sovereign over it, possessing inheritance rights over all that exists. Verse 16 clarifies: He created all things, therefore cannot be created.

Historical Context

Greek philosophy sought to protect God's transcendence by proposing intermediate beings (demiurge, emanations, aeons) that created and mediated between pure spirit and corrupt matter. The Colossian heresy apparently incorporated similar ideas, diminishing Christ by making Him one mediator among many. Paul's hymn demolishes such thinking: Christ is God's perfect image and creation's supreme Lord, requiring no supplementary mediators.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing Christ as God's exact image affect your understanding of God's character and will?
2. What modern religious systems diminish Christ by proposing additional mediators or revelations beyond Him?
3. Do you approach God directly through Christ, or do you feel need for other intermediaries?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	ἐστιν	εἰκὼν	τοῦ	θεοῦ	τοῦ	ἀοράτου	πρωτότοκος
Who	is	the image	G3588	God	G3588	of the invisible	the firstborn
G3739	G2076	G1504		G2316		G517	G4416

πάσης κτίσεως
of every creature
G3956 G2937

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 1:3 (Parallel theme): Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

John 14:9 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

John 1:1 (References God): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (References God): In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

John 1:18 (References God): No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

John 1:14 (Parallel theme): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:6 (References God): Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Romans 8:29 (Parallel theme): For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (References God): For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 89:27 (Parallel theme): Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.