

Sermon or Lesson: Colossians 1:15 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Jesus Is Invisible God In Visible Form

READ: Colossians 1:15, with vv.12-14 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has worked in the past and continues to work in the present at blessing us who believe, qualifying us, including us, giving us an inheritance, and sanctifying us. (v.12)
 - - God conducts the activity of delivering true believers out of "the dominion of darkness" and "into the kingdom of the Son". (v.13)
 - - God's activity of deliverance produces results that radically change life in the present and through into the eternal future for those persons whom God rescues or delivers. (vv.12-13)
 - - With the full collaboration and approval of the Father, Jesus the Son suffered and died on the cross to "redeem" or buy "the forgiveness of sins" for those persons who believe in Him for this redemption. (v.14)
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v.15 - READ

SECTION POINT: Jesus is the visible manifestation, in physical bodily form, of the invisible God.

"He is the image of the invisible God"

QUESTION: What does it mean "the image of the invisible God" and what does it not mean?

- - Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God.
- - This does not mean a fabricated copy of, an artist's rendition of, a photograph of, a replica of, a creation of, or an imagination of God.

QUESTION: What is implied here about the form or manner by which the Son became visible?

- - Jesus is God incarnate; He manifested visibly by taking on human form and nature, remaining fully deity while adding full humanity to His nature. (Matthew 1:18; John 1:14; Hebrews 1:3)

QUESTION: To what extent is the Son a visible image of the invisible God?

- - READ: Hebrews 1:3
- - The Son is "the exact representation of [God's] being", meaning the Son is the visible "image" of the "essence" of the invisible God. (Hebrews 1:3 - Strong's #5480, #5287)
- - And the Son in Himself is the radiance of God's glory", not merely reflecting it or having been given some of it. (Hebrews 1:3)
- - Thus, the Son is the visible manifestation of invisible God Himself, and not merely a likeness or similarity or reflection of God Himself.

- - We do not want to miss the intention and distinction being made within these phrases: making something visible which by nature is invisible.
- - The invisible God made Himself visible to us humans, for a time letting us humans directly and actually see Him physically, touch Him physically, eat lunch with Him, go fishing with Him, communicate with Him in two-way audible verbal conversations, interact with Him intellectually, connect with Him relationally, torture and murder Him bodily - all within the context, dynamics, and settings of normal human-to-human contact and interaction.

QUESTION: Why is it difficult for most humans to believe that God can take on human form if He wants to?

- - If God can create all that exists just by speaking it (Genesis 1), then He certainly has the power and ability to take on human form or manifest in any other form He so chooses, for examples a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21), a pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21), an enveloping bright cloud (Matthew 17:5), a burning bush (Exodus 3:2), an extra man inside a fiery furnace (Daniel 3:24-25), a guiding star in the sky (Matthew 2:9), a dove (Luke 3:21-22), tongues of fire (Acts 2:3-4).
- - Even though He made Himself visible to us humans, the Son nevertheless hid His "radiance of God's glory" and concealed most of His deity attributes and nature from the public, but which He did disclose and reveal in brief glimpses to select followers of His.
- - God's purpose was and is to maintain the requirement that humans must hear what God has to say and believe Him - take God at His word - have faith in God through what He says.
- - So, the Son revealed just enough about His deity attributes and nature to evidence, authenticate, and verify that He is God in human manifestation, but not enough to negate or nullify the hear-and-believe requirement for us humans.
- - During the time the Son was present on the earth, clearly His enemies thought, believed, and acted upon the reality that the Son was indeed human because they plotted over time to eventually successfully have Him arrested, brutalized physically, and then executed through horrific torture. His enemies believed He was human and all resulting evidence pertaining to His humanness verifies that He indeed was fully human.
- - However, the miracles that the Son performed and the resurrection of His dead body on the third day testify that the Son also simultaneously and continuously possessed and retained His deity attributes and nature. (John 10:24-26; Romans 1:2-4)
- - While He was on the earth, the Son repeatedly claimed and demonstrated that He was both fully deity and fully human, but most people did not believe Him - they refused to take Him at His word, which most people throughout the years since then have likewise done. (e.g. John 10:22-26)

SECTION POINT: Jesus is Jehovah God, in fullness.

"He is... the firstborn over all creation."

QUESTIONS: What does this phrase "the firstborn over all creation" mean? Is the Son the first being created by God with the highest rank, as the Jehovah's Witnesses religion contend, or does this mean something else?

- - When interpreting Scriptures and formulating doctrines, always consider the context, the contents of the surrounding verses, and consider similar or parallel passages because the Word of God all fits together.
 - - So in considering context, previous verses 12-14 are asserting that by means of the Son, the Father qualified us believing humans to be transferred from the dominion of darkness into His "kingdom of light", which is the very same kingdom that the Son reigns over as God.
 - - The Son accomplished this transferring through redemption, in which He paid the ransom or penalty for the sins of those who believe in the Son and thereby bought them forgiveness of sins - a function that only God can rightly and genuinely accomplish. (v.14)
 - - The contents of verses 15-21 here are describing the nature and the identity of the Son, who He is and what He is, that qualified and enabled Him to successfully accomplish this redemption.
 - - In verse 16, the Son is declared as being the Creator - at the Son's will "all things were created by him and for him", which includes every thing, every creature, every being, and every authority structure in both the physical and spiritual realms.
 - - In verse 17, the Son is declared as being "before all things", in other words "in front of, prior to, and superior to" all that has been created. (Strong's #4253)
 - - In verse 17, the Son is also declared to be maintaining the existence of all created things.
 - - In verse 18, the Son is declared as being the creator, sustainer, and highest authority of God's spiritual kingdom, which has been intentionally mentioned here in this verse in order to fill out the emphasis that the Son has supremacy over everything that exists - even supremacy of and over resurrection of the human body from the dead.
 - - In verse 19, the Son is declared as being all of the fullness of God contained within and living within His physical human body. (cf. v.2:9)
 - - In verses 20-21, the invisible God, being contained in fullness within and living within that physical human body as the God-man Son, accomplished a way for reconciliation and peace to be established with His enemies - humans, who all have been corrupted and alienated by sin.
 - - An implication from the context, then, is that these cited deity attributes of the Son are mandatory and uncompromisingly required for Him or anyone to successfully redeem sins of human beings for reconciliation to God.
 - - So within the context of these verses in this passage is clearly described and asserted that the Son is deity - the Lord Jesus Christ is Jehovah God, in fullness in visible human body form, Creator and Sustainer of all things, as recorded in Genesis chapters 1-2 and in other passages in the Old Testament.
 - - Therefore, given the context of these verses in Colossians 1:12-21, the phrase "He is... the firstborn over all creation" in verse 15 cannot mean the Son was 'the first created' but instead must certainly mean the Son is the first or most supreme in all of creation because the Son is the deity "firstborn" or "source" who created and sustains all things, by His own will and by His own power that He possesses in and of Himself as Jehovah God in fullness. (Strong's #4416)
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SECTION POINT: People who reject that Jesus is Jehovah God, in fullness and in bodily form, should carefully, accurately, and thoroughly study these verses in Colossians 1:12-21, in context.

QUESTION: How can people come out of their erroneous doctrine that is contrary to the nature of the Son being fully deity united with fully human, as stated in Colossians 1:12-21?

- - The adherents of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion and other people with doctrines contrary to what the Word is saying in this passage about the Son would do well to closely examine the contents of all of Colossians 1:12-21, looking closely at the meanings of only the original Greek words that are in the early manuscripts and refrain from giving credence to additional words, descriptions, and altered meanings of original Greek words that have been subsequently added into their translations.
- - For example, in their 'New World Translation' of the Bible in each of verses 16, 17, and 20 of Colossians chapter 1, the 'Jehovah's Witnesses' religion has added and inserted the word "other", which is not in the original Greek text in any of these verses, is not alluded to nor supported in any way by the original Greek text, and seriously corrupts, distorts, and perverts the true meaning of these verses, particularly in regard to the true nature of Jesus as being the Creator Jehovah God.
- - Another fatal error that the Jehovah's Witnesses and other people with contrary doctrines are making in this regard is that although they correctly conclude that 'man cannot become God', they fail to properly consider that 'God can become a man'.
- - God inspired Paul to write this passage to the Colossian believers and for others thereafter in order to assist them and us in maintaining sound doctrine about the actual nature of Christ Jesus. The Jehovah's Witnesses and other people with contrary doctrines in this regard would be wise to study this passage for themselves in an unbiased, uninfluenced, and uncorrupted way and heed what is actually being stated, in context.

BIG IDEA: Jesus is Jehovah God Himself, the Creator, who came to earth in physical bodily form and made Himself visible, as He provided a way of redemption for sinful humans.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - What theology and doctrines do you hold regarding the nature of Jesus?
- - - - Do they align with what the Scriptures say, particularly here in Colossians 1:12-21? Or do they deviate in one or more ways?
- - If your theology and doctrines about the nature of Jesus are divergent in any way, what do you base your divergent theology and doctrine on?
- - - - Based on something that someone told you or taught you?
- - - - Based on information from a divergent religion, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, which adulterate the translation of key Scripture words and verses in order to accommodate their divergent theology and doctrines? (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-2)

- - - Based on your own understanding or logical thinking, which is a result of naivety, or lack of theological training, or a faulty method of interpreting Scriptures, or an inadequate knowledge of the Scriptures, or rebellion? (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-7)

- - Can you rightly and truthfully contend that you believe in Jesus for redemption, the forgiveness of your sins, if you in effect reject this declaration in Colossians that Jesus is Jehovah God in visible bodily form, the redeemer with a kingdom? (vv.14,13)

- - - Do you really think God will extend to you redemption if you in effect assert that this redeeming forgiveness of sins was accomplished by someone other than God Himself?

- - - And if you believe someone other than God Himself in the bodily form of Jesus the Son accomplished this redeeming forgiveness of sins, then you do realize, don't you, that you are in effect exalting, worshipping, and trusting in a means or someone or something that you have established in your thinking to in actuality be a false god who is supposedly accomplishing that which only God Himself can accomplish?

- - What are you going to do - reject Jesus as Jehovah God incarnate? Or embrace Jesus as Jehovah God incarnate - the visible bodily manifestation of the invisible Creator God, supreme in and over all of creation?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Discuss, analyze, and theorize what the experience was like for the infinite, invisible, non-corporeal God to take on the form and nature of being finite physically, visible, corporeal, and then as such enter His creation, which He created by speaking it into existence (Genesis 1). Further theorize what the experience was like for the incarnate Creator God when shortly after this entry into His creation, He was rejected and crucified by the most prized, cherished, loved, and intelligent entity creatures in His creation - us humans.]

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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File name: Colossians1_15-SermonOrLesson.____ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

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