

**Grace to You** :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

## **The Fullness of God in Helpless Babe**

Scripture: Colossians 1:15–20; Colossians 2:9

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The world's Christmas celebration is bound up in a disturbing incongruity. On the one hand, people go to great lengths to support and sustain the legend of Santa Claus, using his mystical benevolence to leverage good behavior from their children. On the other hand, they systematically minimize the Person and work of Christ—the holiday's rightful celebrity—to the point that the Lord is nothing more than a plastic infant, frozen for all time in the familiar nativity scene. They exchange the singular Christ for a cheap hoax.

## **The Uniqueness of Christ**

There has never been another person like Jesus Christ. All the New Testament underscores that, repeatedly stressing Jesus' deity. But let me point to one passage in particular, written by the apostle Paul, which captures the essence of Jesus' divine nature. These are the truths that make Christmas truly wonderful:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:15-20)

## **The Image of God**

Ironically, some of the cults that deny Jesus' deity try to use Colossians 1:15-20 as support for their view. They suggest, for example, that the phrase "the image of the invisible God" hints that Jesus was merely a created being who bore the image of God. But Genesis 1:27 says that is true of all humanity. We were created in God's likeness. We bear His mark. We only resemble Him. Jesus, on the other hand, *is* God's exact image.

The Greek word translated "image" here is *eikon*. It means a perfect replica, a precise copy, a duplicate—something even more like the original than a photograph. Paul is saying that God Himself is fully manifest in the Person of His Son, who is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the exact image of God. As He said Himself, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Hebrews 1 parallels Colossians 1 at a number of key points. Both passages explicitly teach that Jesus is God. Regarding the statement that Christ is the image of God (Colossians 1:15), for

example, Hebrews 1:3 makes an identical affirmation: "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." Christ is to God as the warm brilliance of light is to the sun. He brings God from a cosmic location to the very hearts of men and women. He gives light and life. He reveals God's very essence. Just as the sun was never without its brightness, so it is with Christ and God. They cannot be divided, and neither has ever existed without the other. They are one (John 10:30).

Scripture repeatedly says God is invisible. "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). God told Moses, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Exodus 33:20). Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). And, "You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form" (John 5:37). Paul, writing to Timothy, called God invisible (1 Timothy 1:17). And here in Colossians 1:15, Paul also describes God as invisible.

But through Christ the invisible God has been made visible. God's full likeness is revealed in Jesus. Colossians 1:19 takes that truth a step further: "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." He is not just an outline of God; He is fully God. Colossians 2:9 is even more explicit: "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." Nothing is lacking. No attribute is absent. He is God in the fullest possible sense, the perfect image.

## **The Lamb of God**

Who was this child? God. We see that clearly now. But why would God become a man and be born in such a lowly manner and let men treat Him the way they did? Why would Jesus, though "He is before all things" (Colossians 1:17), and though He takes "first place in everything" (Colossians 1:18), decide to come to earth as a baby, suffer the abuse He suffered, and die such a painful death?

The apostle Paul tells us clearly: "It was the Father's good pleasure . . . through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

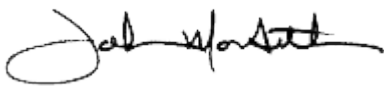
He did it to make peace between God and humanity. All of us have sinned, and we sin repeatedly: "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 2:23). God hates sin and must respond with His wrath. He is a righteous judge who "is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11 KJV). Humanity reacts with more hatred, rebellion, or indifference toward God: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18). The only possible response of a holy God to our sin is more than we can bear, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready" (Psalm 7:12).

Only Jesus, because He alone is both God and man, could ever resolve the conflict. He lived as a man, but without sin, suffering every temptation common to man, so He could be our sympathetic high priest: "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). And though He was without sin, He died as a sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29), an offering bearing *our* sin: "Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Hebrews 9:28). Thus "having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9).

In other words, He takes the hand of a repentant, yielding sinner and the outstretched hand of a holy yet loving God, and He joins the two. He can forgive our sins, reconcile us to God, and thus make “peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20). And God is not reluctant for that to occur; rather it is the very reason He sent Christ into the world.

God is justifiably angry with humanity’s sin. Yet He loves us enough that He gave His own Son to live on earth, die on a cross, and bear our sins in His own body, suffering the full weight of God’s wrath, which should have been *our* lot. He paid our penalty and restored peace between us and God. It could not have been done any other way.

Next time we’ll look at God’s divine plan for redemption, and consider how we can’t truly celebrate Christ’s miraculous birth apart from His death.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Mark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

(Adapted from [The Miracle of Christmas](#).)

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