***The Deity of Christ

Colossians 1:4-9

COL-111***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," number one in Colossians 1:15-20.

We now come to a new section of the book of Colossians. In Colossians 1:15-20, we have an early Christian hymn honoring Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Who is the Creator; Savior; and, Head of the church. This particular segment stands out in the epistle for a variety of reasons that indicates that it is a special segment, and thus a poetical presentation. This is determined to be a hymn by the style of the phrases and the rhythm of the words that are in this particular section. This verse is also marked by unusual words, and a variety of distinct theological expressions which honor Christ.

The apostle Paul is facing a great heresy (great deception) in the city of Colossae, and it focuses on the Lord. So, after he has presented his apostolic prayer, which we have studied in detail, he comes up to bat, and he goes right to the heart of the matter. He takes a swing, and he hits one out of the ballpark. He goes right to the issue: just who is Jesus Christ? How true are His claims? What has he done? And how does this compare to what's being taught back there in Colossae by the heretics? These verses therefore touch on an unusual number of theological ideas, one after another. Keywords or phrases are repeated, indicating that there is an arrangement into a poetic form of verses.

These verses may be viewed and as a hymn in two main arrangements. First it is a hymn with two stanza. It would then divide verses 15 through 18a (the first line of verse 18). That would be the first stanza. The second would be from 18b (the rest of verse 18) through verse 20 as the second stanza. The first stanza presents Christ in His relationship to the created world. It deals with the origin and the purpose of creation. The second stanza (verse 18b through verse 20) presents the relationship of Jesus Christ and the redemption of the creation that He made. The redemptive purpose of God the Father through Jesus Christ is what is dealt with.

Another way of looking at these verses is to have it divided into three sections: two stanzas, with a transition section between. In that case, verses 15 and 16 form the first verse: "And 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 by Him and for Him." That's the first verse. Then we have a transition in verse 17 and verse 18a, where there's a transference from the first verse to the second verse. The first part, verse 17, sums up what is said in the first stanza. And then the first line of verse 18 introduces the second stanza: Verse 17: "And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." That sums up stanza one. Then verse 18a: "He is also the head of the body, the church." That introduces the second stanza, which is the rest of the section which then reads, "And He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself might 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.

In either case (whichever arrangement is the best one), the whole picture is an exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ, in terms of His nature, and in terms of His work. The whole hymn presents Christ as the agent of God the Father in the grace exercise toward mankind in its sinful state. This message goes from the original creation through the redemption of Jesus Christ, and then on to the new creation in eternity. The completion of the divine purpose in God's creation is honored in this hymn.

The false teachers in Colossae were denigrating the person of Jesus Christ. They challenged that He was a God-Man, and that He was the triumphant redeemer. They challenged His supreme authority over earth and heaven: that He was just one of a powerful spirit group who had that authority. They claimed that Jesus was merely one of a line of spirit beings who had been created by God as a bridge between God and man. And each one of these spirit beings had just a little bit of divine qualities in them, but they were not God.

**The Christological Controversies**

So, this was a serious, heretical condition. And, as we already saw, in Paul's praise of the Colossians, they were not buying the heresy. They were well-versed in doctrine from their pastor-teacher Epaphras, who had been taught by Paul. And they knew about the person of Christ. However, this was a very big problem. During the first three centuries of the Christian era of Christian history, we had what are called the Christological controversies, where theologians, for 300 years, debated back and forth what the Bible taught about Jesus Christ. Was He God? Was He Man? Was He God and Man? Did the humanity bleach over into the deity? Did the deity cross over into humanity? How did He function? How did He think? How did He work? What was the consequences to His atonement ministry? All of these things were very important questions, but they all hinged upon settling just who Christ was, and the nature of this person.

So this was an easy place for the heretics to come in, and to undermine the Colossian Christians. This hymn is in honor of Christ, and it is Paul's direct answer to the Colossian heresies that have been circulated about Jesus Christ. He steps up to the plate, and he takes a head-on swing to the issue directly.

**The Person of Jesus Christ**

Mr. Boozer's vocal hymn special this morning was particularly appropriate (if you listen to the words) to our subject. It was a coordination of the Holy Spirit, because the whole special that he sang was the exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ, to get you set mentally for what God is about to teach you. That is the issue. And all issues at the heart of all religious controversies is this issue of Jesus Christ. It all focuses on the person of Jesus Christ.

I want to read you a little article from "The Berean Call," published by Dave Hunt, in the February, 1997 issue. This is an article written by T.A. McMahon entitled "Jesus," illustrating the Issue which is before us, and the problem of dealing with the person of Jesus Christ, and the consequences of getting it wrong, and, in fact, the subtleties that Satan uses to exalt Jesus Christ purportedly (seemingly), and yet to undermine Him in what He actually has been doing.

**Mormonism**

"The young mother and her baby were certainly an attractive sight on the television screen, but it was what she was saying that caught my attention. Her demeanor was gentle and caring as she spoke of things you don't hear on TV commercials: family values; relationships; and, spiritual things. Her last words, as I recall, expressed her excitement that she and her husband would be able to raise their child to follow Jesus the Savior. Then my amazement, just building to joy, took a sudden nose dive. The final seconds of the commercial announced that it was sponsored by the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day saints.

"Sitting there, somewhat stunned, I envisioned millions of unsuspecting people, intrigued by what was being offered, lining up to join this 9-million member cult, with its bogus Jesus, and the 50,000 or so missionaries who promote Him. What could be done in the face of such effective advertising? (We could) pray, certainly. But something else came to mind, to encourage all of us who personally know the biblical Jesus, to talk about Him to the people we try too often to avoid: the two bicycle-transported, white-shirted, young men who unexpectedly show up at our doors. Keep the talk on Jesus. Ask questions about their Jesus. Ask them to show you in the Bible where their ideas about Him are found. It's possible, with the help of some leaning questions, that they may admit to what they have been taught: that Jesus was physically conceived by God the Father and Mary; that Lucifer, demons, and all humans are spirit brothers of Jesus; that Jesus is a God, but should not be worshiped or prayed to as God; that Jesus was married and had more than one wife; and, that Jesus is just one of the many saviors throughout the universe. You, in turn, tell them about the Jesus you know. To do this, no believer needs to be a cult expert. The idea here is to make it clear to them that you and they are talking about a different person, and both cannot be the true Jesus. Hopefully this will give the young men convicting concerns which will lead them to the true Savior."

**The Mormon Jesus**

Now that's the issue. If you visit the Mormon temple (the chief temple in Salt Lake City), you'll walk into a magnificent rotunda. And who is right there in the center? Jesus – a great statue. And the guides will tell you that Mormonism is more Christian than any other Christian group. And the subtlety is very hard to distinguish until you focus upon the person of Jesus. And suddenly, you realize that Joseph Smith created a fantasy Jesus out of the mind of Satan. Jesus and Satan were both propagated by God and his wife in heaven to create a spirit being. And Satan went one way, and Jesus went another way, and it teaches this whole paganistic treatment of the person of Jesus Christ. It causes us revulsion when we know what the Word of God really teaches. But this is the issue that we are facing. This is the problem. And it was the problem back in the time of Paul with the Colossians. Right off the bat, Satan went after: just who is Jesus?

There is an advertising brochure by an organization here close by us in Texas, to join our lady Mary, the mother of God in the worldwide rosary army. Now here you have something very interesting, because here you have a group that accepts Jesus Christ, and has a true Christological doctrine about Him: His two natures; the hypothetic union of those two natures; and, that they don't bleed over into one another. The whole picture is very accurately biblical. But here's the subtlety. The Jesus that they speak of is a Jesus which is unapproachable. He is a tyrant. He is One who is to be feared. And He is always viewed as one in the throes of death. Therefore, the access to God comes through a substitute Jesus. So, Christ is denigrated, because Mary is the approach.

**The Rosary**

You'll read in part there that the principle dogmas of our faith are from Mary: in Mary; with Mary; and, through Mary. Looking at Mary, these dogmas are read, embraced, loved, and believed. She contained (and contains) the Gospel which she offers to us all through the mysteries of the most holy rosary. The rosary was something that was picked up by the crusaders off the bodies of dead Muslims, when they were fighting the Muslims to conquer and recapture Jerusalem from them. The Muslims said their prayers by having little beads. And the size of the beads, and so on, would tell them where they were. So, they incorporated this into Roman Catholicism, and that's the rosary. So, you come to one button, and you say so many "Hail Marys." You come to another button, and you say so many "Our Fathers." And all of these are in order for you to achieve what, in Catholicism, is progressive justification.

Please remember that the Council of Trent that said that anybody that believes that by an act of faith in Christ, you can have instant justification (that is, that you can instantly have the absolute righteousness of God imputed to your account, and you can be instantly saved) is anathema. He is under the condemnation of the Catholic Church, and is destined for the lake of fire, because, under Catholicism, justification comes by little pieces, through your good works, and through the sacraments, and mostly through your adoration of Mary. So, here you have a substitution.

**John Huss**

I was recently in a very large and very grand Roman Catholic Church, and I was surprised by the arrangement. Up there at the front was the altar, and above it was a great image of a crucified Christ. You might say, "Well, what's unusual about that?" It was the placement that was unusual, because Christ was over the altar, and way back off in a corner was where Mary was in a great statue with her crown. Now that's very unusual. But Mrs. Danish and I, a few years ago, traveled through large number of cathedrals in Eastern Europe. And, without exception, when we walked into these cathedrals, over the altar, and in the center position of honor was Mary – every time. And often, maybe a little higher to one side was Jesus Christ, or over here, but He was always separated. But Mary was supreme. This was true except in one church. We went into the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, the church in which John Huss preached, and who had discovered from Scripture the principle of instant justification by faith in Jesus Christ, and began proclaiming that from the Bethlehem Chapel there, which was his church. And the result was that the Roman Catholic Church brought him into custody by deceptive means, and then they burned him at the stake.

**Martin Luther**

Well, 100 years later, Martin Luther discovered those same truths in Scripture – justification instantly by an act of faith in Jesus Christ, not in Mary, not through Mary, not through the sacramental system of the church, not dispensed as a gift from the church, and not through priestly administrations. And the result was that Martin Luther, and then the reformers who joined him (John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli) all swung the focus of Christians back to the Bible. Here in the Word of God, we find the true Christ. Here in the Word of God, we find what He is like; what His nature is; and, how that affects the mission of His atonement.

This was the same problem, right there in the city of Colossae. And it has come down because the devil has not given up on that issue. But it was a pleasure to walk into Bethany Chapel (John Huss' church). And when we walked in there, there was a great mosaic over the altar (as there very often is), and sure this time it was a mosaic of Christ. And there was the focus of attention for one's salvation because Huss said that it is not through Mary, and it is not through the saints, and it is not through any works of our own doing.

Paul's hymn honors Jesus Christ as the key to salvation. He is Lord of all, and He is the only way. And in Colossae, this is what was being challenged. So, we come now to the primary heart of this book: just how trustworthy are the claims of Jesus Christ, and what the Bible teaches us about Him.

Colossians 1:15-20 is a hymn in the sense of a poetical presentation of theology about Jesus Christ. It might not have actually been sung to music, but simply recited. But the purpose is clear. And that is to teach essential doctrines about Jesus, dealing with His deity; His role in the creation of the universe; and, His provision of reconciliation on the cross for lost humanity. This hymn is introduced as the best safeguard against heretical teaching. This is the best safeguard against false doctrines concerning Jesus Christ, which threaten the spiritual wellbeing, and thus the happiness, of the Christians in the city of Colossae. This is a powerful summary.

The purpose of this hymn, then, is to honor the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus, and to recognize Him as the God-Man in the work of salvation. He has provided a salvation which is complete. It's irreversible. And it is through Him alone, and there is no other way by which one can get to heaven. And you cannot add anything to it.

Here again, Catholicism has come and said, "No, because you must incrementally get your justification, we have to sacrifice Christ again and again in the bloodless sacrifice of the Mass," and that is what is done. Catholics all over this world are on this Sunday in churches waiting to eat their God and to drink His blood, which Jesus spoke of in a symbolic manner; that is, faith in the Word of God, and faith in the person of Christ. But the Bible is very clear that there is no other way into salvation except through Christ, and that way is a direct act of faith. There is no intermediary priest, no religious ritual – just either believing or rejecting.

in John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."

Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among man by which we must be saved." And that name is the name of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus is not dependent on any human or angelic help to take a believer from conversion to glory. There is no mystical secret knowledge, as the people in Colossae were being told they had to have. There is no Jewish ceremonial, as the legalists in Colossae were telling you, that they had to have in order to make it into heaven. The Jews had all kinds of ceremonies, circumcision, and rituals. And without those, they said, "You don't go to heaven." The Jews are still saying that today, and they're still not going to heaven. The unbelievers today are still saying (especially the New Agers), "There's a mystical knowledge that you must have which only comes from those who have the inner understanding." And those people are telling you that, without that you cannot go to heaven. But the truth is that they're the ones who are not in heaven.

Jesus Christ is both the Creator of the universe and its Redeemer as well. Both the material and the spiritual realms are firmly under the sovereignty of Christ. Thus there is no distinction between secular and sacred in the life of Christ. It's all of Christ. And there isn't my secular life, and now my religious life: my life with Christ, and my life outside. You'd be surprised how many Christians think they can do things wrong. The principle is that when you deal with the world, you have to act like the world. Whoever told you that? The devil – not the Scriptures. And Christ is the focus. And faith is the way.

I had a man recently that challenged me when I indicated that anybody who wants to come to be saved has to do it by grace. He has to accept it as a gift from God. But if he adds some work to it, then you do not allow God to give it to you by grace, and you cannot be saved. I don't care how much church you go to; how much Christian service you do; how much money you fund the work of God; or, whatever. If you add my water baptism as a way to salvation, along with my faith in Christ, you will go to the lake of fire. Well, he couldn't accept that. He just rejected that.

So, I pointed out to him what Romans 4 said: that if you are paid for it, then it's not a gift. If it's a gift, you can't be paid for it. Romans 11:6 says the same thing: "If it's of grace, it's not works. If it's works, it's not grace." They're mutually exclusive. And logic very clearly says one or the other. And yet, because he did not want to accept that Jesus was telling the truth when He said, "The gate is small, and the way is narrow to eternal life, and few there be that find it," because He is the way; He is the gate into the sheepfold; and, He is the way (the narrow road) into eternal life, And because he did not want to accept that, he was willing to rationalize that the Scripture must mean something else.

Well, that's what's always done with Christ. Whatever it says about Him, man rationalizes to mean something else. The antagonism toward Jesus Christ is enormous. And whether you're a young person or an older person, you need to know this. And our hearts should go out to all the people who should be in this auditorium this morning, from the Berean congregation, to get the focus upon this, and whose children should be here who are going to be denied this. This is a great and an enormous travesty. Let us hope that what they're now preoccupied with is worth what they're losing, and the exchange they have made, because if there's anything Satan wants to do, it is to keep you from hearing about the person of Christ.

We have no separation to a secular and a spiritual (a sacred) life. It's all the same. That means that you and I have roles under Jesus Christ as citizens of this world, and as citizens of heaven at the same time. And He rules in both aspects. That's the point. He rules in our citizenship of this world, and He rules in the citizenship of heaven. They're not separate. He is the same authority.

What God has done is everything that needs to be done through His Son Jesus. And the greatest honor for any of us is to be in Christ, because then we share all His honors. And that is what happens when we trust Him as Savior. God the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, and we become part of Him. We are in Christ, and we share all His honors. No angelic being can add to this supreme position of honor that you have in Christ. Salvation brings all the spiritual benefits achieved by Christ on the cross for us. Sin is forgiven. We have freedom from the power of the sin nature. No angelic being can add to this. And now that we live in an era where angels are popular, and people are interested in angels, notice how much angels are the source of great blessing to people. Well, they are, provided they are angels of God sent on His mission. They are our ministering angels. And it is quite proper that we should expect the angels to assist us at the Father's command. But we do not focus upon them. Our focus is upon the God Who dispatches the angels in our behalf.

Nothing needs to be done or can be done for us to enjoy spiritual fellowship with God the Father, or to receive His material prosperity. That's just up to you. You have everything in Christ. You're seated in the heavenly places with Him now. You can't go any higher. You can't get any more. You have the totality of the spirit of God. How far you go spiritually, and how far you prosper materially – it's all up to you, because those who walk on the principle that Christ is all in all are the ones that are on the track that God can bless. If you're not on that track, you can't be blessed. And don't kid yourself that you are being blessed when you're not. Nothing needs to be done, or can be done, for you to enjoy your spiritual fellowship with God the Father, or to receive His material blessings. Christians need to have a clear understanding, then, of who and what Jesus Christ is, and they need to act in proper respect and dignity toward Him.

**The Dignity of Jesus Christ**

Now I've been pounding away at this dignity of treating Jesus Christ. This is dignified treatment of Christ – dignity in our spiritual relationships to Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ was held in utter contempt by the Pharisees and by the Roman authorities. Now, they're all in Hades, and they have better knowledge now. They did not dignify Him. They treated Him as a clown and a criminal. The worship of the Lord Jesus Christ is not to be some raucous, shallow, high school pep-rally, as if Jesus were some good old boy and a cool character. And especially at the youth level, I am appalled how preachers in the pulpit, who are the authorities who are going to be held responsible for God, for what goes on in that local church, allow their organizations to have raucous, pep-rally types of gatherings of youth where Jesus Christ is talked about in weepy little testimonials for Jesus, and He is degraded as just being a good old boy and a cool character. Obviously, those young people have been hooked by Satan, and they're being pulled away from Jesus Christ. And sooner or later, they're going to act just like that. They're going to act as the aliens they are from Christ, even while they're singing His praises, and jumping and jiving – having a good time over Jesus.

Worship is not to be denigrated and cheapened, because when you do that, you will not fear Him, and you will disobey Him. And I've had over four decades of watching people who have denigrated and cheapened their association with Jesus Christ, and they're the first in line to break the rules. They're the first in line to violate His principles. Some religious gang that has a jumping jiving time over a demeaned Jesus has no hesitancy, I assure you, in breaking the moral code. They *will* break the rules. They will do things such that you will stand there with your mouth hanging open. You'll be astounded, because they're in church. They're all around here. They're in the activities. They're serving God. And all of a sudden, the sin nature regurgitates all its garbage up out of their souls. And you sit there dumbfounded, but you should not be. If the Jesus they think of, that they are related to, is some distant character Who has no relationship to them, or has been demeaned and denigrated by the kinds of worship and associations they've had with Him, He's not going to be a Fig Newton effect upon them, because He will be the nothing that He is really in their experience.

When you rally to fun in your approach to Jesus, then you will rally to practicing the fun of the sin nature. You can count on it. If you rally to fun as your approach to Jesus, then you will rally to all the fun that is potentially in the lust patterns of the sin nature. What we should do is treat Jesus Christ as the God that He is. And we who have authority over others, in the home and elsewhere of our influence, our sons and our daughters, our friends and associates. We should protect them from any debasing religious associations. Here's a point where you should indeed just "No," especially if you're dealing with your younger youth. They don't know any better, but you do. You do not denigrate, and you do not debase the person of Jesus Christ, and then expect Christian principles to have any forceful hold upon people.

So, we begin in Colossians 1:15: "And He is the image of the invisible God." The word "and" is actually a relative pronoun, and it should be translated as "He Who." And the "He Who" goes back to Colossians 1:13, to the last words of that verse: "His Beloved Son – "The kingdom of His Beloved Son." That is the antecedent. That is what the "He Who" refers back to. He refers here to Jesus Christ. "He who is" – this is the Greek word in a timeless condition. This is something in the present tense that He always is. Here, the apostle Paul is proceeding to meet the heresies in Colossae which have been propagated concerning Jesus Christ. He is now going to make clear exactly who Jesus was. And what should he do right off the bat? He zeros in on the key issue: "He is the image of the invisible God."

**If Jesus Christ is not the God-Man**

It is necessary, first of all, to give credence to the claims of Jesus: that He is the Savior of mankind; and, that He is the God-Man. If Jesus is not indeed the sinless God-Man, then all about Him is false and deceptive, and we are all doomed to the lake of fire. Now, this is what the heretics were after in Caesarea. If they could denigrate Jesus, and undermine His position as the God-Man, then nothing else mattered. If that were not the case, then everything else that we hope for, and that we believe that He promised is meaningless. The miracles that the Scripture says He performed as God's Son – They're not true if He is not the God-Man. The debt in substitution for the sin of all mankind that He claimed – it's not true. His complete satisfaction of the justice of God toward the morally guilty – it's not true: it wasn't done. His physical resurrection from the dead – it's not true, and it didn't happen. His ascension into heaven to sit at God the Father's right hand as a human being (a man in heaven in a glorified body) – He's not there. It's not true. His current work in heaven of intercession for each believer against Satan's accusations – it's not true. He's not doing that. His promise to return in the rapture, to resurrect His church, and to take the believers to the heavenly new Jerusalem, which He has prepared for them – it's never going to happen. It's not true. His predicted Second Coming to set up a kingdom of perfect righteousness to rule over all nations for 1,000 years – it's not true. His creation of a new heaven and a new earth uncontaminated by sin for believers to enjoy for all eternity – it's not going to happen. His sending all unbelievers from the great white throne judgment to spend eternity in the lake of fire – it's not going to happen, and it's not true. If He is not the God-Man, then all these basic principles of the promises and expectations of the Word of God that we have are meaningless. No mere good human being devoid of the nature of deity could do these things.

**Icon**

So right off the bat, Paul steps up to the plate, and he hits the ball out of the park to establish a home run on the fact that Jesus Christ is God. If he is not God, then none of these things are true and none of these things can come about. What He is, he says, is the image of the invisible God. Now we have to look at an important word. And boy, are the people who are not here this morning going to be the poorer for it. The word is "eikon" (i-kone') E I K O N, from which we get our English word "icon" – something that's a statue or a picture.

The word "eikon" has two basic meanings. First of all, it means a likeness. Jesus is the exact likeness of the invisible God the Father. Jesus represented God as the image on a coin represents the person that that coin is minted after, or as a reflection of a mirror represents what you look like when you look in a mirror. Jesus represented the precise likeness of God the Father. This is referred to in Scripture in Matthew 22:20 about Caesar's portrait on a coin – his icon on a coin; or, just as the statue in Revelation 13:14 of the antichrist is an icon. It means that it looks just like Caesar, and the statue will look just like the antichrist.

In the Gospel of John 12:45, Jesus is said to be a precise reproduction of God the Father in every respect: "'And he who beholds Me,' Jesus said, 'beholds the one who sent Me. If you see Me, you see the Father Who sent Me.'" John 14:9: "Jesus said to them, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How do you say, 'Show us the Father.''" This is a clear meaning of this word "icon" in terms of a factor of likeness. Jesus is the exact reproduction of God the Father in every respect, including His deity.

The Jehovah's Witnesses say "No." The Mormons say "No. Jesus is just a human being. God the Father is just a human being Who, because He was so good, and proved Himself worthy, became a God. And Jesus, because He proved Himself worthy, became a God. But you don't pray to Jesus. You don't approach Him as *the* God, because all Mormons believe that they too will one day be gods. They have swallowed Satan's lie to Eve (hook, line, and sinker), and you'll wonder why anybody would do that with the consequent result when she believed it – that she would be a God if she disobeyed the God Who had created her.

So, this word "eikon," first of all, means a precise reproduction. Jesus is the image of a prototype. That prototype is God the Father. You have this idea of derivation. Jesus is, as a theologians like to say: "very God of very God." The word "very" V E R Y is used in old English in that sense, meaning identical (exactly) – the word "very God of very God." He is the identical God of the identical God. Hebrews 1:3, "And He is the radiance of His glory, and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by word of His power. When He had made purification of sin, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high – the exact representation of His nature. Jesus Christ has the exact essence of God the Father. All those principles (the 10 basic qualities of the attributes that identify deity – the essence of God), Jesus has all of those. And that's part of the meaning when he said, "Christ is the 'eikon' of the invisible God." That means that He is exactly like the invisible God.

*Jesus the Son is derived from the Father by an eternal generation in a birth that never took place because it always was.* Theologians struggle to try to take these things that are infinite concepts relative to Christ (that's why the Christological controversies took so long) and try to put them in human terms. Listen to the sentence again, trying to convey to us in human terms what took place but really didn't take place because, eternally, this was so: "Jesus the Son is derived from the Father (meaning that He will be exactly like Him then) by an eternal generation in a birth that never took place because it always was." He has always been from the Father.

**Resemblance**

So the theologians finally took the word "generation." The Father "generated" the Son eternally as a concept that there is a relationship to them that goes beyond the human relationships as we think of it – but nevertheless, the results are the same. That's what we're trying to get across. Because Christ is viewed and, in experience is, generated by the Father. He is exactly like the Father, as your children are like you. But mere likeness without derivation is a different Greek word. I show you this word "eikon" because it's not just that He is like God, but He *is* God. If the apostle Paul meant that He was just like God, which is what the Mormons say; which is what the Jehovah's Witnesses say; which is what the heretics teach; and, which was being taught in Colossae, that's a different word. It's a Greek word "homoioma" (hom-oy'-o-mah), H O M O I O M A. "Homoioma" means only a resemblance. It doesn't mean a derivation so that it is exactly like it.

**Jesus is God**

So, God the Holy Spirit very carefully did not use that word, because it's not just that He looks like God, or that He is like God, but He is God. So we have the word "eikon."

**Mormonism**

Jesus does not represent God the Father, however in a physical body sense. Please remember that. In John 4:24, that is made very clear. Get all of Scriptures together, and the Bible puts it all so that there's no confusion. John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."' The Mormon heresy taught by Joseph Smith is that God the Father is a human being, and that He became God because He proved Himself worthy. And that's how you will become god, because you prove yourself worthy. Mormonism teaches that God in heaven is with his wife, and He is sexually propagating spirit children. These spirit children are standing by, and they have a preexistence. Isn't that interesting? Satan taught a preexistence. Now, this is true of Christ, and we'll get into that – the preexistence of Jesus Christ before He had a human body. Along comes Satan, through Joseph Smith, and he said, "Everybody has preexistence in his spirit, and as soon as somebody produces a body for a child, that spirit enters that child, and that child has a term of life to prove himself worthy to become a god. And then he goes, and he becomes a god." That is a gross heresy.

When I was at the Mormon temple, you can ask questions. And since God is Spirit, contrary to what the Mormons teach (as His being a human being), and since Jesus here is the icon of God (not that in His physical aspect, but in His deity, because Jesus added the physical body to His deity), I asked the ladies who were on the tour about this verse: "It says, 'God is a Spirit,' and yet Joseph Smith and Mormon doctrine says that He is a physical human being.'" They said, "That's a good question." I said, "I know." They said, "Would you write your name and address down on this card? We will give this to our department that answers questions." I thought, "Hot dog, I'd like that." I gave it to them, and handed it in. This I would like to know.

Well, recently, I was in the car, and I was just coming in, and I saw the two bicycles. And right away, I knew who they were. They were neat-looking guys. They wear bicycle helmets now. And for a moment, I almost headed for the bicycles with the car, to accidentally run them over. I shouldn't do that. So, I restrained myself from fixing on the bicycles. And they were very jolly, and introduced themselves, and said, "We have your card from Salt Lake City, where you had a question about the nature of God." And so I went right after the subject of the person of Jesus Christ, and I said, "Where's your authority for what you teach about Christ as a Man, because Scriptures say God is a spirit. Where do you get your idea that God is a physical person like Christ who was incarnated, and had the physical body added to His spirit?"

And they proceeded to their Mormon doctrine: "Our prophet and seer, Joseph Smith, has received these revelations from God."

So I said, "But a prophet always has to be right. He can't ever be wrong." And they agreed. But I said, "Brigham Young said that if the Mormon Church ever permits Black people to enter the priesthood of the Mormon Church, the Mormon Church will be destroyed by God." Ah-huh. Right away I could see in their eyes that they had a problem guy here who knew their doctrine. And it so happened that that was just when the head of their church had just recently pronounced his papal life pronunciation, that Black people may now become priests. So it was a very live issue.

Well, one of the young men snapped back at me and said, "Oh, Brigham Young taught all kinds of things."

I said, "But he's your irrefutable, unmistakable, infallible, prophet from God – your prophet seer."

They said, "Well, we'll talk to you again sometimes." And they got on their bikes, and they left me. People always leave me when I talk about the Bible. I've noticed that. When you tell about what the Word of God says, they always leave you. It's just like that Church-of-God guy who believed in water baptism salvation, and yet told me he didn't believe in salvation by works, but you had to have that work, and he told me that faith is a work. So then I said, "Well, you don't really believe that salvation is without works if even faith has to be a work then. Then he looked at me and turned around. We were up on top of one of the mountains at Winter Park, and he s skied off and left me there, standing by myself, with the wind blowing, and snow swirling around me. I could have gotten lost going down that mountain. People always leave you when you speak with the authority of the Word of God. That's why you have to know Who Jesus is, and what the Word of God teaches about Him, so that you are not deceived, and you go back to what the Scripture says. That is the authority.

**True Representation**

So, first of all, this word "eikon" says that Jesus Christ is the likeness of God the Father. He has the quality of likeness; that is, He is a true representation.

**Manifestation**

Secondly, it has the idea of manifestation. The word "eikon" conveys manifestation. It conveys the essence and the being of God the Father in Jesus Christ. He perfectly reveals to us what Christ is like in His essence. Hebrews 1:3: "And He is the radiance of His glory, and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power." He is the manifestation of what the Father is. It connotes the actual presence of the object which is symbolized. He is the visual expression of what God the Father is. Jesus actually brought God the Father into the human sphere of understanding. The manifestation of the Father through Jesus Christ is a powerful confirmation of the existence of God, because without the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, we would know absolutely nothing about Him. What we know about God (of the essence of God, and the nature of God), we know only through Jesus Christ.

So, Jesus Christ, as the image of the invisible God, conveys to us the exact likeness of God, and the exact nature of God is manifested, In Jesus Christ, we see God. And when we get to know Him, the Father is manifested to us as well.

Paul himself personally saw Jesus on the Damascus road, and he saw Him in the image of God, and the likeness of the manifestation of God the Father.

We close with 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, of Paul's testimony of what he discovered about Jesus as the image of God: "In whose case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

When Paul looked up on that Damascus road, and the heavens opened, and he saw this person of Jesus Christ in His physical body, He saw the light of the glory of God surrounding Him, shining forth from Jesus Christ. So, the apostle Paul, in that moment, realized how wrong he had been – Jesus *was* the icon of the invisible God. He was the one who did give the exact representation of God: what God believed; what God taught; how God acted; the character of love; and, the exact manifestation of the nature of God – the Spirit being, the Almighty One, the Omnipotent One, and the All-Knowing One.

So, Jesus Christ, to be the image of God, is, in fact, God Himself. That's the first point. And that's the starting point. And if you do not have that clear in your mind, then you will be drifted off into all kinds of deceits by the deception of Satan and the cults, all of whom systematically degrade Jesus Christ into something less then very God of very God.

Father, we thank You for this time together in Your Word. And we pray that you will help us to have a new respect for the dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we act accordingly. We are dealing with He who is our God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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