

A The image of God (Colossians 1:15a)

- ❖ An image can be a copy of reality (a photograph, a hologram, a statue), or even something fictional (a drawing). But the biblical concept of image goes beyond that.
- ❖ God created Adam and Eve in his image (Gen. 1:27), and Adam fathered a son in his own image (Gen. 5:3). These are not copies of reality, imitations, or figments of their imagination. They are physical, psychological, and social similarities...
- ❖ Paul says that the ceremonial law was a shadow, “not the very image of the things” (Heb. 10:1), implying that “image = reality”.
- ❖ The question is: Was Jesus *similar* to God, or *equal* to God? In addition to repeatedly attributing to himself the divine name “I am,” Jesus explicitly said: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30); “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

B The firstborn (Colossians 1:15b-17)

- ❖ “Firstborn” means the first begotten. Hence, some teach that Jesus was the first being created by God (Col. 1:15). But, as with the term “image,” the word “firstborn” has a broader biblical meaning.
- ❖ Isaac was the firstborn instead of Ishmael; Jacob was the firstborn instead of Esau; Joseph was the firstborn instead of Reuben; David was the firstborn instead of Eliab (Psalm 89:27). They were all firstborn because they held the preeminent position over their brothers, not because they were born first.
- ❖ Paul refers to this preeminence in Colossians. To avoid any doubt about its nature, he attributes two divine qualities to He: the creation of all that exists (Col. 1:16; Is. 45:18); and its sustenance (Col. 1:17; Ps. 119:91).

C The head of the Church (Colossians 1:18a)

- ❖ In some languages (such as Catalan or English) the word “head” is also translated as “chief” or “principal,” because that is the metaphorical meaning of “head.” This is also the case in Hebrew. For example, “appoint for themselves one head” (Hos. 1:11 NKJV) should be translated as “they will appoint one leader” (NIV).
- ❖ This is also the sense in which Paul uses this word when he applies it to Christ.
- ❖ But Paul also adds a metaphorical meaning to the body. If Christ is the head, we—the church—are the body. From this idea it follows that:
 - We are all needed (1 Cor. 12:15)
 - Each one has his or her own work (1 Cor. 12:17)
 - We cannot despise anyone (1 Cor. 12:21)
 - There are no “inferior” believers (1 Cor. 12:22-24)
 - We care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25-26)

D The beginning (Colossians 1:18b)

- ❖ The word translated as “beginning” is *archē* (ἀρχή), a Greek word that means beginning, origin, first cause or principle, but also means ruler, power, authority or principality, depending largely on the context.
- ❖ We can say that this word, applied to Christ, can have all these meanings. Jesus is the origin of everything [the image of God], the cause for which everything was created [the firstborn of creation], the supreme ruler [the head]. All of this gives him preeminence.
- ❖ Paul inserts the title “the firstborn from among the dead” here (although Jesus was not the first to be resurrected, but Moses). His victory over death also implies his victory over sin and his power to recreate us in his image.

E The Reconciler (Colossians 1:19-20)

- ❖ What Jesus did, resulted in him taking first place in everything. According to Paul, Christ is worthy of all these titles “for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Colossians 1:19). In other words, Jesus was fully God and fully human. “We have seen his glory, [...] full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
- ❖ By dying on the cross and rising again, Jesus fulfilled the necessary requirements to reconcile humanity with God (Col. 1:20).
- ❖ We can understand that he has reconciled to God “the things on earth.” But how has he reconciled to himself those that are in heaven?
- ❖ The entire universe has been able to clearly see the nature of evil. Thus, the character of God is vindicated both in Heaven and on Earth.