

:00 (15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities --- ALL things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

(18) And He is the head of the body --- the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.

(19) For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

(21) And you --- who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds --- He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him [the Father], if indeed you --- continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the Gospel --- which He proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Think on these things:

- 1) What does God look like --- v.15 offers an answer?! Consider these verses:

Exodus 33:20 – **No man can see the face of God --- and live!**

John 1:18 – **No one has seen God except God, the Son (Jesus). Jesus has made Him known.**

John 14:9-10 **Anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father in Him, and heard His Words.**

1 Timothy 6:16 **Our glorious God dwells in unapproachable light and has never been seen.**

Hebrews 1:3-4 **Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of His nature.**

- 2) Now consider 1 John 4:12. How does this verse mirror what Jesus said in John 14:9 to Phillip?

No one has seen God the Father. In Jesus we glimpse the Father’s glory and hear the Father’s Words. In this human life, God promises to live inside each believer as the Paraclete (Helper).

- 3) The second part of v.15 is a little challenging. Doctrinally, what does it mean to refer to Jesus as the “firstborn”? The context of Psalm 89:19-37 is about God choosing David and allowing his offspring to rule forever. Look at Psalm 89:27, and this is what many scholars consider the New Testament use of firstborn. How does Psalm 89:27 use the term firstborn? (The NIV translation uses “over” instead of “of”, which is consistent with Philippians 2:9-10.) See also Hebrews 1:6. The meaning of “firstborn” from these verses is that Jesus is,

Psalm 89:27 – **David’s offspring will be preeminent, the highest in rank, above all other kings. Jesus stands alone, unique in God’s sight and among humanity.**

Hebrews 1:6 – **The Father brings the “firstborn” into our world and commands the angels to worship Him.**

- 4) From v.16, what things in God's creation were created by Jesus? Consider Genesis 1:26; John 1:3, 10; and Hebrews 1:1-2. How does what we learn here in v.16 validate scientific discoveries of our own age?

ALL things were created by Jesus. In Genesis, God speaks to Himself in plurality as He completes His creative work with humans. John says all things were made 'through' Him, and without Him nothing was made. Hebrews adds that the Father created the world through Jesus, whom He appointed heir of all things. --- These statements also encompass things we can't see without microscopes, which, at the time written, were unknown in the world.

- 5) The last phrase of v.17 reflects an important doctrine to understand: "**We believe** that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship." What has Jesus always done for our world? See also Hebrews 1:3.

In Jesus, all the scientific properties of the world 'hold together' (e.g., gravity, centrifugal force, magnetism, microbiology, atoms, etc...). Hebrews says these laws we depend on exist simply by the 'power' of Jesus' spoken Word.

- 6) How is the Body of Christ defined in v.18, and what is Jesus' position over the Body?

The "Christian body of Christ" is also known as the "Church" (comprised of all believers).

- 7) In what way is Jesus the "beginning"? Describe what we know about the new life we will have in heaven. See Luke 20:34-36 and 24:36-44, and John 20:19-20, 26-27.

The Beginning? – **He is the Firstborn of those who die physically and then arise to eternal life.**

New life? – **(Lk.20) There will be no marrying in eternal life, and we will live eternally as equals with angels (but known as the Sons of God). (Lk. 24) The resurrected body is spiritual, but it will still have a semblance of flesh and bone, capable of eating food. (Jn. 20) Even so, the resurrected body can simply appear in places without having to open and enter via a door.**

- 8) Why does Paul say that Jesus is the "beginning" in terms of new life (v.18b)?

Jesus, as the Firstborn to be resurrected from the dead, was the first man to begin "eternal" life. There are many Old and New Testament examples of human beings being raised from the dead, only to die again later. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead in eternal life, the gift He also offers all believers. Thus, believers will be 'following the Leader' into eternal life. (Death has now 'lost its sting', swallowed up by Jesus' victory, 1 Cor. 15:54-55.)

****Extra discussion -- Time permitting, there is a good review of the resurrected body found in 1 Cor. 15:35-36, 42-53).**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: