

Colossians 1:15-20, “Jesus, Above All”

10.20.19

This morning we’re going to read perhaps the most succinct description of who Jesus Christ is (in all of the Bible). I would “suppose” to you today, that what we’re going to see in Colossians 1:15-20 is quite possibly one of the most important passages of Scripture in all the Bible. That’s a weighty statement, but I believe you’ll see it’s true. For you see, this morning we’re going to seek to grasp and understand the fact that Jesus Christ is the most important person in the entire universe. We’re literally going to see today, that because of Jesus Christ, everything we can see and even the things we can’t see...they are all held together by Jesus Christ. This morning we’re going to see “**Jesus Christ, Above All!**”

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by^[a] 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. ¹⁷ 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, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

I agree with the pastor and Bible Commentator, John MacArthur when he says, “Jesus Christ is the most important personality in the universe...He is the God of heaven, revealed as the Son in the person of Jesus Christ.” Church family, I’ll say it again, I believe what we just read are some of the most important words ever written in human history...or ever will be written, for that matter. Why? Because the passage of Scripture we just read identifies the King of the ENTIRE Universe. Jesus is not just a religious, historical figure of the past...NO...He sits enthroned over this entire universe...and He is in absolute and total control of everything in the universe! He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He sees you and me right now! And we’re going to see that so poignantly today.

Now as we begin this morning, let’s see if we can set the scene for what we’ve just read. Remember, Colossae is in Asia Minor:



It is just east of what we know as the 7 Churches of the Book of the Revelation. In Colossae false doctrine was being taught. Epaphras, a man from Colossae, who was led to faith by the Apostle Paul, while Paul spent three years, Ephesus, nearby, has gone to Paul in Rome. You remember the Apostle Paul is writing this letter back to the church in Colossae from Rome where he is under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier. Epaphras had come to Paul and he said, "Paul you've got to help me. They won't listen to me. Instead, they are listening to false doctrine and many are being led astray."

Church family, if you take the time to read through the book of Colossians, which by the way, will only take you about 15 minutes (it's only 4 chapters), you will quickly discover what Paul is seeking to do. He's seeking to set straight who Jesus Christ is. He's seeking to identify that which is true from that which is false



Can you make out IN RED, what is TRUE.

You see, he's wanting to debunk the heresy that was being espoused that Jesus wasn't really God. Paul is arguing against the theology of those heretics, which is called: "Gnosticism."

Now, Gnostics believed that God didn't actually set out to create the world. Instead, the Gnostics say that God's divine essence went out from Him and filled the universe and that only certain people could rise to the level of this secret and super-intellectual knowledge and understanding. The word "Gnosticism," see it:

GNOSTICISM

The word, "gnosticism" means: "knowledge of spiritual mysteries." These Gnostics taught that all matter was evil, including the human body and that Jesus didn't really have a human body, since this would have put Him in contact with evil matter. So, for the Gnostic, and this is the heresy, Jesus was never born of a virgin and therefore He is not God. You might hear that and say, "That's crazy, why would anybody believe that?" And I would ask you what are personal pronouns? Let that sink in. And so, you see, this is why Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians...he had to refute this false teaching.

Colossians 2:8-10

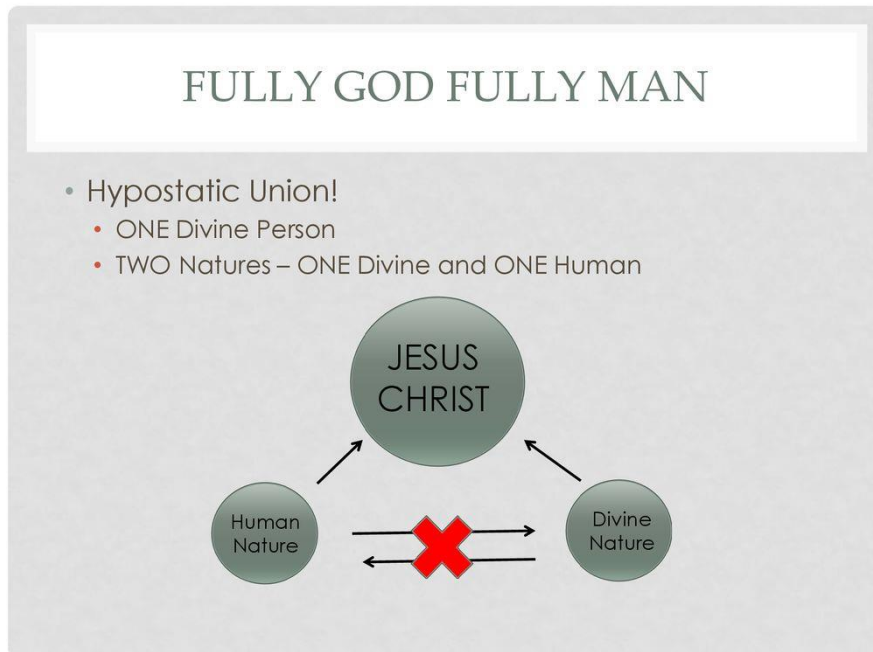
⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^[a] of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

And that brings us back to our text. Jesus is God.

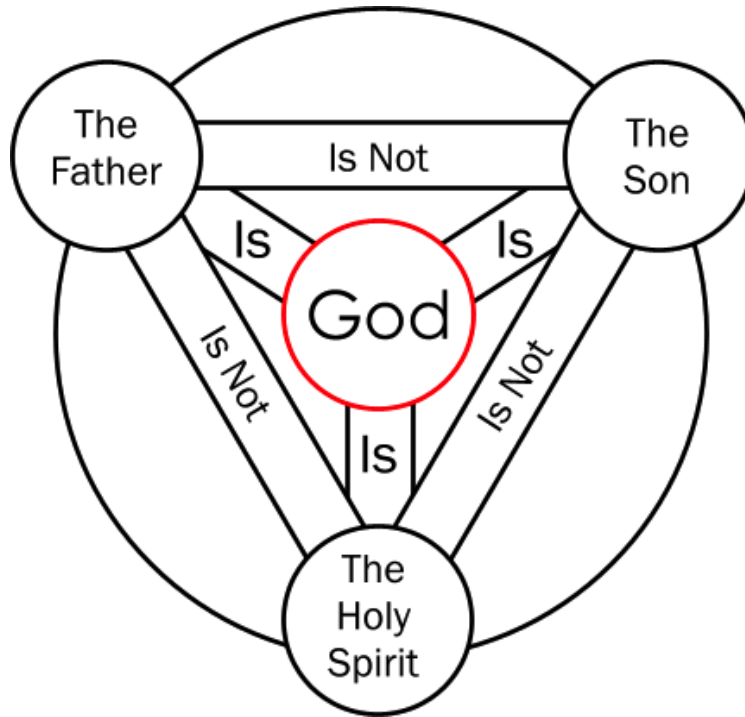
Colossians 1:15

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

The heretics were saying that Jesus is not God. Paul says, "Oh no...He most certainly is...Jesus is the image of the invisible God." Jesus was God and Man. We call this the Hypostatic (Hype-O-static) Union. Meaning Jesus is 100% man and 100% God in the same body.



The Scripture is clear Church family...Jesus is God in the flesh, and because He is God...He is Creator of the universe.



Now think about what we've just read. God is invisible, right? Did you see that in verse 15? But, when Jesus came to this earth, He made God visible in His flesh to all humankind for 33 years. NO, God is not visible to the human eye, but Jesus was for 33 years!

Colossians 1:19

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Now, church, let's remember who we are. We are "spirit-beings" housed in jars of clay...these bodies. But, when we die, our spirit leaves (and if you know Jesus) goes to heaven...if you don't, your spirit will go to Hades. Here's the point...when you were created by God, you became an eternal spirit...and you will either live in heaven and Hell for all eternity. Therefore, your life...my life...on this earth is absolutely NOTHING compared to eternity. Our lives are nothing more than an EYELASH compared to this room (representing eternity). So I'll ask you: Do you know Jesus?

Remember Genesis 1:26. God said, "Let us make man in our image..." Verse 27 says:

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

There is so much confusion in our culture today about male and female and Satan loves it. We are image-bearers...We are spirit-beings. But, when we are born, we are separated from God. Why? Because our spirits cannot know Him because we are sinners. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But, Jesus came and gave us the ability to know God in Spirit and in truth, because of His death and resurrection. So, when you and I get saved, when we surrender our lives to Jesus, repenting of our sins and calling on Jesus, then the image of God in you and me is restored, because the Holy Spirit, the third person of God, comes to indwell us and we're reconciled in "spirit" to God.

Church, Jesus is God and He has always been. That's Hebrews 1. Remember Paul was describing to the Hebrews, the Jews turned Christians, why they could trust that Jesus was superior to all things...

Hebrews 1:1-4

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Those words, "exact imprint," in verse 3 are used in classical Greek to describe a stamp or an engraving tool that made an exact imprint or an exact reproduction of something. Jesus is the exact imprint of God; nothing is missing, nothing has been altered, nothing changed. **Turn to Philippians 2** and as you are turning, see these quarters:



Those are exact imprints of an original quarter housed at one of the four US Mints in the United States: Philadelphia, Denver, San Francisco, and West Point, and here's the point. those quarters are worth the same amount as the original quarter they were minted from housed at the Mint. Why? Because they are exact imprints of the original. Look now at Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^[a] ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If people ask you how you know there is a God...you tell them, we're keeping time by Him, because Jesus is God and as sure as today's date is October 20, 2019, there is a God. God revealed Himself to us, when He came to us...Emmanuel, God with us, in the person of Jesus Christ. That's why Jesus said in John 14:9, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father..."

So, if you want to know what God is like, well, He's the spitting image of His Father. Kind of like me and my dad...



I've been told all of my life... "You're the spitting image of your dad." BTW, that term: The term: "spitting image" goes all the back to the 1600's when folks made the case that someone was so much like someone else, (say their father or mother), that it appeared they been spit out of their mouths.

You know what, Church family, think with me...If God were a man, we would expect Him to be sinless, wouldn't we? Jesus was. You know, if God were a man, we would expect Him to speak the greatest words ever spoken. Jesus did. You know, if God were a man, we would expect Him to do miracles with ease. Jesus did. If God were a man, we would expect Him to love like no one else, and Jesus did and He still does at this very moment...He loves you! And He died for you so that you might know Him and know the joy of being in His presence!

But, I must tell you, there are some who struggle with the end of verse 15. See it again...

Colossians 1:15

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

"The firstborn of all creation." That particular phrase has caused some people, even some scholars, trouble through the years. But it shouldn't. It's very clear in the Greek. That phrase, "firstborn of all creation," **is a reference to position, not time**. Jesus is not the first created being in terms of time, because Jesus was never created. That's why He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." The book of the Revelation describes Jesus as: "the One who was, and is, and is to come."

The word: "firstborn" refers to rank, not to chronology. After all, the firstborn is the one who has the rights of inheritance. In the Jewish context, everybody knew that. Christ was the honored One, the privileged One, the prestigious One, the Father's heir. That's what verse 15 is speaking of. Jesus has always existed with His father. Listen, think of this...**Jesus is the only person who ever existed before He was born.** Think on that.

Think of Christmas...think of Bethlehem...Think of Joseph and Mary and Jesus...

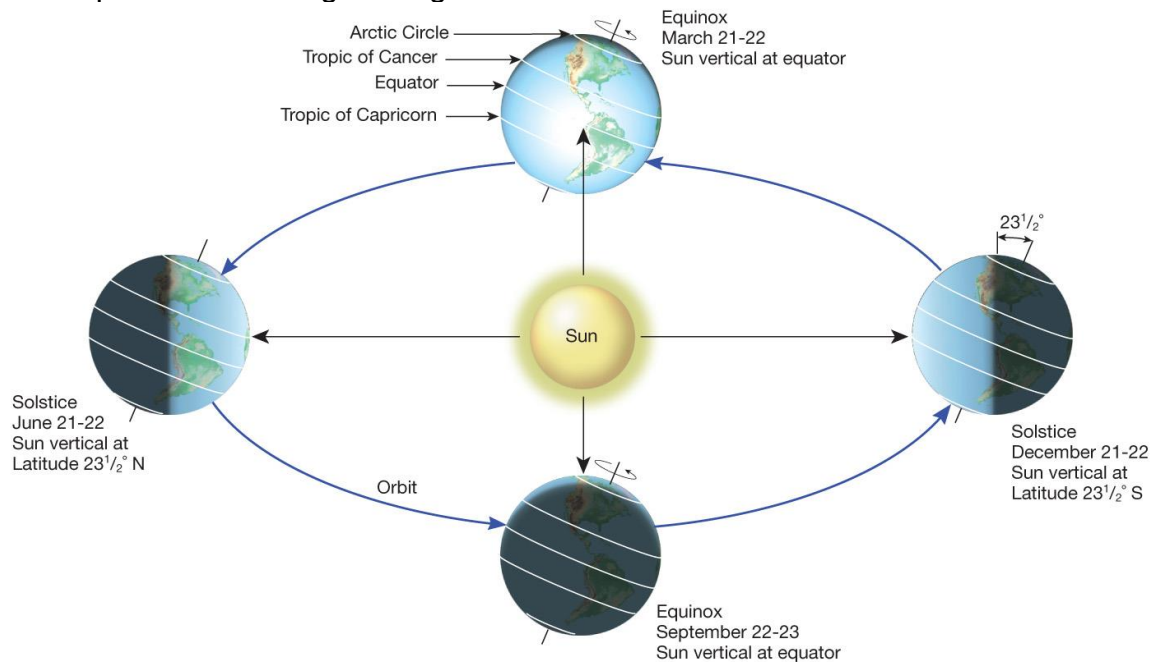


Isn't it incredible to think that the Creator of the universe became a baby? God took on a body. God became a man...the One who created all things, and that's verse 16:

Colossians 1:16

16 For by ^[a]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.

Now let's think about Jesus as the Creator and I want to park here for a little bit. Let's think about our solar system for a few minutes. (Get ready to have your mind blown!) Think first of all about our earth. The earth rotates on a 23 ½ degree axis at the same, constant speed. If the speed of that rotation slowed down or sped up just a fraction one way or the other, we would either freeze to death or burn up. That 23 ½ degree angle enables us to have four seasons.



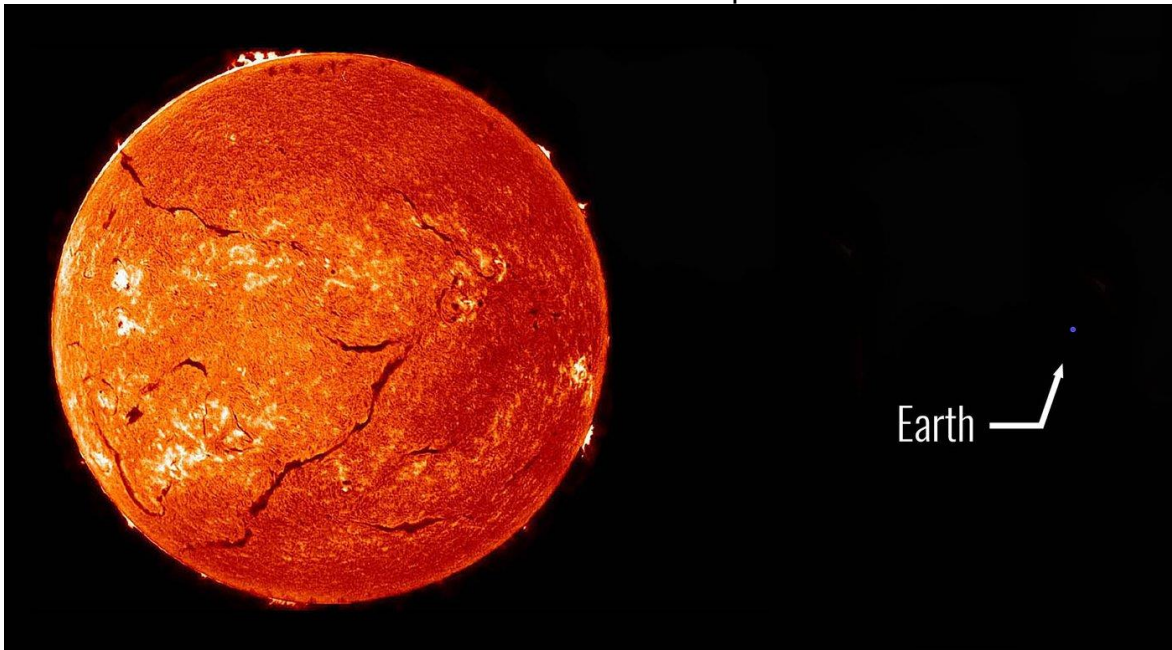
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And get this...if we weren't spinning on a 23 ½ degree, **invisible** axis, ice would move down from the North pole and up from the South pole and pile up on the continents. And, of course, you know the relationship between the moon and the earth...

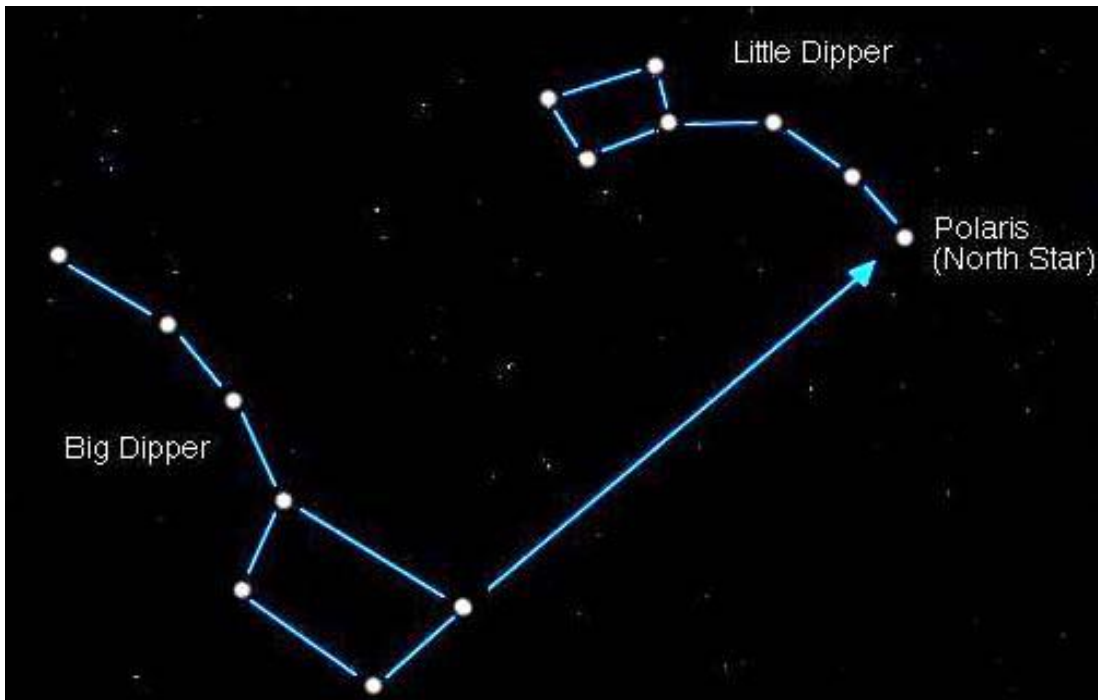


even though the moon is 238,900 miles away, it controls the ocean tides. Move the moon a few hundred miles and we'd all drown.

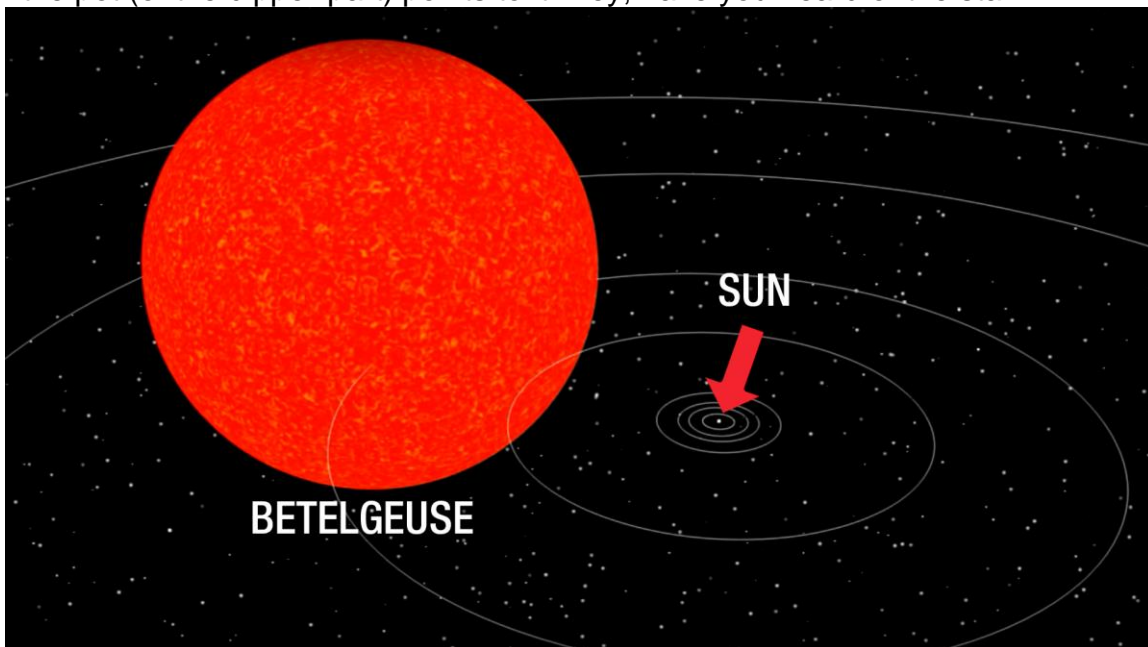
What about the sun? Sometimes we forget how massive the sun is. It's 864,400 miles across. That's 109 times the diameter of the Earth. Look at the comparison of the Sun and the earth:



You can hardly see the earth on the right! Listen, the sun is so large that about 1,300,000 planet Earths could fit inside the sun. What about the stars? Did you know that the closest star to the earth is JUST, oh, 25 trillion miles away? Alpha Centauri is 4.3 light years from earth. How about this...see

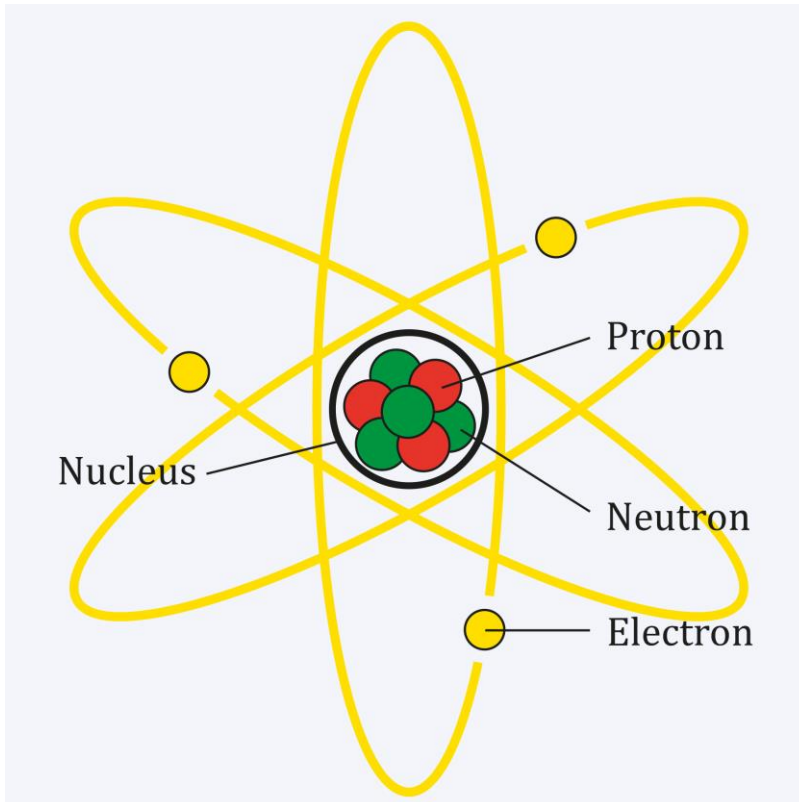


the North Star...called Polaris, and it's at the end of the handle of the little dipper. It's 323 trillion miles away. That's 13 times further than Alpha Centauri. BTW...the north star is easy to find...you do it by locating the Big Dipper, which is really easy to spot on clear nights, and the corner star in the top of the pot (of the dipper-part) points to it. Hey, have you heard of the star...



“Betelgeuse.” That’s how it’s pronounced. Get this...it’s 880 quadrillion miles away. You know quadrillion is the next number after trillion. Betelgeuse is so big that its diameter is bigger than the earth’s orbit. BTW...see the sun, to the right, compared to Betelgeuse!!

Aren’t these things amazing! Here’s something else that really gets me. Nuclear science tells us that all substance in the universe is constructed from three fundamental little particles called protons, neutrons and electrons. They make an Atom. You studied this in school. See the picture...



In an atom, you have a nucleus in which you have protons, neutrons and little electrons shooting out around the outside. Again, these are the basic building blocks of all matter. Now let's concentrate for a moment on protons and neutrons, right in the middle of the nucleus. Each proton in green, carries a positive charge of electricity (see the green +). The neutrons (in blue) carry NO electrical charge. The electrons in yellow, carry a negative charge.

Now, this is what's interesting. How are these negative electrons not sucked into the positive protons? You know...because positive and negative charges attract one another... Or to put it another way, why aren't the protons sucked out of the middle of the nucleus toward the electrons, positive to negative, thereby destroying the nucleus? What is it that's holding the nucleus together?

Well, nuclear scientists call this phenomenon the: "Strong Force," or "Atomic Glue," "Nuclear Glue," or some scientists now call this: "The God-Particle." This Strong Force or Atomic Glue or "God Particle," is more powerful than the electrical repulsion between protons; and yet, scientists can't offer any explanation as to why. How can those protons keep sticking together? What's holding them? One physicist, I read, said: "Some inflexible inhibition is relentlessly holding them together."

Church family I'd like to introduce you to that inflexible inhibition. It's what I call the: "Colossians 1:17 Particle." It's not a what...it's a WHO...

Colossians 1:17

¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Listen, try to wrap your minds around this, you see that little baby...



When Jesus was lying in the arms of Mary, and she was holding him, He was holding the entire universe together. Jesus is seated on the throne at this very moment, looking down from heaven and He continues to hold everything together! Why? Because He is the Alpha and the Omega... the beginning and the end!

Listen church and we'll be done. Jesus is the head of all things...verse 18...

Colossians 1:18-20

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, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Jesus would become obedient to death, even on a cross, on a tree that He created, with ore from the ground that made the Roman spikes.

You know, it's no wonder that the winds and the waves obeyed Jesus when He said, "Peace be still," and millions of pounds of water in the Sea of Galilee became like a sheet of glass. It's no wonder death couldn't hold Lazarus when Jesus called out his name from the tomb! It's no wonder disease had no power over the lame or held any power of the blind or the deaf. And it's no wonder Satan and all of Hell had no power over Jesus when He, THE GOD/MAN walked out of His own tomb, declaring victory over death Hell and the grave! Why? (position)

Colossians 1:15

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
