

Book of Colossians - Introduction and Colossians 1:1-18

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Schedule

Session	Date	Passage
1	April 26/27	Introduction, Gal. 1:1-18
2	May 3/4	Col. 1:19 - 2:29
3	May 10/11	Col. 2:1-23
4	May 17/18	Col. 3:1-17
5	May 24/25	Col. 3:18-4:18

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A Word Concerning Balanced Study

- ◆ There are two primary ways to study God's word: topically and verse-by-verse (exegetically).
- ◆ Each approach has value and relative strengths and weaknesses.

Teaching Method	Strengths	Weaknesses
Topical	<p>Scripture interprets scripture. Shows God's divine 'finger print' in the consistency of authors spanning time. A comprehensive understanding of various themes through scripture, acts as a "safety net."</p>	<p>Easy to ride hobby horses. Easy to avoid passages which contradict.² Ability to manipulate the text: a text out-of-context is a pretext. Controversial subjects may not get taught.</p>
Verse-by-verse.	<p>More difficult to use scriptures out-of-context. Focus allows deeper penetration of the text, its historical setting, and meditation upon its application.</p>	<p>May never get around to studying more distant passages. Inability to see the "big picture" how scripture ties together. Lack of a systematized understanding of scriptural themes (the 'safety net').</p>

- ◆ Our previous study ([Israel Through the Eyes of Scripture](#)) was topical in nature. This study will be verse-by-verse (exegetical).
- ◆ With either approach, we must remember that we are not the "chef," we are the "waiter." God has already "cooked" what we are to serve.

² This is especially prevalent in popular Christian books.

Location of Colosse



History of Colosse

- ◆ **Geography** - 110 miles east of Ephesus, 10 miles east of Laodicea, located on the Lycus River.
- ◆ **Name** - Its name may have been derived from Colossus, a large statue, which in turn may have been named for stony deposits found in the area.
- ◆ **Prominence** - from the 5th century B.C. It's prominence prominence derived especially from its wool-working and cloth-dying industries; the dark red wool cloth known as colossinum was widely known."³

³ Achtemeier, Paul J., Publishers Harper & Row, and Society of Biblical Literature. Harper's Bible Dictionary. Includes index. 1st ed., Page 175. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985.

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- ◆ **Paul never visited Colosse** - It appears that the Christian church was established by some other means, possibly by Epaphras (mentioned in Col. 1:7-8). This most likely occurred during Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19).
- ◆ **Significance waned** - Underwent a severe earthquake in A.D. 60 or 61 and passed into oblivion in later Roman times—only a few coins survive from this period—and its site, rediscovered in 1835 and still unexcavated, became a quarry in the Byzantine era.

Paul's Epistle

- ◆ **A "Prison Epistle"** - Written about A.D. 60-62 while imprisoned in Rome (recorded in Acts 28:30). Paul also wrote Ephesians and Philemon during the same period.⁴ Probably written before Philipians. The epistle was also to be read by the Laodicean church (Col. 4:16). The letter was carried by Tychicus, who was accompanying the runaway slave Onesimus back to his master, Philemon, a member of the Colossian church (Col. 4:7-9).
- ◆ **Purpose** - Paul appears to have written the letter to address heretical ideas which arose among the believers there. Paul attempts to correct incorrect teaching such as: (1) the need to observe Old Testament laws and ceremonies (Col. 2:14, 20-23); (2) an emphasis on "deeper knowledge" only attainable to an elite few (Col. 2:8-10, 18); (3) the worship of angels (Col. 2:18) and; (4) an apparent denial of the deity of Christ (Col. 1:15-17). Paul also gave attention to the distinction between our absolute equality in Christ (Col. 3:11) yet preserving important God-established differences in roles (Col. 3:18-4:1). The Colossian heresy, "contained elements of what later became known as Gnosticism: that God is good, but matter is evil, that Jesus Christ was merely one of a series of emanations descending from God and being less than God (a belief that led them to deny His true humanity), and that a secret, higher knowledge above Scripture was necessary for enlightenment and salvation. The Colossian heresy also embraced aspects of Jewish legalism..."⁵
- ◆ **"ism's" to avoid** - Paul emphasizes our sufficiency in Christ. Being complete in Christ, believers have no need for gnosticism (avoiding the material and seeking spiritual freedom through knowledge), legalism (attaining righteousness by adhering to rules and regulations), mysticism (spirituality is attained by subjective experience), or asceticism (forgoing the material to attain spiritual standing).

4 "The names of the same people (e.g., Timothy, Aristarchus, Archippus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, Onesimus, and Demas) appear in both Colossians and Philemon, showing that both were written by the same author at about the same time." [MacArthur, John Jr. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed., Col 1:1. Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997.]

5 MacArthur, John Jr. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed., Col 1:1. Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997.

Colossians 1:1-18⁶

Col 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

- ◆ Apostle (apostolos from apostellō - a "messenger," "envoy" or "sent one"). One who is sent as a representative with a message.
- ◆ Paul was an apostle strictly by the will of God (Acts 9:3-6).⁷ See especially Acts 26:12-18.

Col 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ [who are] in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ◆ "saints" (hagios) denotes those who are "holy," or "sacred," because they are set-apart exclusively for the purposes of God. It denotes ownership and dedication rather than any intrinsic quality or performance.

Col 1:3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

- ◆ Notice the intercessory nature of Paul's prayers. How do we measure up to this in our own prayers?
- ◆ "since we heard of your faith" - These were believers that Paul had no direct involvement with.
- ◆ "your love for all the saints" - the mark of true conversion is a growing love for all the saints. Not because of who they are, but because of Whose they are!

Col 1:5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

- ◆ One of our main motivators is hope. This hope is "laid up... in heaven" because we hope in those things which are unseen, but are absolutely guaranteed to come to pass. (See [Romans 8:18-25](#)). If we are to truly serve God as He has intended on this earth, then it is imperative that our minds and hearts be fixed on heaven.
- ◆ We are considered aliens. It is no accident that the people alive on earth during the Tribulation are consistently referred to as "earth dwellers."⁸ Their citizenship and focus is on the earth and not on the eternal things of heaven. How about us?
- ◆ God reminds Israel: The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land [is] mine; for ye [are] strangers and sojourners with me. (Le 25:23) Jesus reiterates this them in relation to believers ([John 15:18-19](#); [John 17:14-17](#)).

Col 1:6 which has come to you, as [it has] also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as [it is] also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

- ◆ A key purpose of God's word is to "bring forth fruit" -- the fruit of the Spirit. Our knowledge of

6 New King James Version

7 A frequent theme found in scripture regarding those with great responsibility to represent God is an initial experience where God reveals His glory to the man of God.

8 Re 3:10; Re 6:10; Re 11:10; Re 12:12; Re 13:8; Re 13:12; Re 13:14; Re 14:6; Re 17:8

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God's Word is pointless without application. Worse than that, it is dangerous in that we are self-deceived and misrepresenting Christianity and our Lord.

- ◆ To the degree we stay close to God's Word (the Bible), we will be near the source of spiritual life: [Isa. 55:10-11](#).
- ◆ This living water of God's Word is not to be kept for us. We are to become its dispenser: [John 7:38-39](#).

Col 1:7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,

Col 1:8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

Col 1:9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

- ◆ We are to be filled with the knowledge of His will. How are we to come to the knowledge of His will? By subjective experience? By mysterious revelation? By our own 'opinions' about Who God must be and what He must think? These are all the ways which the earth dwellers attempt to approach God and discern His will. Jesus set forth a different way in [John 8:31-32](#).
- ◆ Paul emphasizes spiritual understanding because our natural understanding is unable to comprehend or submit to God. Those who have not been born again are unable to understand the things of God (John 8:43; [1Cor. 2:12-16](#)).

Col 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing [Him], being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Col 1:11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and long suffering with joy;

Col 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Col 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed [us] into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

Col 1:14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

- ◆ Redemption requires a blood sacrifice which is one reason why it was not to be eaten (the life [nephesh] is in the blood, Lev 17:11).
- ◆ Blood sacrifice is required by God for atonement: ([Heb 9:22](#))
- ◆ The "life" (nephesh) of Christ, is what was made an offering for sin, Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul [nephesh] an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10).

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- ◆ If you think Christianity can transmogrify into a "bloodless religion," thing again! (Mt 26:28; Mt 27:4; Lu 22:20; Joh 19:30; Ac 20:28; Ro 5:9; 1Co 10:16; Eph 1:7; Eph 2:13; Col 1:14; Col 1:20; Col 2:14; Col 2:15; Heb 9:12; Heb 9:14; Heb 9:22; Heb 10:19; Heb 10:29; Heb 11:28; Heb 12:24; Heb 13:12; Heb 13:20; 1Pe 1:18; 1Pe 1:19; 1Jo 1:7; 1Jo 5:8; Re 1:5; Re 5:9; Re 7:14; Re 12:11)
- ◆ This is offensive and it is intended to be so—the scandal of the cross.

Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

- ◆ "image" (eikōn) What is an image? An image corresponds to the original. It is the representation of the original, often in situations where the original cannot be perceived fully due to the limitations of the viewer or viewing situation. Sinful flesh is consumed in God's presence without special measures of atonement and separation. This is the entire reason for the expulsion of man from the Garden and the entire edifice of the Tabernacle and Temple to follow. This separation of Holy from sinful is overcome by the reconciliation provided by the blood of Christ. This is one reason why the Holy Spirit would not take up residence within sinful vessels, making them a Holy Temple, until Christ was glorified (John 7:39; 16:7).
- ◆ The prohibition against conceiving of any image of God, given in the second commandment (Ex. 20:4-5). Elsewhere, Israel is warned, "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, (De 4:15-16)
- ◆ The very incarnation of Jesus is an intentional revelation of God among men:⁹ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared [Him]. (Joh 1:18). This is yet another reason for understanding the Angel of YHWH in the OT as preincarnate appearances of Jesus.¹⁰ Jesus emphasized this very point Himself (**John 14:9**). Jesus is the very form of God (morphē, Php. 2:6) but was found in the likeness (skēma, Php. 2:8) of a man.¹¹ His essence is fully that of God, but His external representation was that of a man. (He is fully man, but that is not all He is!)
- ◆ "firstborn" (prōtotokos). From prōto, "first or chief," and tiktō, "to bring forth." Most frequently used as a positional title in reference to the preeminent rights of the first born son (). Applied to the promised Davidic King (**Ps. 89:27**).

9 Isa 9:1-2; Lu 2:32; Joh 1:14-18; Joh 12:45; Joh 14:7-9; Joh 15:15; Ga 1:12; Col 1:15; Col 2:9; Heb 1:2; 1Jo 1:2; Re 1:1

10 "Stephen's sermon refers at least three times to the Old Testament angel of the Lord, usually regarded as the preincarnate Christ (Ac 7:30, Ac 7:35, Ac 7:38). In Ac 7:30-31, Stephen ascribes to the angel at the burning bush 'the voice of the Lord' (cf. Ac 7:35, Ac 7:37-38) and applies the Old Testament 'angel of the Lord' to the New Testament Christ." [Mal Couch, A Bible Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), p. 187]. "As the church fathers had already recognized [among later scholars we mention Calvin, Hengstenberg, Keil, Ebrard, Lange, and Stier], this is no less a person than the Son of God Himself, the Word... who appeared later in Christ." [Erich Sauer, The Dawn Of World Redemption (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, c1964, 1951), p. 103.]

11 skema is similar to ikon, "everything in a person which strikes the senses, the figure, bearing, discourse, actions, manner of life" [Strong, James. The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order. electronic ed. Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996.]

Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

- ◆ Jesus is God! He is the Creator, and is God's revelation to man, (John 1:3, 10; Heb. 1:1-3; Eph. 3:9)
- ◆ John makes an intentional parallel from John 1:1 to Genesis 1:1. It is Jesus, the very Word of God, Who was the agent of Creation (as were the Father and the Spirit¹²).
- ◆ This includes the spiritual realm, both holy and profane (Da 10:13; Da 10:20; Mt 9:34; Mt 12:24; Mr 3:22; Lu 11:15; Joh 12:31; Joh 16:11; Ro 8:38; Eph 1:21; Eph 3:10; Eph 6:12; Col 1:16; Col 2:10; Tit 3:1).
- ◆ How twisted can a mind become due to sin? Consider Satan who was created by Jesus asking Jesus to bow down and worship him! The creature asking for worship from the Creator! (Mtt. 4:9). Beware of sin! It twists and perverts your very ability to reason!

Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

- ◆ "before," that is, preeminent (see Col. 1:18).
- ◆ It is at the momentary and continual will of Jesus that all things continue as they are (Heb 11:3; 2Pe 3:10; Re 4:11)
- ◆ The "things which are seen were not made of the things were are visible" (Heb. 11:3).

Col 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

- ◆ Christ as head of the church, His body: 1Co 11:3; Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18,24
- ◆ Church as the body of Christ: 1Co 12:27; Eph 1:22-23; 3:6; Col 1:18
- ◆ Firstborn from the dead: Ac 26:23; 1Co 15:20; 1Co 15:23

¹² Ge 1:1; Ge 1:2; Isa 42:5; Col 1:16