

**Supplemental Notes:**

*The Epistle  
to  
the Colossians*

*compiled  
by  
Chuck Missler*

## Acknowledgments

These notes have been assembled from speaking notes and related materials which had been compiled from a number of classic and contemporary commentaries and other sources detailed in the bibliography, as well as other articles and publications of Koinonia House. While we have attempted to include relevant endnotes and other references, we apologize for any errors or oversights.

The complete recordings of the sessions, as well as supporting diagrams, maps, etc., are also available in various audiovisual formats from the publisher.

## Audio Listing

### Colossians Introduction

Introduction. Background. The Occasion of the Epistle. Epaphras.

### Colossians 1:1-14

Doctrine: Christ's Preeminence Declared in the Gospel Message and Redemption.

### Colossians 1:15-29

All Things Held by Him. He is the Beginning. Fullness.

### Colossians 2:1-17

Danger: Christ's Preeminence Defended. The Sufficiency of Christ. Steadfast in the Faith.

### Colossians 2:18-23

Kosher Laws. Sunday vs. Sabbath. Astrology.

### Colossians 3:1-17

Duty: Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated. Christ in Heaven. Practical Holiness. Our Inheritance. Social Sins.

### Colossians 3:18-25

Practical Holiness in Relation to Others. One Body.

### Colossians 4

The Power of Speech. Prayer. Closing Salutations.

# The Epistle to the Colossians Session 1

## Introduction

Paul's Epistle to the Colossians has several unique and compelling characteristics. It is regarded as including the most elevated view to be found in the Bible, and it also focuses on the most relevant insights and counsel for Believers in our present day.

The following quote is an excerpt from the Foreword to Nan's and my book, *The Kingdom, Power, and Glory*, by William P. Welty, Ph.D., Executive Director of the ISV Foundation:

*John must have been puzzled. Exiled to the lonely island of Patmos, he has just begun to receive what will become known as the most elevated vision of things to come given to any person in the history of Planet Earth.*

*The vision begins with a resurrected, immortal Jesus of Nazareth dictating seven letters for delivery to the pastors of seven churches that existed during the latter half of the first century. With eyes of flames like fire and feet like bronze that glows in a furnace, the God-man—who once was dead and now is alive forevermore—is ill!*

*Bluntly speaking, the immortal Man is about ready to vomit. How can it be that an immortal being can apparently become so unwell as to puke? Call the dictated letter eschatological symbolism if you will. Label it literary allegory. Or classify it as apocalyptic literature influenced by Jewish visions of the end of the world from the time between the Old and New Testaments. You can even think of the story as mere literary license.*

*It really doesn't matter what name we use to describe the event, because the reality of the letter to the church of Laodicea is that Jesus is sick of lukewarm Christianity. He is about to vomit, writes the Apostle John in Revelation 3:14-17:*

*To the messenger of the church in Laodicea, write: "The Amen, the witness who is faithful and true, the originator of God's creation, says this: 'I know your actions, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. Since you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am going to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything.' Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."*

Revelation 3:14-17  
ISV v2.0

*Bluntly speaking, Jesus of Nazareth is sick of lukewarm, useless Christian lifestyles. But he doesn't leave the Laodicean pastor without a solution to the problem:*

*Therefore, I advise you to buy from me gold purified in fire so you may be rich, white clothes to wear so your shameful nakedness won't show, and ointment to put on your eyes so you may see. I correct and discipline those whom I love, so be serious and repent! Look! I am standing at the door and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place to sit with me on my throne, just as I have conquered and have sat down with my Father on his throne. 'Let everyone listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

Revelation 3:18-22  
ISV v2.0

*As I write the words of this Foreword on a rainy, blustery wintery day in early 2009 here in Southern California, the United States of America and the world in which it exists is entering the most terrifying time in history. The economies of virtually every nation on earth are collapsing.*

*Unwise American politicians are creating dollars out of thin air, voting into existence more than a trillion dollars merely by agreeing to loan them to businesses that would otherwise have been reorganized through the discipline of the bankruptcy courts and free enterprise business realities.*

*Meanwhile, the whole Western world that only six months ago was saying, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything" is now about to find out from personal experience what it will mean to hear the 3<sup>rd</sup> horseman of the Apocalypse cry out, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, or three quarts of barley for a denarius." (Rev 6:6, ISV).*

*All of this trouble comes on the world from a God who loves us and who corrects and disciplines those whom He loves. And that's why this message is going to be your road map through the times of trouble that are about refine God's children and judge all of God's enemies.*

*The counsel contained in this remarkable volume will explain what the life of faith is intended by its Author to lead to, which is divinely ordered preparation for the rulership in the coming Kingdom. May these readers learn to be firmly entrenched "overcomers" who have no need of exhortation. May we not be the cowardly ones who bury their talents in the ground, wrongly convinced that the God whom we serve reaps where he doesn't sow.*

*Meanwhile, the ancient words of a centuries-old poem haunt me. They're carved in a gothic, medieval alphabet on a towering, ornate cathedral door right in the heart of a small town in Germany. Translated into modern English, the words take the form of a frightening poem. Here is what the poem says:*

*You call me eternal, then do not seek me.  
You call me fair, then do not love me.*

*You call me gracious, then do not trust me.  
 You call me just, then do not fear me.  
 You call me life, then do not choose me.  
 You call me light, then do not see me.  
 You call me Lord, then do not respect me.  
 You call me Master; then do not obey me.  
 You call me merciful, then do not thank me.*

*You call me mighty, then do not honor me.  
 You call me noble, then do not serve me.  
 You call me rich, then do not ask me.  
 You call me Savior, then do not praise me.  
 You call me shepherd, then do not follow me.  
 You call me Way, then do not walk with me.  
 You call me wise, then do not heed me.  
 You call me Son of God, then do not worship me.  
 When I condemn you, then do not blame me.*

*May we all allow God to carry us on to maturity and fitness for ruling as kings and queens in the coming Kingdom as we rightly respond to the circumstances and adversities of this present life, which are not worthy to be compared to the glories which will one day be revealed in us.*

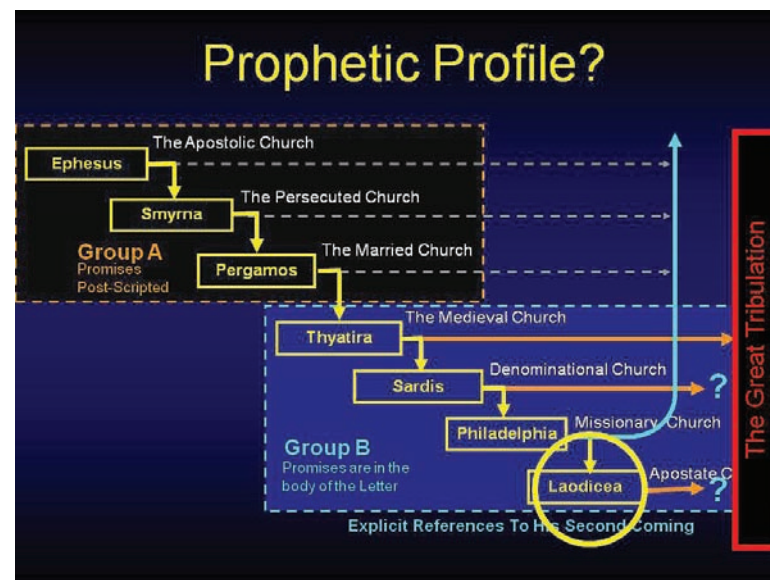
William P. Welty, Ph.D.  
 Executive Director, The ISV Foundation  
 Winter, 2009

## The Seven Churches - "The Things that Are" (Rev 2-3)

Why *these* seven? Why not Jerusalem? Antioch? Rome? Lystra? Iconium? Et al. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

### Levels of Application:

- 1) **Local:** These are actual churches. Researched archaeologically by Sir Wm. Ramsey...
- 2) **Admonitory:** "...churches": *all* of them. Each message applies to each, to some extent.
- 3) **Homiletic:** "He that hath an ear..." Applies to each of us.
- 4) **Prophetic.** In their *particular order*, they lay out the history of the church. [They fill the gap implied in Daniel 9:26, and between Rev 12:5 and 6, etc.]



## Paul's Epistles

Paul wrote 13 letters. Three of them are "First & Seconds," leaving 10 addressees, three of which are pastors—Paul wrote to Seven Churches.

Seven Churches	
Jesus:	Paul:
• Ephesus	• Ephesus
• Smyrna	• Philippians
• Pergamos	• Corinthians
• Thyatira	• Galatians
• Sardis	• Romans
• Philadelphia	• Thessalonians
• Laodicea	• Colossians

## Introduction to Colossians

Do heavenly bodies have any influence over our lives? (Millions of people consult their horoscopes every day. In the U.S., 1220 of the 1750 newspapers carry astrological data.) Is there any relationship between diet and spiritual living? Does God speak to us immediately, in our minds, or only through His Word? Do the Eastern religions have anything to offer the evangelical Christian?

These very contemporary questions are the very issues Paul dealt with in his magnificent epistle to the Colossians. Many Bible scholars have concluded that Colossians is the most profound letter Paul ever wrote. [Unless we depend upon the *Spirit of God* to teach us, we will miss the truths God wants us to learn.]

## The Occasion

The Book of Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul about A.D. 60-62, while he was imprisoned in Rome. One purpose was to correct the heresy that had sprung up in the Asian city of Colossae.

Colosse was one of three cities in the Lycus Valley, about 100 miles east of Ephesus (capital) in Asia Minor. Its name is possibly derived from *Colossus*, a large statue. Colosse is about 12 miles from Hierapolis and Laodicea, the other two cities of the valley (Col 4:13, 16).

The area was a meeting point of East and West; an important trade route passed through there. It was fertile ground for religious speculations and heresies.

Several references in Colossians indicate that Paul had not visited the city (Col 1:7; 2:1; 4:12). The church there was an outgrowth of the three years Paul spent in Ephesus (Acts 19; 20:17-38). So effective was the witness of the church at Ephesus that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus...” (Acts 19:10).

Specifically, two men, Epaphras and Philemon (Phile 19), who were in Ephesus, seem to have been primarily responsible as founders (Col 1:7). Epaphras apparently carried the thrilling news of the Gospel to his family back home in Colossae (Cf. Mark 5:19). Philemon had a church meeting in his home (Phile 2). It is likely that Apphia and Archippus were respectively the wife and son of Philemon, and Archippus was the pastor of the church (Col 4:17).

The church seems to have been predominantly Gentile (Col 1:25-29; 3:5-9) and about five years old when Paul wrote this letter, about 60 A.D.

Paul was, at that time, a prisoner in Rome (Acts 21:17-28:31). He met a runaway slave named Onesimus who belonged to Philemon, one of the leaders of the church at Colossae. Paul led him to Christ, and then wrote Philemon, asking his friend to forgive Onesimus and receive him back as a brother in Christ.

At the same time, Epaphras showed up in Rome because he needed Paul's help. In his status report, some new doctrines were being taught in Colossae and were invading the church and creating problems.

The Epistle itself gives it as being due to the arrival of Epaphras from Colossae (Col 1:7-9; 4:12f). He is probably one of Paul's converts while in Ephesus who on behalf of Paul (Col 1:7) evangelized the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea) where Paul had never been himself (Col 2:1; 4:13-16).

Since Paul's departure for Rome, the “grievous wolves” whom he foresaw in Miletus (Acts 20:29f) had descended upon these churches and were playing havoc with many and leading them astray, much as new cults today mislead the unwary.

Epaphras remained with Paul in Rome (Col 4:12-13). Onesimus and Tychicus carried Paul's epistles to their destinations: Ephesus (Eph 6:21), Colossians (Col 4:7-9) and Philemon. Epaphras was called Paul's “fellow-prisoner,” a title also given to Aristarchus (Col 4:10; Phile 23). It has been suggested that Epaphras *willingly* remained with Paul to assist him. They were Paul's willing companions, sacrificing their own comfort to assist and comfort him.

The circumstance which prompted the writing of Colossians seemed to be the special heresies that arose there. This false teaching seemed to be the beginning of what later (in the second century) developed into:

**Gnosticism** [From *gnosis*, “to know”] They declared themselves “in the know” when it came to the deep things of God; they felt they were the “spiritual aristocracy” in the church. A pretension to knowledge. These pretensions were similar to the Theosophists of today, and the so-called New Agers.

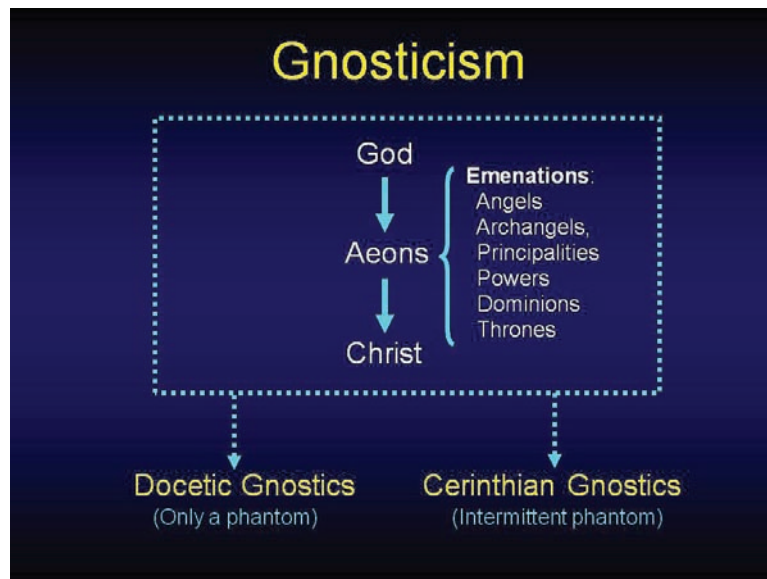
## Colossians: Christ Preeminent

This epistle is a response to the Gnostics (Greek: *Gnosis* = knowledge). A mixture of mysticism, Eastern speculations and Jewish legalism. Alexandria was a major headquarters.

### Gnosticism

- Eastern speculations + mysticism:
  - Man-made traditions and philosophy (Col 2:8);
  - Matter was evil (Col 1:16);
  - Astrology: angelic beings associated with heavenly bodies (Col 2:10,15);
- Plus, a form of Jewish legalism:
  - Good and evil were derived from rules (Col 2:21);
  - Circumcision (Col 2:11);
  - OT dietary laws (Col 2:14-17)

These heresies promised people “spiritual perfection” if they entered into the teachings and ceremonies prescribed. This “depth” and “full knowledge” could only be enjoyed by those initiated, etc. These were all based on man-made traditions and philosophy, not on divine Truth (Col 2:8).



The gnostics came to the false conclusion that matter was evil; that a powerful spirit world used material things to attack mankind. They held to a form of astrology, believing that angelic beings associated with heavenly bodies influenced affairs on earth (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15). Added to these Eastern speculations was a form of Jewish legalism: the idea that the rite of circumcision was helpful in spiritual development (Col 2:11); and the OT dietary laws were also helpful in attaining spiritual perfection (Col 2:14-17). Good and evil were derived from rules and regulations (Col 2:21).

### Docetic Gnostics

The Docetic (from *δοκεω*, “to seem”) Gnostics held that Jesus did not have a real human body, but only a phantom body. He was, in fact, an aeon and had no real humanity.

### Cerinthian Gnostics

The Cerinthian (followers of Cerinthus) Gnostics admitted the humanity of the man Jesus, but claimed that the Christ was an aeon that came on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove and left him on the Cross so that only the man Jesus died.

Some thought that Jesus was “just a man”—similar to Christian Science and other phases of “New Thought.” Paul deals with this heresy directly. [Others held that Jesus was only spiritual, not material; John also deals with these in his three epistles.]

At once this heresy sharpened the issue concerning the Person of Christ already set forth in Philippians 2:5-11. Paul met the issue squarely and powerfully portrayed his full-length portrait of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Son of Man (both deity and humanity) in opposition to both types of Gnostics. So then Colossians seems written expressly for our own day when so many are trying to rob Jesus Christ of his deity.

Huxley coined the term “*agnostic*” = “without knowledge”; (Latin = *ignoramus*)! Paul: *Epignosis*, “superknowledge”! (Col 1:9).

These errors are important to understand since these attacks on the deity of Christ are just as prevalent today as then. Each cult group involves a strategy to misrepresent some aspect of revealed truth in regards to Christ and His redemptive work.

These views undermined the very foundations of the Christian faith, and attacked the person and work of Jesus Christ. To them, He was but one of God's many "emanations" and not the very Son of God, come in the flesh. The Incarnation means "God *with us*" (Mt 1:23), but these false teachers claimed that God was keeping His distance from us! When we trust the Son of God, there is no need for any intermediary beings between us and heaven!

In His work on the cross, Jesus Christ settled the sin question (Col 1:20) and completely defeated all Satanic forces (Col 2:15). He put an end to the legal demands of the law (Col 2:14-17). He alone is the Preeminent One and completely sufficient (Col 1:18; 3:11).

Gnosticism contained several characteristics:

- It was Jewish, stressing the need for observing Old Testament laws and ceremonies;
- It was philosophical, laying emphasis on some special or deeper knowledge (gnosis);
- It involved the worship of angels as mediators to God (2:18);
- It was exclusive, stressing the special privilege and "perfection" of those select few who belonged to this philosophical elite.

This seminal Gnosticism denied the deity of Christ, thus calling forth one of the greatest declarations of Christ's deity found anywhere in Scripture (Col 1:15-16; 2:9).

The gnostics came to the false conclusion that matter was evil; that a powerful spirit world used material things to attack mankind. They held to a form of astrology, believing that angelic beings associated with heavenly bodies influenced affairs on earth (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15).

Added to these Eastern speculations was a form of Jewish legalism: the idea that the rite of circumcision was helpful in spiritual development (Col 2:11) and the OT dietary laws were also helpful in attaining spiritual perfection (Col 2:14-17). Good and evil were derived from rules and regulations (Col 2:21).

## Asceticism

Matter is not evil, neither is the human body. Our fallen human nature wants to control the body and use it for sin; but the body itself is not evil, or Jesus would never have come to earth in a human body. Nor would He

have enjoyed the everyday blessings such as attending wedding feasts or dinners. Diets and disciplines may be good for one's health, but they have no power to develop true spirituality (Col 2:10-23).

## The Age of Syncretism

These false teachings were a combination of many things: Jewish legalism, Oriental philosophies, pagan astrology, mysticism, asceticism, with a touch of Christianity. Here was "something for everybody"—an attempt to harmonize and unite many different schools of thought into a composite religion. These teachers claimed that they were *not* denying the Christian faith, but only lifting it to a "higher level." Do we have any of these heresies today? Indeed, and they are ever more dangerous!

## Nothing "New" in the "New Age"!

Every modern erroneous cult is some ancient Satanic heresy revived. Every "new" heresy has been anticipated by the Holy Spirit. Satan has nothing new to offer. We live in a day when religious toleration is interpreted to mean "one religion is as good as another." Many people try to take the best from various religions and fabricate their own. To them Christ is only one of several great religious teachers, with no more authority than they have. He may be prominent, but certainly not *preeminent*.

When we make Jesus Christ and the Bible only a *part* of a total religious system or philosophy, we cease to give Him preeminence. When we strive for "spiritual perfection" or "fullness" by means of formulas, disciplines, or rituals, we go backward rather than forward.

We must beware of mixing our Christian faith with such alluring things as yoga, transcendental meditation, Oriental mysticism, and the like. We must also beware of the "deeper life" teachers who offer a system for victory and fullness that bypasses devotion to Jesus Christ. In all things, He must have preeminence!

No one familiar with the teaching of Colossians will ever be misled by the specious sophistries of the various occult systems now being foisted upon a credulous public, such as Theosophy, or Spiritualism; or be deluded by the revived Gnostic religions of Eddyism, Unity School of Christianity, or other branches of misnamed New Thought or New Age.

## Overview

With this background, we can now review Paul's Letter to the Colossians. This was written about the same time as the Letter to the Ephesians; Ephesians is on the church, the *Body* of Christ; Colossians is on the Christ, the *Head* of the Body.

- Ephesians: Prophet
- Hebrews: Priest
- Colossians: King

Paul uses the vocabulary of the false teachers, but with their true meaning. We find such words as *fullness*, *perfect*, *complete*, *wisdom*, etc. Over 30X the word *all* is used.

He spoke much about angels and spirit powers. There is no need for us to worry about angelic mediators or spiritual emanations. God has sent His Son to die for us! Every person who believes on Jesus Christ is saved and is a part of His body, the church, of which He is the Head (Col 1:18). Furthermore, nothing need be added to our relationship with Him—each believer is complete in Him. He is totally sufficient.

Paul did not begin by attacking the false teacher or their doctrines. He began by exalting Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence in five areas:

- 1) The Gospel message,
- 2) Redemption,
- 3) Creation,
- 4) The Church, and
- 5) Paul's own ministry.

In Chapter 2, he exposed the false origin of their teachings and how they contradicted everything Paul had taught about Jesus Christ. The believer who masters this chapter is not likely to be led astray by some alluring and enticing "new and improved" brand of Christianity.

The greatest antidote to false teaching is a *godly life*! Paul concludes, in Chapters 3 & 4, with some important exhortations. Wrong doctrine always leads to wrong living. What we believe determines how we behave.

- Chapter 1: Christ's Preeminence **Declared**.
- Chapter 2: Christ's Preeminence **Defended**.
- Chapter 3 & 4: Christ's Preeminence **Demonstrated**.

Christ's Preeminence		
<b>DOCTRINE: CHRIST'S PREMINENCE DECLARED</b> Chapter 1		
A.	In the Gospel message	1:1-12
B.	In redemption	1:13-14
C.	In Creation	1:15-17
D.	In the church	1:18-29
<b>DANGER: CHRIST'S PREMINENCE DEFENDED</b> Chapter 2		
A.	Beware of empty philosophies	2:1-10
B.	Beware of religious legalism	2:11-17
C.	Beware of man-made disciplines	2:18-23
<b>DUTY: CHRIST'S PREMINENCE DEMONSTRATED</b> Chapters 3-4		
A.	In personal purity	3:1-11
B.	In Christian fellowship	3:12-17
C.	In the home	3:18-21
D.	In daily work	3:22-4:1
E.	In Christian witness	4:2-6
F.	In Christian service	4:7-18

## Christology

- The visible form of the invisible God;
- The Prior-head of all creation;
- In Him the universe was created;
- He is before the universe;
- In Him the universe coheres;
- The Head of the Body: the Church;
- The Firstborn from among the dead.

Above the Angels—*all* of them "that in all things He might have the preeminence."

## Christ the Creator

*For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him are all things held together.*

Colossians 1:16-17

## Christ the Redeemer

*And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.*

*For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

Colossians 1:18-20

## Astrology, Angels, and Heavenly Bodies

Paul denounced these influences with vigor. On the cross, Jesus won complete victory over all Satanic powers (Col 2:15). Christians do not need to turn to the “rudiments” [“elemental beings”]—referring to the beings believed to be controlling the heavenly bodies, which in turn controlled events on the earth. Horoscopes and superstitions deny the person and work of Christ.

## The Word for Today

Do the heavenly bodies have any influence over our lives? In the United States, there are about 1,750 daily newspapers, and 1,220 of them carry astrological data! Is there any relationship between diet and spiritual living? Does God speak to us immediately, in our minds, or only through His Word, the Bible? Do the Eastern religions have something to offer the evangelical Christian? These very contemporary questions are the very issues Paul dealt with in his magnificent epistle to the Colossians.

Many Bible scholars have concluded that Colossians is the most profound letter Paul ever wrote. [Unless we depend upon the *Spirit of God* to teach us, we will miss the truths God wants us to learn.]

Mysticism, legalism, Eastern religions, asceticism, and man-made philosophies are secretly creeping into churches. They are not denying Christ, but they are dethroning Him and robbing Him of His rightful place of preeminence.

### DOCTRINE: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED Chapter 1

- |    |                       |         |
|----|-----------------------|---------|
| A. | In the Gospel message | 1:1–12  |
| B. | In redemption         | 1:13–14 |
| C. | In Creation           | 1:15–17 |
| D. | In the church         | 1:18–29 |

### DANGER: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED Chapter 2

- |    |                                |         |
|----|--------------------------------|---------|
| A. | Beware of empty philosophies   | 2:1–10  |
| B. | Beware of religious legalism   | 2:11–17 |
| C. | Beware of man-made disciplines | 2:18–23 |

### DUTY: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED Ch. 3–4

- |    |                         |          |
|----|-------------------------|----------|
| A. | In personal purity      | 3:1–11   |
| B. | In Christian fellowship | 3:12–17  |
| C. | In the home             | 3:18–21  |
| D. | In daily work           | 3:22–4:1 |
| E. | In Christian witness    | 4:2–6    |
| F. | In Christian service    | 4:7–18   |

## Next Session

Study Colossians 1:1-14. Review your notes on the basics: Why is there evil in this world if creation was made by a holy God? Can you lose your salvation?

## The Epistle to the Colossians Session 2 Chapter 1:1-14

### Habakkuk 2:4

“The Just Shall Live by Faith”: This verse led to a Trilogy of epistles in the New Testament:

The Just...	Romans	Rom 1:17
...Shall live...	Galatians	Gal 3:11
...By Faith!	Hebrews	Heb 10:39

This implies that Paul wrote *all three!* Each use Hab 2:4 as a cornerstone, which became the battle cry of the Reformation which, in turn, changed the history of the world!

### Colossians 1

#### DOCTRINE: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED Chapter 1

- |           |                              |                |
|-----------|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>A.</b> | <b>In the Gospel message</b> | <b>1:1–12</b>  |
| <b>B.</b> | <b>In redemption</b>         | <b>1:13–14</b> |
| C.        | In Creation                  | 1:15–17        |
| D.        | In the church                | 1:18–29        |

[1] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

“Paul”: 13 NT epistles begin with this name (a 14<sup>th</sup> we believe was also by Paul...). Paul was also authenticated by Peter (2 Pet 3:15,16). As in the Philippian letter, Paul associated Timothy with him in the salutation.

“...an apostle”: Its NT meaning probably is to be derived from the Hebrew word *shalah*, “to send.” The substantive *shaliah*, a virtual equivalent of the NT word “apostle,” is not uncommon in rabbinical writings. It was primarily a legal term, signifying authorized representation. As in the modern law of agency, the one sent was held to be equivalent to the sender himself. To dishonor the king’s ambassador was to dishonor the king (2 Sam 10; cf. 1 Sam 25:5-10, 39-42).

“...an apostle of Jesus Christ”: Although the term, **apostle of Jesus Christ**, has other secondary usages (Phil 2:25; 2 Cor 8:23), it appears to apply primarily to those directly commissioned as apostles by the risen Lord (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8-10). Thus Paul exercised the function of an apostle *by the will of God*.

## Timothy

Timothy was with Paul here as he often was (cf. 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Timothy had a Gentile father (Acts 16:1), but his mother and grandmother were godly Jewesses (2 Tim 1:5) from whom he had learned the Old Testament Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim 3:15). Paul picked up Timothy on his second missionary journey at Lystra where the “brothers...spoke well of him” (Acts 16:2). Paul spent much time discipling Timothy and wrote two of his last letters to him.

- 2] To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“...saints and faithful brethren...”: Saints *vs.* faithful brethren? Are they different? Saint: Divine call: you must be born into it... Faithful brethren: our response to His call. (Which are *you*? cf. Jn 8:31, 32....)

- 3] We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

“...praying always for you”: People he probably had never met...For Paul to learn of others coming to the Lord it invariably meant that his prayer burden was *increased!*

## The Prayers of Paul

They offer valuable lessons for all concerning the meaning of Christian prayer. When compared with the Lord’s Prayer, they provide an index to the way Christ’s instruction, “after this manner pray ye” (Mt 6:9) was applied in the early church. After the initial thanksgiving, Paul begins a petition that merges into thanksgiving as the prayer moves into a paean of praise to the exalted Christ.

- 4] Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

“...your faith in Christ Jesus”: Faith in a *person*, not a “system,” or doctrine, or philosophy. Not faith in “faith” (as an abstract)! Faith is totally relying on *something*. What is *your* faith in?

- 5] For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

“For the hope”: Which “hope”? *The Second Coming!* No one fully appreciates the Gospel that leaves out this “blessed hope.”

“...laid up”: Our hope is “laid up”—reserved, set aside, for us. Tense of the verb indicates that this hope has *once and for all* been reserved so that nothing can take it from us. We, too, are being “guarded” for glory (1 Pet 1:1-5).

“...before”: Before the false teachers were on the scene. [False teachers do not take their message to all the world; they go where the Gospel has already gone and try to lead believers astray. They have no good news for lost sinners.]

Note: faith, love, and hope intimately linked...Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-8); Truth (Jn 17:17; 14:6). Satan is the liar (Jn 8:44).

## Virtue Trilogy

This trilogy of virtue—faith, love, and hope—is a favorite of Paul’s (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3) and Peter’s (1 Pet 1:3, 5, 22). Faith is the soul looking *upward* to God; Love looks *outward* to others; Hope looks *forward* to the future.

Faith rests on the *past* work of Christ; Love works in the *present*; and Hope anticipates the *future*.

Even though “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6) and “hope does not disappoint us” (Rom 5:5), nevertheless, “the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13).

## Paradigm of Graces

- Faith **Past**
  - Content of historical facts;
- Love **Present**
  - The emblem of our calling;
  - Do you pray for the leaders with which you may not agree?
  - Cf. Paul’s climactic order in 1 Corinthians!
- Hope **Future**

- 6] Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

One could use this verse to establish that, even in Paul’s day, the Gospel had been carried to the ends of the earth (Cf. v.23). If you were to give a gift that would be suitable for the whole world, what would you give? Books? Food? Clothing? Money? **John 3:16!**

## John Selden

John Selden (1584-1654), leading historian and legal authority in England and regarded for his learning (he had a personal library of over 8,000 volumes); as he was dying, said to Archbishop Ussher:

*“I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts on various subjects. But at present, I cannot recollect any passage out of all my books and papers whereon I can rest my soul, save this from the sacred Scriptures: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” (Titus 2:11)*

- 7] As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

“Epaphras”: Epaphras’ outstanding characteristic was that of fervency in prayer (Col 4:12). He was in Rome with Paul, who called him “my fellow prisoner” (Phile 23). “Epaphras” is a shortening of “Epaphroditus,” referred to in Phil 2:25 and 4:18. These could be the same person or different persons since both names were common.

“...learned of”: Discipled by (Acts 19:10; Mt 28:19-20). “Disciple”: 260X in Gospels and Acts “To learn as a disciple”: 25X in NT. Learning *by living*. That is what the fellowship of the local church is all about.

- 8] Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17). We learn to walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7) and work by faith (1 Thess 1:3). Faith gives power to prayer (Lk 17:5-6). Faith is our shield against Satan’s darts (Eph 6:16).

Love is the evidence of salvation. Doctrinal correctness will never atone for lack of love (Cf. Rev 2: 1-11). [This is the only verse in this epistle that mentions the Holy Spirit explicitly and it is in connection with love (Jn 16:13). In contrast with Ephesians...]

## Prayer Life

It is unlikely that any other writer has given us as helpful an insight for our own prayer life as is contained in these following verses...

- vv. 9-11 sets forth certain blessings for which Paul prays.
- vv.12-14 lists those for which he gives thanks. They each are different...some are nonforfeitable; some are blessings for which need to pray daily...

- 9] For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

“knowledge” = ἐπίγνωσις *epignosis*, “superknowledge,” in contrast to the Gnostics’ “superior knowledge” boasted of.

*Epignōsis* is a *Koiné* word for additional (*epi*) or full knowledge. The word is the keynote of Paul’s reply to the conceit of Gnosticism. The cure for these intellectual upstarts is not ignorance, not obscurantism, but more knowledge of the will of God.

“...wisdom”: (σοφία *sophia*; used six times in Col. 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5); that is, practical know-how which comes from God (James 1:5; 3:15).

“...spiritual understanding”: (σύνεσις *sunesis* ; also used in Col. 2:2), which speaks of clear analysis and decision-making in applying this knowledge to various problems.

## Wisdom

By contrast, the false teachers offered only “an appearance of wisdom” (*sophia*; Col 2:23), which captivated their minds and lives in legalistic regulations. But true spiritual wisdom is both stabilizing and liberating (Eph 4:14). Truth is not learned through the intellect alone.

Paul emphasizes neither an abstract intellectualism nor an occult experience of the “powers,” but a thorough knowledge (*epignōsis*) of God’s will in accordance with wisdom (*sophia*; I Cor 1:24-30) and perception.

Although in using these terms the apostle may have been influenced by the vocabulary of his opponents, he turns the meaning of the words against the false teachers.

- 10] That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- Walk worthy of our vocation. Eph 4:1
- Walk worthy of the gospel. Phil 1:27
- Walk worthy of God. 1 Thess 2:12

*Faith is understanding’s step, and understanding is faith’s reward.*

—Augustine

*The end of all knowledge is conduct.*

—Lightfoot

“...pleasing”: This word is not found in any other passage in the NT; Greek usage = “a preference of the will of others before our own.” [G. Thomas].

“...every good work”: *Everything* in a believer’s life is sacred. There is nothing “secular.”

- 11] Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

The same spiritual dynamic that raised Christ from the dead operates in us: the Holy Spirit. (Wow!) Patience, not with stoical tolerance, but with joyfulness (James 1:2). “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh 8:10).

## Patience

Endurance and patience are often associated (cf. 2 Cor 6:4, 6; 2 Tim 3:10; James 5:10-11). **Endurance** (ὑπομένω *hupomeno*, lit., a “remaining

under”) implies not easily succumbing under suffering; and **Patience** (μακροθυμία *makrothumia*, lit., “long temper”; Col. 3:12) means self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate. A lack of endurance often results in despondency or losing heart, whereas a lack of patience often leads to wrath or revenge (Prov 15:18; 16:32).

At work in the Christian is no less than the power of Almighty God himself, not at present to exalt, but to give **patience**, fortitude, and endurance. The Stoic philosophers also enjoined these virtues but, like the traditional poker-faced Indian, coupled them with an attitude of complete detachment. Paul means hopeful waiting and suffering with **joyfulness**. This is the Christian distinctive! Joy not rooted in the soil of suffering is shallow. [Source: (C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*).]

The following we already have—we simply express thanksgiving. (Some would argue that to pray for these is to dishonor God by casting doubt upon His Word.)

- 12] Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

2 Pet 1:10, 11: Here is the beginning of the list of things for which Paul is thankful. All our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving.

“...inheritance”: “Of the lot,” “for a share of the lot.” An old word. First a pebble or piece of wood used in casting lots (Acts 1:26), then the allotted portion or inheritance, as here (Acts 8:21; cf. Heb 3:7–4:11). We will review inheritance in Col 3:24.

- 13] Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

“hath translated us”: This word was used to describe the deportation of a population from one country into another. History records the fact that Antiochus the Great transported at least 2,000 Jews from Babylonia to Colossae. [Sources: J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, Pfeiffer, Charles F.; Harrison, Everett Falconer: *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1962; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*: Broadman Press, 1932.]

“...power of darkness...”: The kingdom of light, vs. kingdom of darkness. Paul here rules out the whole system of aeons and angels that

the Gnostics placed above Christ. It is Christ's Kingdom in which he is King. He has moral and spiritual sovereignty (cf. the Kingdom that will be established).

**Light** and **darkness** are common theological terms used in many religions, and found most recently in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here Paul seems to be contrasting the realm or sphere of the new age—**light**, with that of the present age, the evil sphere or authority (*exousia*) of **darkness**. Elsewhere this evil sphere is equated with the power of Satan (Col 2:15; Lk 22:53; Acts 26:18; Eph 2:2).

It is interesting that the Hebrew of *erev* and *boker* (“evening” and “morning”) in Genesis profiles each step of the Creation going from darkness to light; the Gentiles parallel is to reckon their days from “midnight” to “midnight”...

- 14] In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

“...forgiveness of sins”: And, because we have been forgiven, we can forgive others (Col 3:13). The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant makes it clear that an unforgiving spirit *always leads to bondage* (Mt 18:21-35).

These verses, which posit a past deliverance and transference into Christ's Kingdom and a redemption which Christians **have** as a present possession; and that these are the hallmarks of a *realized* eschatology: that the actual new age arrived with Christ's resurrection *and that Christians enter it at conversion*.

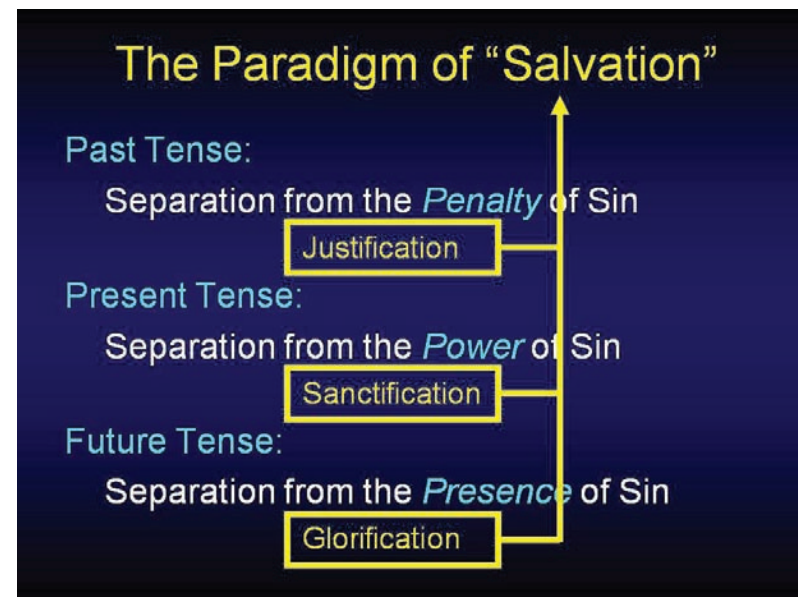
## Foundational Issues: Paradigm of Salvation

“I have been saved; I am being saved; and I will be saved.”

—Earl D. Radmacher

- Justification (Past tense): The gift from God of everlasting life received by faith alone in Christ alone.
- Sanctification (Present tense): A progressive work that involves the faith and the works of the believer.
- Glorification (Future tense): A result of the previous aspects.
- Justification is *for* us; Sanctification is *in* us.
- Justification *declares* the sinner righteous; Sanctification *makes* the sinner righteous.

- Justification removes the *guilt* and *penalty* of sin; Sanctification removes the *growth* and the *power* of sin.



## Foundational Issues: Eternal Security

*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

John 6:37-39

*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

John 10:28,29

I have searched the original texts; I cannot find, “Oops!”

## Foundational Issues: The Origin of Evil

*Why is there evil in this world if creation was made by a holy God?* These philosophers came to the false conclusion that all matter was evil. Their next false conclusion was that a holy God could not come

into contact with evil matter, so there had to be a series of “emanations” from God to His creation. They believed in a powerful spirit world that used material things to attack mankind. They also held to a form of astrology, believing that angelic beings ruled heavenly bodies and influenced affairs on earth (cf. Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15).

Since to them matter was evil, they had to find some way to control their own human natures in this pursuit of perfection. Two different practices resulted. One school of thought held that the only way to conquer evil matter was by means of rigid discipline and asceticism (Col 2:23).

The other view taught that it was permissible to engage in all kinds of sin, since matter was evil anyway! It appears that the first opinion was the predominant one in Colossae. [Source: Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Col 1:5.]

Matter is not evil, and the human body is not evil. Each person is born with a fallen human nature that wants to control the body and use it for sin; but the body itself is not evil. If that were the case, Jesus Christ would never have come to earth in a human body. Nor would He have enjoyed the everyday blessings of life as He ministered on earth, such as attending wedding feasts and accepting invitations to dinner.

Diets and disciplines can be good for one’s health, but they have no power to develop true spirituality (Col 2:20–23).

## Gnosticism

Spiritual perfection by mixtures of legalism; mysticism; special rites and ceremonies; eastern philosophic thought; and diet-based commitments—all false concepts deriving from their views of the origin of evil.

These heretics attacked the person and work of Jesus Christ. To them, He was merely one of God’s many “emanations” and not the very Son of God, come in the flesh. The Incarnation means God *with us* (Mt 1:23), but these false teachers claimed that God was keeping His distance from us! When we trust the Son of God, there is no need for intermediary beings between us and heaven!

Christian believers must beware of mixing their Christian faith with such alluring things as yoga, transcendental meditation, Oriental mysticism, and the like.

We must also beware of “deeper life” teachers who offer a system for victory and fullness that bypasses devotion to Jesus Christ. In all things, He must have the preeminence!

## The Ultimate Remedy

In His work on the cross, Jesus Christ settled the sin question (Col 1:20) and completely defeated all Satanic forces (Col 2:15). He put an end to the legal demands of the Law (Col 2:14–17). Jesus Christ alone is the Preeminent One! (Col 1:18; 3:11). All that the believer needs is Jesus!

## Outline of Colossians

### DOCTRINE: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED Chapter 1

- |    |                       |         |
|----|-----------------------|---------|
| A. | In the Gospel message | 1:1–12  |
| B. | In redemption         | 1:13–14 |
| C. | In Creation           | 1:15–17 |
| D. | In the church         | 1:18–29 |

### DANGER: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED Chapter 2

- |    |                                |         |
|----|--------------------------------|---------|
| A. | Beware of empty philosophies   | 2:1–10  |
| B. | Beware of religious legalism   | 2:11–17 |
| C. | Beware of man-made disciplines | 2:18–23 |

### DUTY: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED Ch. 3–4

- |    |                         |          |
|----|-------------------------|----------|
| A. | In personal purity      | 3:1–11   |
| B. | In Christian fellowship | 3:12–17  |
| C. | In the home             | 3:18–21  |
| D. | In daily work           | 3:22–4:1 |
| E. | In Christian witness    | 4:2–6    |
| F. | In Christian service    | 4:7–18   |

## Next Session

Read Colossians 1:15-29. What are the boundaries of our physical reality? What are their implications? Why is this section regarded as “the most elevated view” in the New Testament?

# The Epistle to the Colossians Session 3

## Chapter 1:15-29

### Review: Gnosticism

Gnosticism contained several characteristics: It was Jewish, stressing the need for observing Old Testament laws and ceremonies. It was philosophical, laying emphasis on some special or deeper knowledge (*gnosis*). It involved the worship of angels as mediators to God (Col 2:18).

It was exclusive, stressing the special privilege and “perfection” of those select few who belonged to their philosophical elite. Gnosticism denied the deity of Christ, thus calling forth one of the greatest declarations of Christ’s deity found anywhere in Scripture (Col 1:15-16; 2:9).

Added to these Eastern speculations was a form of Jewish legalism: the idea that the rite of circumcision was helpful in spiritual development (Col 2:11) and the OT dietary laws were also helpful in attaining spiritual perfection (Col 2:14-17). Good and evil were derived from rules and regulations (Col 2:21). These views undermined the very foundations of the Christian faith, and attacked the person and work of Jesus Christ.

To them, He was but one of God’s many “emanations” and not the very Son of God, come in the flesh. The Incarnation means “God *with us*” (Mt 1:23), but these false teachers claimed that God was keeping His distance from us! When we trust the Son of God, there is no need for any intermediary beings between us and heaven!

In His work on the cross, Jesus Christ settled the sin question (Col 1:20) and completely defeated all Satanic forces (Col 2:15). He put an end to the legal demands of the law (Col 2:14-17). He alone is the Preeminent One and completely sufficient (Col 1:18; 3:11).

### Overview

The false teachers in Colossae, like the false teachers of our own day, rarely deny the importance of Christ, they simply dethrone Him. No one familiar with the teaching of Colossians will ever be misled by the specious sophistries of the various occult systems now being foisted upon a credulous public.

What holds the universe all together, if anything? Astronomers and astrophysicists are continuing to struggle with these questions—with new theories continually displacing the old...but the Bible has much to say about them.

New Testament Creation References: John 1:1-3 [Eternal preexistence, prior to the existence of the material universe.] *The other reference is in this section.*

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- |    |                                |         |
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- |    |                         |          |
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| C. | In the home             | 3:18–21  |
| D. | In daily work           | 3:22–4:1 |
| E. | In Christian witness    | 4:2–6    |
| F. | In Christian service    | 4:7–18   |

### Colossians 1:15 – 1:29

Probably no section in the New Testament contains a more elevated view than the following one...

- 15] Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

In contrast to the Gnostic (and the Muslim) who maintains that God can never be known or understood, we have One who has made God known to us. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...” (Jn 1:14). It is because man “bears the image of his creator that it was

possible for the Son of God to become incarnate as man and in his humanity to display the glory of the invisible God” [Source: F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* by E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce].

“...the image”: The image of God reflects upon the Adam-Christ typology (Gen 1:27; Ps 8; Heb 2:5-18), in which Christ is viewed as the first true man who fulfills God’s design in creation. Thus, to be in the image of Christ is the goal of all Christians (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 11:7; 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4; Col 3:10).

Paul used the word *image*, which means “an exact representation and revelation.” The writer to the Hebrews affirms that Jesus Christ is “the express image of His Person” (Heb 1:3). Jesus was able to say, “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). In His essence, God is invisible; but Jesus Christ has revealed Him to us (Jn 1:18).

“...the firstborn” = πρωτότοκος *prototokos* (5X: Col 1:15; 18; Rom 8:29; Rev 1:5; Heb 1:6.) Priority of position, rather than origin.

“...firstborn of all creation” = *prior* to all creation. (Cf. Letter to Laodicea, Rev 3:14; Jn 1:1-3; et al.). [This was interpreted by the Arians to mean “first of a kind,” i.e., Christ was the first creature.] The word can have this meaning (cf. Rom 8:29), but such a reading is not consistent with Paul’s theme, which here stresses a Messianic priority and primacy.

## “Firstborn”: Positional Title

Heir and preeminent one, not necessarily the one born first: Ishmael and Isaac; Esau and Jacob; Reuben and Joseph; Manasseh and Ephraim; et al. The first Adam vs. the Last Adam! Preexistent (Micah 5:2) and Only Begotten: 5X in NT (Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9). [Isaac is so-called in Heb 11:17 Abraham’s “only begotten son.”]

*And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.*

Exodus 4:22,23

## “Firstborn”: Messianic Title

*I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen*

*him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.*

Psalms 89:20-29

16] For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

“...by him were all things created”: including Satan (vs. Mormon view!). Whatever cosmic powers there may be, they have nothing to offer or deny a Christian; in Christ he has all things (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:10).

“...visible and invisible”: There are two kinds: the four dimensions we experience; and the 6 that we know exist = 10 in total...

## The Boundaries of our Physical Reality

### Hyperdimensions: Spaces of more than Three Dimensions

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth**, and **length**, and **depth**, and **height**;

Ephesians 3:18

- the **breadth**,  
– πλάτος *platos*: breadth; suggesting great extent
- and **length**,  
– μήκος *mekos*: length
- and **depth**,  
– βάθος *bathos*: depth, height; deep things of God
- and **height**;  
– ὕψος *hupsos*: height; of place (heaven); of rank

→ **4 Dimensions!**

Time is *not* uniform: it is a *physical* property that *varies* with mass, acceleration and gravity...among other things... We exist in *more* than three dimensions (apparently 10). This physical insight will dissolve most theological paradoxes...

## Hyperdimensions: Beyond Euclid (>3 Dimensions)

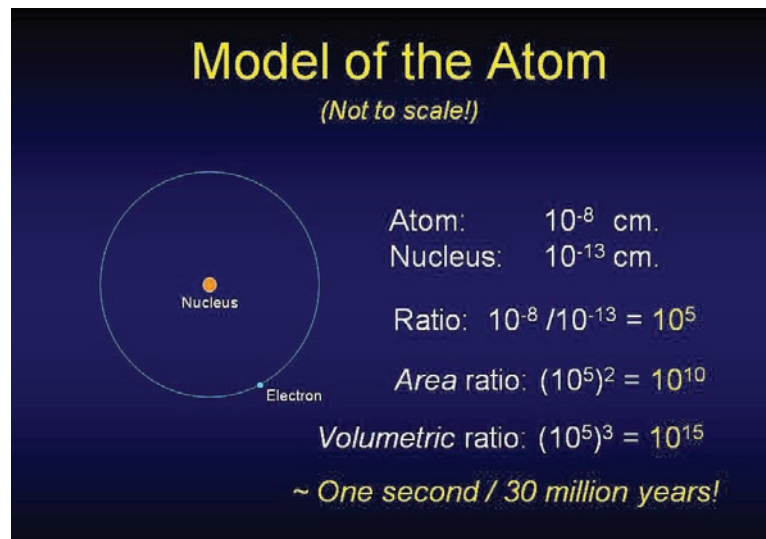
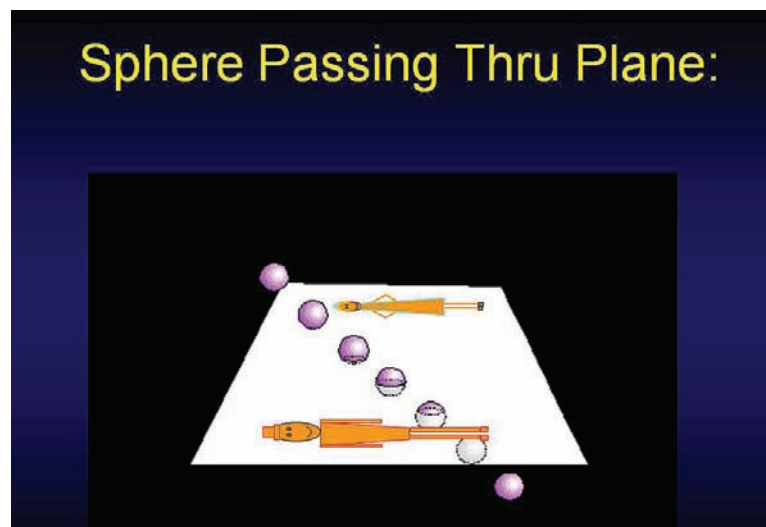
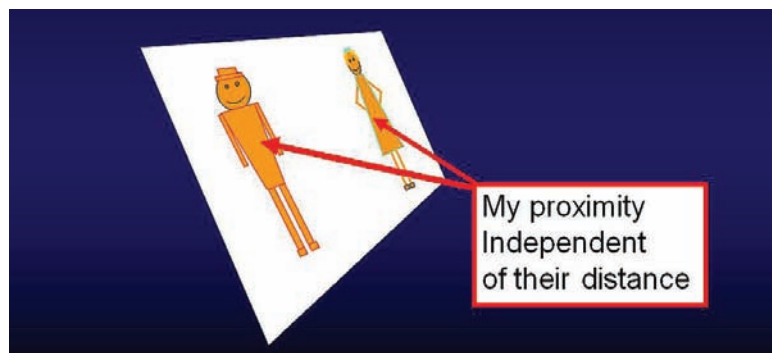
June 10, 1854: the most important mathematical lecture ever given...It took over 60 years for it to be applied...Georg Riemann's lecture on Metric Tensors.

- 1915: Einstein, Four-Dimensional Space-time: Einstein went to his grave frustrated over his inability to reconcile issues which subsequently yielded by applying his previous insights.
- 1953: Kaluza-Klein: 4+n Dimensions (Light & Supergravity).
- 1963: Yang-Mills Fields (Electromagnetic & Both Nuclear Forces).
- 1984: Superstrings, 10-Dimensions (The current thinking among quantum physicists is that our universe consists of one-dimensional "superstrings" vibrating in 10 dimensions...).

## Dimensions of "Reality"

Nachmonides (13<sup>th</sup> century): 10 dimensions, only 4 are "knowable" (*Commentary on Genesis*, 1263). Particle Physicists (20<sup>th</sup> century): 10 dimensions, 4 are directly measurable: (3 spatial + time) and the other 6 are "curled" into less than  $10^{-33}$  cm, and thus inferable only by indirect means. (We have spent billions of dollars building elaborate particle accelerators to learn what Nachmonides discovered by doing his homework on Genesis One!)

There are only two kinds of people who are able to deal with hyperspaces (spaces of more than 3 dimensions): mathematicians with special training and small children. But we can gain some useful insights by examining a two-dimensional universe...Meet Mr. & Mrs. Flat:



## How Solid is this Podium?

Is this podium "solid"? or is this just "empty space"? *Conjecture (2) is more descriptive than (1) by the same ratio: ~ one second / 30 million years!*

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

1 John 3:2

“Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers” = these words in the Greek refer to the hierarchy of angelic beings.

“...by him and for him”: Three prepositions (by, for, through) used to refute the philosophy of the false teachers. He is the heir of all things. We are the house guests in Someone Else’s Universe! History is headed somewhere, and we all have an accountability.

“...created by him...” Disbelief or denial is no refuge. We all have an appointment with destiny (Jn 5:22-29).

## Prepositional Power

For centuries, the Greek philosophers had taught that everything needed a primary cause, an instrumental cause, and a final cause.

- The primary cause is        the plan
- The instrumental cause    the power
- The final cause            the purpose.

When it comes to Creation, Jesus Christ is:

- The primary cause        (He planned it)
- The instrumental cause    (He produced it)
- The final cause            (He did it for His own pleasure).

This passage is parallel to the Λογος [*Logos*] passage in Jn 1:1–18 and to Heb 1:1–4 as well as Phil 2:5–11, in which these writers give the high conception of the Person of Christ (both Son of God and Son of Man). This central activity of Christ in the work of creation is presented also in Jn 1:3 and Heb 1:2 and is a complete denial of the Gnostic philosophy.

17] And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

“...consist” = *sunistemi*, to be compacted together, to cohere, to be constituted with, to be held together.

## Four Basic Forces

- 1) **Gravity:** keeps our feet on the ground, the earth in its orbit, the galaxies in their places;
- 2) **Electromagnetic:** radio waves, light, as well as the molecules of chemistry;
- 3) **“Strong” Nuclear force:** holds the atom together;

4) **“Weak Nuclear force”:** radioactivity, the heat of the sun, etc. The first two decrease in strength inversely with the square of the distance between two objects; the last two act only at very short ranges.

The nucleus of every atom is held together by what physicists call “weak” and “strong” forces. The nucleus of the atom contains positively charged and neutral particles—to use a simplistic model. Mutual electrostatic repulsion between the positrons would drive the nucleus apart if it were not for the “strong” nuclear force which binds the nucleus together.

## Zero Point Energy

There is an active force imposed upon the universe, which actively holds the very atoms of the material world together moment by moment, day by day, century by century. Similarly, accelerated electrons circling the nucleus should quickly radiate all their energy away and fall into the nucleus unless there exists an invisible energy source to counteract this.

This would appear to correlate with the “zero point energy”—the energy of empty space—and the atoms appear to behave like perpetual motion machines, picking up energy from the background zero point energy and thus sustained by it. [Barry Setterfield has estimated that the rate at which this “outside” energy from the “vacuum” of empty space would have to be fed into the universe is a staggering  $1.071 \times 10^{117}$  kilowatts per square meter per second!]

Other NT passages which deal with the destiny of atomic structure and physics (cf. Heb 1:2-3; 2 Pet 3:6-12).

*Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;*

Hebrews 1:2

“...worlds”: The Greek word αἰῶνας *aionas* (plural) means “time domains.” Some Bibles may say “ages.” It is generally regarded by scholars to mean the entire creation. Jesus is the Creator (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16).

*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Hebrews 1:3

“...express image” is the Greek χαρακτήρ *charakter*, the impressed character, like a steel engraving. All the prophets, and all the writings

up til now, have all been but shadows and hints at the aspects of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim 6:16; Col 1:15). The opposite of this is also true: Without Jesus Christ man is in the dark about God.

“...upholding all things”: (Col 1:15,17,20 which enumerates the three facts in the same order as here). The word for upholding is the very same word in the LXX as used in where it speaks of the Spirit of God “moving” on the face of the waters (Gen 1:2).

“...when he had by himself purged our sins”: The Greek aorist participle there is completed: it is done; cf. τετέλεσται “it’s finished!” (Jn 19:30).

## The Son is the Final Revealer: Hebrews 1:1-3

- He is the heir of all things;
- Through the Son the ages were made;
- He is brightness of God’s glory;
- He is the image of the Father;
- He upholds all things by His power;
- He made purification of sin;
- He sat down on Majesty on High.

## God, The Sustainer of the Universe: 2 Peter 3:6-13

*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

2 Peter 3:6,7

“...fire”: Next time *by fire*. Cf. Isa 66:15; Dan 7:10; Mal 4:1; 2 Thess 1:8. By Him are the very elements “held together” (Col 1:17). God’s sovereignty over *time* (Job 22:15-18). God has a perspective, an intensity, a priority, that we lack.

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

2 Peter 3:9

“...not willing that any should perish”: Another refutation of Calvinism. The great tragedy is that after the entire panorama of redemption, God *doesn’t get what He wants* out of the deal! Not all will repent. Time is

our most inelastic (and thus, precious) resource. Teach us to number our nanoseconds (Ps 90:12).

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

2 Peter 3:10

“...day of the Lord”: Cf. 1 Thess 4:13f (“bring with Him” v.14).]

“...as a thief in the night”: Only *to those who are in darkness* (1 Thess 5; 1 Thess 4:18 introduces). “Behold I create a new heavens and new earth” (Isa 65:17).

“...in the which”: The Day of the Lord closes at the end of the Millennium when the destruction of the heavens and the earth (Rev 20:11; 21:1).

“...a great noise”: ῥοιζήδον *rhoizēdon*. It is the word used for the swish of an arrow, the rush of wings, the splash of water, the hiss of a serpent.

“...elements”: στοιχεῖα *stoicheia* basic building blocks.

“...melt”: λύω *luo* to untie, loose.

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

2 Peter 3:11

“...ought ye to be”: So how then shall we live? Do the realities of all this impact our priorities?

*Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

2 Peter 3:12

“Looking for and hasting unto”: You can hasten the Day of God! Lord’s Prayer: “Thy Kingdom Come.” Help bring in the “fullness” (Rom 11:25). [Cf. *Revelation & Isaiah Commentaries*; Mal 4:1; Joel 2:10; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24; Rev 6, 8, et al.]

“...melt”: Mountains melting (Ps 46:6; Micah 1:4; etc.).

*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

2 Peter 3:13

“...new heavens and a new earth”: World #3? (Isa 65:17; 66:22; Rev 21:1). This one will have righteousness dwelling in it.

God dynamically sustains the universe, including the very atoms themselves. Atoms, it seems, are stable only because force and energy are being supplied into their nuclear binding fields from *outside* the system. [See also our briefing package, *Beyond Perception*, for further discussion of particle physics and the boundaries of our present physical reality.]

God is the Sustainer of the universe: He is not uninvolved, remote, detached and impersonal—leaving things to run themselves. He energizes all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11). He cares about the sparrow that falls to the ground, the widow, the orphan, and the homeless. *You*.

God does not lose track of His children but watches over them with infinite, patient, intimate, precise, Fatherly care. He also intervenes from time to time to alter the status quo in response to prayer, and even alters the course of entire nations. [Now, back to our text...]

- 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 might have the preeminence.

“...the beginning”: The originator. The *Alpha* and *Omega*, *Aleph* and *Tau* (Rev 1:8-10, 17-18). As the body of Christ (not “body of Christians”) the church is not merely a “society” but is defined in terms of its *organic communion* with Christ

“...preeminence”: πρωτεύω *proteuo* is used nowhere else in NT. This is The Theme of this epistle...]

- 19] For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;

“...fullness” = *pleroma*, sum total of all the divine power and attributes. (A favorite term of the gnostics.) 8X in this letter. Lit. “For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell”: God the Father was in Him (Jn 17:21-23; God the Holy Spirit was His in full measure (Isa 42:1; Jn 3:34)/

“...dwell”: κατοικέω *katoikeo* reside, to be at home permanently.

“...fullness dwell”: The verb indicates that this fullness was “not something added to His Being that was not natural to Him, but that it was part of His essential Being as part of His very constitution, and that permanently.” [Source: Dr. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians*

*in the Greek New Testament*, p.187.] Wow! What does this really mean? God is *fully* manifested in Him (Col 2:9; cf. Phil 2:5-11).

*It may be that the Deity can forgive sins, but I do not see how.”*

—Socrates, to Plato

- 20] And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

“...the blood”: How rarely we hear this preached today...He has taken care of all of *our* needs.

“...to reconcile”: Three main truths: 1) Jesus has taken care of *all things*. 2) Jesus is sufficient; *all* that we need is in Him. 3) God is pleased when Jesus is honored and given preeminence.

“**GRACE: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**”

## Reconcile

ἀποκαταλλάσσω *apokatallasso* = to reconcile completely (Rom 5:10,11; 11:15; 1 Cor 7:11; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20-21).

**Two distinct reconciliations:** 1) At Calvary: By the death of Christ, the barrier because of sin was taken away judicially, enabling God to show mercy where judgment was deserved. The work of God alone, in which man had no part. 2) Wrought by God in the sinner himself, whereby he becomes changed in his rebellious attitude toward God, so that he is persuaded to receive the reconciliation already accomplished at the cross (Rom 5:11). In this Christians have a part, as ambassadors for Christ bearing the “word of reconciliation” committed to them (2 Cor 5:19) and beseeching men (2 Cor 5:20).

## Summary

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| • Christ’s relationship to the Father   | v. 15    |
| • Christ’s relationship to the Creation | v. 16,17 |
| • Christ’s relationship to the Church   | v. 18,19 |
| • Christ’s relationship to the Cross    | v. 20    |

- 21] And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

Man is never called upon in Scripture to make his own peace with God (Rom 5:1) It was in heaven that sin began...] For the apostle, assurance always had to be present tense. And, while God's election is not vacillating, it can be affirmed only in terms of profession (Rom 10:9); conduct (1 Cor 6:9); and, the witness of the Spirit (Rom 8:9).

- 22] In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

The purpose of this reconciliation is *personal holiness*. God does not make peace so that we can continue to be rebels. A two-fold headship here: 1) Over all creation; 2) As Head of the Church.

- 23] If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

False teachers attempted to move them away from the hope of the Gospel. The unsaved are without hope (Eph 2:11-12; 1 Thess 4:13). There is no hope held out in Scripture that the sad inhabitants of the infernal regions will ever be reconciled to God. They are, indeed, hopeless.

"If": This should be rendered "Since." This is not a conditional clause that is based on the future. The *if* that Paul uses here is the *if* of argument. It does not mean that something *shall be* if something else is true; rather it means that something *was* if something else is true.

Endurance is proof of reality (1 Cor 15:1, 2; Heb 3:6; 10:38, 39).

- 24] Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

Cf. Phil 3:10; Acts 5:41. When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem on false charges, the Jews listened to his defense until he used the word "Gentiles" (Acts 22:21ff). It was that word that infuriated them and drove them to ask for his execution (Acts 21-28). Had Paul compromised with the Jews and stopped ministering to Gentiles, he could have been spared a great deal of suffering.

This idea is to be understood from the standpoint of the Hebrew concept of corporate personality as illustrated in Jesus' graphic statement concerning his church, "Why persecutest thou *me*?" (Acts 9:4).

- 25] Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

"...dispensation": οἰκονομία *oikonomia* economy, stewardship. Paul's dispensation or assignment in God's redemptive plan was, specifically, to make salvation known to the Gentiles. [Ask not, "What will I get out of it," but rather, "How much will God let me put into it?"]

- 26] Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

"...mystery": In the world of the 1<sup>st</sup> century μυστήριον *musterion* meant 1) something mysterious; 2) an initiatory religious rite; 3) a secret known only by divine revelation (Dan 2:28-30, 47).

The broad Pauline usage falls into the last category (1 Cor 15:51; Eph 5:32; 2 Thess 2:7); *musterion*, sacred secrets made known to the initiated. These divine secrets could never have been discovered by human reason—especially limited by observing a cursed creation (Cf. Eph 3, Mt 13...).

- 27] To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

"...riches of the glory of this mystery": In relation to God's redemptive plan, the mystery is the corporate union with Christ, **Christ in you**, by which God gives righteousness and salvation. In Ephesians (3:6) the focus is upon the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Body, and this aspect of the mystery is also explicitly present here.

- 28] Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

"Whom": Christian is about a person, not a "system." Paul *preached* (warned, announced as a herald); Paul was a *teacher* of the truth. (How far would we get if highway signs only told us where the roads were not going?)

- 29] Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

"...striving": Literally, "For this I labor to the point of exhaustion, agonizing": ἀγωνίζομαι *agonizomai* to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers; to endeavor with strenuous zeal, strive: to obtain something.

Our moment-by-moment existence depends upon His gracious sustenance of every electron, every atom, every molecule and every spiritual entity as well. We are safe when we place our trust in Him and put our

whole lives into His hands. Should we not stand in awe of our Great God and Creator (Psalm 95:1-7).

## Next Session

Study Chapter 2:1-17. Watch for evidences of encouragement, endearment, enrichment. and enlightenment.

## The Epistle to the Colossians Session 4 Chapter 2:1-17

### Review

- Declaration of the deity of Christ.
- The Answer to every heresy, every problem: The Person of Jesus.
- **Four Primary Heresies:** 1) Worldly Philosophy 2) Jewish Legalism 3) Oriental Mysticism 4) Stoical Asceticism

### Outline of Colossians

#### DOCTRINE: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DECLARED Chapter 1

- |    |                       |         |
|----|-----------------------|---------|
| A. | In the Gospel message | 1:1–12  |
| B. | In redemption         | 1:13–14 |
| C. | In Creation           | 1:15–17 |
| D. | In the church         | 1:18–29 |

#### DANGER: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED Chapter 2

- |    |                                     |                |
|----|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| A. | <b>Beware of empty philosophies</b> | <b>2:1–10</b>  |
| B. | <b>Beware of religious legalism</b> | <b>2:11–17</b> |
| C. | Beware of man-made disciplines      | 2:18–23        |

#### DUTY: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED Ch. 3–4

- |    |                         |          |
|----|-------------------------|----------|
| A. | In personal purity      | 3:1–11   |
| B. | In Christian fellowship | 3:12–17  |
| C. | In the home             | 3:18–21  |
| D. | In daily work           | 3:22–4:1 |
| E. | In Christian witness    | 4:2–6    |
| F. | In Christian service    | 4:7–18   |

- 1] For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

“...great conflict” = *intense agony!* *αγωνα agwon* (“ag-one”) the assembly of the Greeks at their national games; hence the contest for a prize at their games; generally, any struggle or contest; a battle; an action at law, trial.

### Summary: Laodicea

Note the explicit “linkage” with Laodicea. Geographically, only a mile apart. They were to exchange letters (Col 4:16). There are unique Greek phrases only in this letter and Rev 3:14-22. Laodicea stood midway between the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold waters of Colossae. It was fed by an aqueduct from Hierapolis, the water being lukewarm when it arrived. Militarily undefendable, its typical posture was one of compromise.

Prophetically, Laodicea (“rule of the people”) was the self-satisfied church. It is one of only two, of the seven of Revelation 2 & 3, of which nothing positive is said. It is the church of today. The letter to Colossians seems to specifically address the doctrinal deficiencies of today.

An inscription on the cathedral in Lubeck, Germany:

*Ye call Me Master and obey Me not.  
Ye call Me Light and see Me not.  
Ye call Me the Way and walk Me not.  
Ye call Me Life and choose Me not.  
Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not.  
Ye call Me Fair and love Me not.  
Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not.  
Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not.  
Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not.  
Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not.  
Ye call Me Might and honor Me not.  
Ye call Me Just and fear Me not.  
If I condemn you, blame Me not.*

### A Litmus Test

- Has the church failed to tell you that you are a sinner?
- Has the church failed to deal with you as a lost individual?
- Has the church failed to offer you salvation in Jesus Christ alone?

- Has *your* church failed to proclaim the horrible consequences of sin, the certainty of hell, and the fact that Jesus alone can save?
- 2] That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
- [Note Paul's intensity of prayer for people he had never met. What an example for us!]
- "...being knit together": Truth unites; error divides.
- "...all riches": The *sufficiency* of Christ.
- "...mystery of God": Incarnating the fullness of the Godhead, and all the divine wisdom and knowledge for the redemption and reconciliation of man
- 3] In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- "...all the treasures": [All!] It is not necessary to go elsewhere, investigating human systems and philosophies, for an explanation of the mystery of the universe and the relations of the Creator to His creatures (v.8).
- "In whom": The person is the key: *in Him* are all the answers! [The necessity of psychology to meet life challenges? We will review at verse 8.]
- "...wisdom and knowledge": Proverbs 8, personalized... *Wisdom* implies the ability to defend what we understand; *knowledge* suggests the ability to grasp truth. All of these terms were also used by the gnostics.

## Evidences

- Encouragement: "that their hearts might be comforted."
  - Endearment: "being knit together in love."
  - Enrichment: "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding."
  - Enlightenment: "full assurance of understanding."
- 4] And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.
- Advocates of error delight in packaging their systems in the most attractive phraseology, to entrap the unwary...
- 5] For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Word picture (6): an army. *Order* and *steadfastness* are military terms.

- 6] As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
- "...so walk ye": Word picture: *a pilgrim*. Walk.
- 7] Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
- Word pictures:
- a) a tree, *rooted* (Similar figures in Eph 3:7). Rooted, once and for all; but (continually) growing, and built up, in Him.
  - b) a building, *built up* is an architectural term;
  - c) a school, *stablished* and taught;
  - d) a river, *abounding* suggests a river overflowing its banks (Jn 4:10-14; 7:37-39).

Question: Can the words of an unbelieving world have a detrimental impact on a believer?

- 8] Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
- "...philosophy and vain deceit": The history of philosophy is the story of contradictory, discarded hypotheses. Plato yearned for a divine "Word"—*logos*—which would come with authority and make everything plain (Jn 1:1-3, 14).
- "...rudiments": The Greek word translated "rudiments" basically means "one of a row or series"; ABCs...

## Epistemological Approach

Epistemology: The study of knowledge, its scope and limits. The study of Epistemology is a waste of time if it is conducted by the philosophy department: a study of the history of words rather than methods. Cf. "Berean" challenges (& tools, methods) vs. "Issachar" challenges (& tools, methods): Berean + Issachar → Koinonos.

It has long fascinated me how the information sciences are at the root of all sciences: quantum physics, DNA, the nature of light, et al. [The bankruptcy of value relativism; cf. Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*...et al. vs/ Great Books of the Western World...]

## Two Primary Systems

Two great systems—when Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians—are still contending over minds of the Western World:

**1) Stoicism:** Live nobly and death cannot matter; hold appetite in check, become indifferent to changing conditions. Be not lifted up by good fortune nor cast down by adversity. Man is more than circumstances; the soul is greater than the universe (1 Cor 9:24-29; Phil 4:11-13)

**2) Epicureanism:** All is uncertain; we know not whence we come, nor whither we go; we only know that after a brief life we disappear from this scene; it is vain to deny ourselves any present joy in view of possible future ill. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (Cf. Isa 22:13; 1 Cor 15:32).

“Beware lest any man spoil you”: Beware lest any man *make a prey of you.*” Or “*carry you captive.*” The Scripture nowhere condemns the acquisition of knowledge. The Christian may well avail himself of any legitimate means of becoming better acquainted with the great facts of history, the findings of true science, and the beauties of literature.

[Contemporary “Science” is not the pursuit of truth: It is the attempt to explain the observations of the physical universe while denying any existence of a Creator.]

...but let the Christian never put human wisdom in the place of divine revelation. This is the first element of the Armor of God: to gird oneself with Truth (Eph 6:14; Jn 14:6; 2 Tim 2:15). It is the wisdom of this world, not its knowledge, that is foolishness with God.

## The Ultimate Oxymoron

The “Foolishness of God” (1 Cor 1:19-29). Examples: Noah and his barge (Gen 6-8); Moses and the Brazen Serpent (Num 21; Jn 3:14-16); Samson and his jawbone (Judg 15); Elisha and Naaman (2 Kgs 5); Jonah and the Fish (Jonah 2)...The Ultimate Foolishness?

*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

1 Corinthians 1:18

Note: Only two categories. Christ is the antidote for human philosophy, Jewish legalism, oriental mysticism, or carnal asceticism (1 Cor 1:30-31).

9] For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Wow. “Fulness” = *pleroma*, the sum of the qualities of deity. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn 14:7-9).

10] And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

“...complete” = filled full. “We are accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). Dr. Kenneth Wuest’s *Expanded Translation*, reads: “And you are in Him, having been completely filled, full with the present result that you are in a state of fullness.”

[Need for psychology?] Denial of guilt vs. a remedy for the primary dynamic of the human predicament: Sin.

## Our Personal Architecture?

Seven times the Bible declared: “Ye are the Temple of God” (1 Cor.3:9-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20,21; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5; 4:17). This appears to hold the key to our “software” architecture: What is our Heart? Soul? Spirit? Mind? The Greatest Commandment instructs us to “love God with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind.”

What does this mean? You can’t determine the architecture of software by external means; you need the designer’s manual. [That’s why you can buy it at a store: you can *use* it, but not infer its internal design...] Thus, psychology is doomed to frustration to establish causes—or even deal with guilt.

## The Doom of Psychology

A programmable computer is an infinite state machine. An infinite state machine defies external determination of its internal architecture. The

Architecture	
• Hardware	• Physical Body
– Microcircuits	– Flesh
– Memory	– Bones
– Wires, resistors, etc.	– Circulatory System etc.
• Software	• Our Selves
– User Interface	– “Soul”
– Internal Interfaces	– “Spirit”
– Machine Language	– “Mind”
– Algorithms, etc.	– Thoughts, etc.

frustration of psychology is that it is attempting to determine internal architecture from external behavior. The real *you* is software, not “hardware.” You have no mass: you are not restricted to our physical time dimension; you are eternal—*whether “saved” or not!*

## Psychological Insights?

The problem with Adam and Eve is that they came from a dysfunctional family? Was that Satan's problem, too? Isn't it tragic that Paul didn't have the insights of modern psychology when he counseled Timothy?

[If you are "filled full" why doesn't it show? If we have the love of God within us, why do we behave the way we do? See our book, *The Way of Agape*, for the moment-by-moment faith choices that are the secret of the Christian walk...]

- 11] In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

"...circumcision made without hands": God never separates the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Circumcision was a sign of the Covenant (Gen 17:9-14). It was a physical emblem with a spiritual significance. As so often happens, the physical sign tended to replace the actuality (Rom 2:25-29).

God warned them (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 6:10; Ezek 44:7). People make the same mistake today when they rely on *any ritual* to save them. A contrast between Jewish circumcision and the believer's spiritual circumcision in Christ:

### Jews

- External surgery
- Only part of the body
- Done by hands
- No spiritual help in conquering sin

### Believers

- Internal—the heart
- The whole "body of sins"
- Done without hands
- Enables them to overcome sin

## The Victory over Sin

When Jesus Christ died and rose again, He won a complete and final victory over sin (Rom 6:10ff). What the Law could not do, *Jesus Christ accomplished for us*. The old nature ("the body of the sins of the flesh") was put off—rendered inoperative—so that we need no longer be enslaved to its desires. The old sinful nature is not eradicated, for we can still sin (1 Jn 1:5–2:6); but its power has been broken as we yield to Christ and walk in the power of the Spirit.

- 12] Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

[Only Paul emphasizes His death as an essential part of the Gospel: 1 Cor 15:1-4.] When a person is saved, he is immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13). Whatever happened to Christ is imputed to us, "through faith in the operation of God."

## Baptism

The word *baptize* has both a literal and a figurative meaning: The literal meaning is "to dip, to immerse." The figurative meaning is "to be identified with." For example, the Jewish nation was "baptized unto Moses" when it went through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1,2). There was no water involved in this baptism, because they went over on dry land. In this experience, the nation was identified with Moses.

- 13] And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

What else do we need? What did you contribute to the process? You (and I) are helpless. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Gal 2:16); "The flesh profiteth nothing" (Jn 6:63); "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7).

The Law was certainly against us, because it was impossible for us to meet its holy demands. Even though God never gave the Ten Commandments to the Gentiles, the righteous demands of the Law—God's holy standards—were "written in their hearts" (Rom 2:12-16).

How could the holy God be just in canceling a debt? Socrates, pondering the unsolvable problems relating to future rewards and punishments, said, "It may be, Plato, that the Deity can forgive sins, but I do not see how."

"...hath he quickened together with him": Hath, not will...present possession. Therefore God is making no attempt to improve it. There is no place for merit as far as Man is concerned. All merit is Another's!

- 14] Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

"...handwriting of ordinances that was against us" = our Certificate of Debt: *χειρῶγραφον cheirographon*: a note of one's own hand or writing in which one acknowledges that money has either been deposited with him or lent to him by another, to be returned at the appointed time; an acknowledgment of debt.

“...contrary to us”: ὑπεναντίας *hupenantios* opposed to, contrary to, as an adversary. (Our debt...)

The legal practice in the Greco-Roman period involved a literal “certificate of debt” which would result from a sentence being passed against an accused. This debt was paid as one served his sentence. (In the event of an escape, the jailer was considered liable for any unpaid remainder. Cf. Acts 16:23ff.)

ἐξαλείφω *exaleipho* to wipe off, wipe away; to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out. When the sentence was completed, the jailer would endorse the Certificate of Debt as:

Τετέλεσται *Tetelestai*, from τελέω finish, complete, end; to fulfill, carry out, accomplish; come to an end, be over; pay (obligations); keep or obey (the law). Cf. Jn 19:30: “Paid in Full!” “It is finished.” Christ is God’s last word to mankind.

God paid sin’s debt when He gave His Son on the cross, and He upheld the holiness of His own Law. But Jesus Christ did even more than cancel the debt: He took the Law that condemned us and set it aside so that we are no longer under its dominion. We are “delivered from the Law” (Rom 7:6). We “are not under the Law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14).

## Pilate’s Epitaph

Pilate’s official label: τίτλον *titlon*, the official announcement from the official representative of the ruler of the world. Written first in Hebrew, the first letter of each of the four words spelled out the *tetragrammaton*, the ineffable name of God, YHWH, *Yehovah*, or *Yahweh*:

The Jews	The King	The Nazarene	Jesus
HaYehudim	v Melech	HaNazarei	Yeshua
			
ה	ו	ה	י
H	W	H	Y

*And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

John 19:19-22

- 15] And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Jesus not only dealt with sin and the Law on the cross, but He also dealt with Satan. Speaking about His crucifixion, Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (Jn 12:31).

## Three Great Victories

Jesus had three great victories on the cross. 1<sup>st</sup>: He “spoiled principalities and powers” (Col 2:15), stripping Satan and his army of whatever weapons they held. Satan cannot harm the believer who will not harm himself. It is when we cease to watch and pray (as did Peter) that Satan can use his weapons against us.

2<sup>nd</sup>: Jesus “made a show of them openly” (Col 2:15), exposing Satan’s deceit and vileness. In His death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ vindicated God and vanquished the devil.

His 3<sup>rd</sup> victory is found in the word *triumph*. Whenever a Roman general won a great victory on foreign soil, took many captives and much loot, and gained new territory for Rome, he was honored by an official parade known as “the Roman triumph.” Paul alluded to this practice in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 2:14). Jesus Christ won a complete victory, and He returned to glory in a great triumphal procession (Eph 4:8ff). In this, He disgraced and defeated Satan.

## Conclusion

You and I share in His victory over the devil. We need not worry about the elemental forces that govern the planets and try to influence men’s lives. The Satanic armies of principalities and powers are defeated and disgraced! As we claim the victory of Christ, use the equipment He has provided for us (Eph 6:10ff) and trust Him, we are free from the influence of the devil.

## Summary

A fourfold identification with Christ makes it not only unnecessary, but sinful for us to get involved with any kind of legalism:

- |                             |          |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| 1) Circumcised in Him       | v.11     |
| 2) Alive in Him             | vv.12-13 |
| 3) Free from the Law in Him | v.14     |
| 4) Victorious in Him        | v.15     |

Caveats: Where does character and integrity fit in? Do we need to keep appointments? Honor business commitments? What does it mean to be a *fiduciary* to our brothers and sisters? To our employers? We are called to holiness and obedience, nevertheless. This is *not legalism*. It is our thanksgiving offering for what He has already done for us.

## Three Warnings

- 1) Let no man judge you (Col 2:16,17);
- 2) Let no man beguile you of your reward (Col 2:18,19);
- 3) Let No One Enslave You (Col 2:20-23).

## Next Section: Religious Externalism

Some Issues: Should we worship on Sunday or Saturday? Can we eat shrimp and pork? Can we have a glass of wine with dinner? Do we need to “keep” the feasts of the *Torah*?

- 16] Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

## Origin of the Kosher Laws

Kosher Laws: *Kashrut*; “kosher state” (Lev 11, Deut 14—esp. Ex 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21).

Separation of milk and meat products may derive from a misunderstanding of Ex 23:19. Some scholars believe it was to prohibit a common pagan practice, *Lebu immf*, among the ancient Zabii, Ishmaelites (and still among some Arabs). A kid seethed in its mother’s milk was used by certain pagans to propitiate the deities, and milk was sprinkled on the fruit trees, fields, and gardens, to improve the crops of the coming year.

[Sources: Dr. Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, Vol. 1, p.135; Spencer, *De Legibus Hebraeorum*, 2, 8; R. Jamieson, *Critical and Experimental Commentary on Old Testament*, p. 375.]

## Kosher Laws?

Abraham served the Lord a *non-Kosher* meal(!) in Gen 18:7, 8. Reform Jews regard *kashrut* as no longer meaningful, but often accommodate some in deference to their “*Observant*” guests.

## The Karaites

Among the groups that protested against the rigidities of Talmudic Judaism were the Karaites, led by Anan ben David in Mesopotamia (a “Jewish Luther”), 740-800 A.D., who would not accept the oral traditions of the Talmud but defended the Torah and the Prophets as the sole source for religious doctrine and practice. Beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Persia, it spread to Egypt and Syria and later to Europe through Spain and Constantinople.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, the Karaites so distanced themselves from Talmudic (“Rabbinic”) Judaism that they were relieved of the double taxation, exempted from military conscription, and were permitted to acquire land. The Lenningrad Codex, the oldest complete Hebrew Bible, was acquired through their efforts.

Christians are freed from the law (Lev 11; 17; Deut 14). God does not condemn those who eat everything (Rom 14:1-). In fact, God says that all foods may be eaten since they were “created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth” (1 Tim 4:3). The teaching that forbids this, Paul wrote, is “taught by demons” (1 Tim 4:1) whom Christ has disarmed (Col 2:15).

## Sunday vs. Sabbath?

(There is no *commandment* in the New Testament establishing the sacredness of the first day of the week.)

The *Sabbath* was, of course, established as a memorial of the creation (Gen 2:3, Ex 20:11), as well as their deliverance from Egypt (Deut 5:15). Sunday was the day of Jesus’ resurrection (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1) and 6 of the 8 post-resurrection appearances recorded in the Gospels occurred on Sunday.

The Feast of Pentecost (*Shavout*) was on “the morrow after the sabbath” after Passover (Lev 23:15,16); thus, the Church was “born” on a Sunday (Acts 2:1-4). [There are some that suspect that the rapture will occur on this same day, just as there is a tradition that Enoch was “translated”

on his birthday, celebrated at the beginning of *Hag Shavout*. See our briefing package, *The Feasts of Israel*.]

## Sunday as a Day of Worship

Yet, the NT has surprisingly little to say about Sunday as a day of worship: There are only three references: 1) Paul's visit to Troas (Acts 20:5-12); 2) Paul's command to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 16:1, 2); 3) The "Lord's Day" only appears in Rev 1:10.

### 1) Paul's visit to Troas: Acts 20:5-12

Paul arrived after the Feast of Unleavened Bread and remained there for seven days. On Sunday evening the church gathered to break bread and Paul gave a farewell address to them which lasted until after midnight. After the miraculous resuscitation of Eutychus, they continued until day break. (Some suggest that this was actually a Saturday evening...)

### 2) Paul's command to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 16:1,2)

Here, however, some argue that this was a procedure to avoid "gatherings when I come."

### 3) "Lord's Day" only Appears in Rev 1:10.

Many scholars view the phrase as referring to the "The Day of the Lord." It seems that both the Sabbath and Sunday were probably both venerated by the early (Jewish) Christians, but as the church became increasingly Gentile, Sunday emerged as the distinctly Christian day of observance.

Ignatius, a disciple of John, and the bishop of Antioch, wrote to the Magnesians in the early years of the 2nd century, describing Christians with a Jewish background as those who "have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death." [Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9:1-3.]

Sunday has been, of course, a primary pagan day: "Sunday" was the label from the ancient Babylonians: the days of the week were named after the Sun, Moon, and five planets. Popular among the Romans, especially the soldiers, was Mithraism, a religion imported from Persia. Mithra was the god of the Sun, and regarded Sunday as a sacred day.

In 321, Emperor Constantine declared Sunday as the imperial rest day. This seems to have been a deliberate policy on the part of Constantine in attempt to unite the diversified religions of the empire.

## Several Current Views

**The Biblical View:** Christianity had its roots in the Old Testament, so Sunday seems to borrow many of the practices of the Sabbath: setting aside the seventh day to worship his Creator; assembly, Bible reading, etc. However, Paul clearly teaches that the Sabbath was part of the old covenant that was done away in Christ. There is not the slightest hint that Christ or the apostles changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

## The 7<sup>th</sup> Day

The liberation of believers from the Law was the dispute resolved in Acts 15. This Colossian passage explicitly condemns those who command Sabbath obedience. However: The Millennial Temple (Ez 40-48) will only be open on *Shabbat* and the New Moon; (it is closed on Sundays; Ezek 46:1; Cf. *The Seventh Day* Briefing Package for a detailed discussion).

17] Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

"...a shadow of things to come": We get our word *photograph* from the Greek word used here for "shadow." As Paul put it, the Old Testament Law (including the Sabbath) was only a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality or "substance" (*soma*, lit., "body"), however, is to be found in Christ (cf. Heb 8:5; 10:1). What the Old Testament foreshadowed, Christ fulfilled (cf. Mt 5:17; Rom 8:3-4).

A "shadow" (*skia*) is only an image cast by an object which represents its form. Once one finds Christ, he no longer needs to follow the old shadow. The Feasts of Israel—in fact, every element of the *Torah*—are not just historically commemorative, but prophetically significant! Passover, et al. [Other strange examples: The Cities of Refuge; Daughters of Zelophehad; etc.]

## Warnings

Let no man judge you (Col 2:16,17); Let no man beguile you of your reward (Col 2:18,19) Can you lose your "reward"? How?

## Next Session

Study Colossians 2:18-23. When someone is a) disillusioned by the self-imposed blinders and myopia of contemporary “science,” or b) frustrated by the moral bankruptcy of unbridled materialism, where do they turn? Why?

## The Epistle to the Colossians Session 5 Chapter 2:18 - 23

As we study this profound letter, we must heed Paul’s warnings:

- 1) “Lest any man should beguile you” Col 2:4
- 2) “Lest any man spoil you” Col 2:8
- 3) “Let no man therefore judge you!” Col 2:16

### Outline of Colossians

#### DOCTRINE: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED Chapter 1

- |    |                       |         |
|----|-----------------------|---------|
| A. | In the Gospel message | 1:1–12  |
| B. | In redemption         | 1:13–14 |
| C. | In Creation           | 1:15–17 |
| D. | In the church         | 1:18–29 |

#### DANGER: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED Chapter 2

- |    |   |         |
|----|---|---------|
| A. | Beware of empty philosophies                  | 2:1–10  |
| B. | Beware of religious legalism                  | 2:11–17 |
| C. | <b>Beware of man-made disciplines 2:18–23</b> |         |

#### DUTY: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED Ch. 3–4

- |    |                         |          |
|----|-------------------------|----------|
| A. | In personal purity      | 3:1–11   |
| B. | In Christian fellowship | 3:12–17  |
| C. | In the home             | 3:18–21  |
| D. | In daily work           | 3:22–4:1 |
| E. | In Christian witness    | 4:2–6    |
| F. | In Christian service    | 4:7–18   |

- 18] Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

“Let no man beguile you”: Or judge against you (1 Tim 2:5). The error against which Paul warned them later developed into the heresy called Gnosticism. This false teaching assigned to Christ a subordinate place to the true Godhead, and undervalued the uniqueness and completeness of His redemptive work. It interposed a host of beings, angels, etc., forming a bridge of which Christ was a member.

Whether disillusioned by the self-imposed blinders and myopia of contemporary “science,” or frustrated by the moral bankruptcy of unbridled materialism, increasing numbers of desperate people are now seeking “answers” outside the realm of natural phenomena and are pursuing the supernatural. The anguished plea of the disenfranchised now begs the question, “Is there anyone out there?”

## The Flight to Mysticism: Kabbalah

*Kabbalah* originally simply designated “received tradition.” Generically, it refers to Jewish mysticism in all its forms. Denotatively, it refers specifically to the esoteric theosophy that crystallized in 13<sup>th</sup> century Spain and Provence, France.

It is particularly paradoxical to find these occultic practices embedded within Judaism, despite the numerous explicit prohibitions against all forms of the occult recorded throughout the very *Torah* that is so highly venerated among the Jews.

## Judaism Redefined

Two cataclysmic challenges happened to Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.: 1) The rejection of Christ as the Messiah and 2) The subsequent destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

How could there be a continuation of the prescribed sacrifices without an altar and a Temple? The Council of Jamnia met in A.D. 90 and began redefining Judaism with the formulation of the *Talmud* (3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the Geonic Era (7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> centuries).

## Talmud

The *Talmud* is a body of Jewish civil and religious law, including commentaries on the *Torah*, or Pentateuch, and the oral laws handed down through tradition. The *Mishnah* is a codification of laws; The *Gemara* is a commentary on the *Mishnah*; The *Halakhah* (from Hebrew, “to go”) are scholarly materials on disputed legal questions; and The *Haggada*

includes illustrations and amplifications of the ethical, political, and religious principles involved in the laws

## Talmud

Two compilations of the *Talmud* exist: The *Jerusalem Talmud* (3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and The *Babylonian Talmud* (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). It became authoritative because the rabbinic academies of Babylonia survived those in Palestine by many centuries (and is referred to in the “Geonic Era”: 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries). Both compilations contain the same *Mishnah*, but each has its own *Gemara*.

## Veneration of Commentaries

The epistemological problems emerge from an excessive veneration of the scholastic commentators *over the text itself*. The *Mishneh Torah* by the Spanish rabbi, philosopher, and physician Maimonides is an abstract of the rabbinical legal literature in existence at his time.

Among the most widely known commentaries are those on the *Babylonian Talmud* by the French rabbi Rashi and by certain scholars known as *tosaphists*, who lived in France and Germany between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. This lengthening tether reaches its extremes in the imaginative conjectures that emerged among the *Kabbalistic* scholars of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and subsequently.

## Karaites

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, there emerged a Jewish sect known as the Karaites who clung to the strict interpretations of the Scriptures, rejecting the *Talmud* and the rabbinical traditions that had been incorporated during the first six centuries.

Considered heretical by “Orthodox” Jews, in Czarist Russia they were exempted from abuses such as the double taxation, the pogroms, etc., that fell on Talmudic Judaism. Today there are some 30,000 Karaites, concentrated largely in Israel; small communities are also found in the United States, Poland, France, and Turkey.

## Kabbalah Emerges

One of the basic works that was to impact all subsequent mystical movements in Judaism is the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, (or *Zohar* for short). This

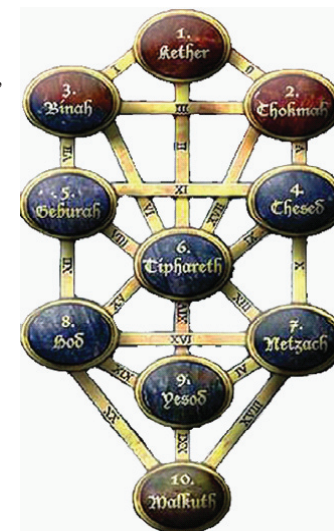
monumental work was composed by Moses de León (born in León, Spain), who lived in Guadalajara, former Spanish kingdom of Castile, until 1290, and thereafter led a life of wandering. De León was a prolific writer, completely immersed in mysticism. The *Zohar*, his greatest work, was written over 30 years in Aramaic.

## Zohar

The *Zohar* depicts the Godhead as a dynamic flow of force: above and beyond all human contemplation is God as he is in himself, the unknowable, immutable *Ein-Sof* (Infinite “Nothingness”). Other aspects or attributes, knowable through God’s relation to the created world, “emanate” from *Ein-Sof* in a configuration of ten *sefirot* (realms or planes), through which the divine power further radiates to create the cosmos. Zoharic theosophy concentrates on the nature and interaction of these ten *sefirot* as symbols of the inner life and processes of the Godhead.

## The Ten Sefirot:

1. *Kether Elyon*, “Supreme Crown”
2. *Chokhmah*, “Wisdom”
3. *Binah*, “Intelligence”
4. *Chesed*, “Love”; or *Gedullah*, “Greatness”
5. *Geburah*, “Power”
6. *Tiphareth*, “Beauty”
7. *Nezach*, “Lasting Endurance”
8. *Hod*, “Majesty”
9. *Yesed*, “Foundation”; or *Zaddik*, “Righteous One”
10. *Malkuth*, “Kingdom”



## Interior Workings of Cosmos

Because the *sefirot* are viewed as archetypes for everything in the world of creation, an understanding of their workings ostensibly illuminate the inner workings of the entire cosmos and all of history.

The *Zohar* thereby provides a cosmic-symbolic interpretation of Judaism, and of the history of Israel, in which the *Torah* and commandments—as well as Israel’s life in exile—become symbols for events and processes in the inner life of God. Thus, the proper observance of the commandments by man assumes a cosmic significance.

## Ein-Sof

The concept of *Ein-Sof* is, among other things, a tragic attempt to *de-personalize* God. In contrast to the unknowable “nothingness” (their words) of *Ein-Sof*, or the unknowable, capricious (and thus, untrust-worthy) *Allah* of the *Quran*, the *YHWH* of the Old Testament is a God who delights in making—and *keeping*—His promises!

## Kabbalah Errors

Any attempt to chart the “inner life” of the Godhead, by means of the *sefirot* or any other, is akin to “uncovering the Father’s nakedness,” a sin of grave disrespect emphasized in the *Tenach* itself! (cf. Gen 9:22-27; 2 Sam 16:22; et al.). The disciplines of *Kabbalah* include meditative practices that promise to enable individuals to share and participate in the diverse dimensions of God’s being. [Similar to the claims of New Age aspirants as well.]

## Lurianic Kabbalah

The 16<sup>th</sup>-century *Lurianic Kabbalah* (named for its formulator, Isaac ben Solomon Luria) developed dramatically the cosmic aspect of the *Zohar*. The Lurianic system represented a response to the cataclysmic experience of Jewish exiles expelled from Iberia in the 1490s and it projected this experience onto the divine world.

In this system, the *Ein-Sof* withdrew into itself (*tzimtzum*) at the outset of creation, making room for the world, but also for evil. A cosmic catastrophe occurred during emanation when vessels of the divine light shattered and the sparks were imprisoned in the world in shards of evil (*qelippot*).

Luria held that God, as well as Israel, was in need of redemption from exile, and that humanity was assigned the critical role in the cosmic drama of redemption (*tiqqun*). The human task, through prayer and proper observance of the commandments, becomes nothing less than the redemption (*tiqqun*) of the world and the reunification of the Godhead. It would seem that without you and me, God won’t be able to get His act together!? Get serious.

There was, indeed, a *man* assigned the critical role in this cosmic drama who was, indeed, fully qualified, worthy, and capable for the role. He is presently sitting on His Father’s throne as you read this.

Luria’s thought provided the basis for transforming *Kabbalah* into a popular, Messianic movement that infused the rabbinic traditions and affected all Jewry, paving the way for Sabbatian Messianism (after Sabbatai Zevi) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and Hasidism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Hasidic Judaism

In the Hebrew Bible, the word *hasid* usually refers to a pious or righteous person (Ps 32:6). (The plural is *hasidim*). By the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, the term *hasid* implied a person involved in a specifically mystical form of contemplative piety. It came to be applied to a group of German Jewish mystics known as the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* (“German Pietists”) who became known for rigorous ascetic practices designed to suppress the power of physical appetites to place the body under the dominion of the soul as it strove for intimate knowledge of God.

*Hasidism*, as we know it today, developed in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in Eastern Europe from the *Kabbalah*, and continues today in dozens of Hasidic communities around the world. Some communities consist of only a few hundred members in isolated Jewish neighborhoods of New York City, Los Angeles, and Jerusalem. Other Hasidic groups, such as the *Satmar Hasidim* and the *Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidim*, have an international membership numbering in the tens of thousands. All of these communities trace their origins to a single individual, 18<sup>th</sup>-century rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, better known to the Jewish world as the *Baal Shem Tov* (Hebrew for “Master of the Divine Name”) credited with miraculous cures.

## Summary

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Mosaic Judaism      | Exodus - Ezra                             |
| • Pharisaical Judaism | Gospel period                             |
| • Talmudic Judaism    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> century |
| • Kabbalah            | 12 <sup>th</sup> century                  |
| • Hasidic Judaism     | 18 <sup>th</sup> century                  |

## Gematria

In *Kabbalah*, great importance is attached to manifold manipulations of letters and numbers, particularly those involved in many of the “Names of God,” to which are ascribed magical properties. The manipulation of the numeric values attached to the alphabet is called *Gematria*, and there are virtually unlimited varieties of “rules” for their use.

## Forms of Gematria

- 1) *Ragil* (nominal).
- 2) *Kolel*, the *ragil* values plus the number of letters in the word.
- 3) *Katan*, small values; all tens and hundreds reduced to 1 - 9 by summing the digits. (Also called “reduced” values.)
- 4) *Hakadmi*, nominal values plus the values of each letter preceding it.
- 5) *Hameruba Haklali*, the value of the word *squared*.
- 6) *Hameruba Haperati*, the sum of the squares of each individual letter.
- 7) *Miluy*, the sums of the values of the *names* of each letter that makes up the word. (Also called “filling.”)

“If you torture the data long enough, it will eventually confess to anything!”)

## Cryptology

It was the esoteric skills of the Jewish Kabbalists who were attached to the courts of Europe which developed the techniques of cryptology which emerged during the Renaissance. These techniques led to mechanical aids, ultimately culminating in the *Enigma* coding machines of the Germans during World War II. In turn, this accelerated the development of the computers to defeat them—by John Von Neuman in the U.S. and Alan Turing in Great Britain.

These computers, in turn, have now led to the *rediscovery* of some of the astonishing properties of the Biblical text that has caused such sensationalism—some valid, much fanciful—today (cf. *Cosmic Codes*, 2004).

## Occult Practices

Anyone with a modicum of Biblical literacy should realize that occult practices are *expressly prohibited* in the Scriptures: Scripture condemns by name spiritism, mediums (“channeling”), and necromancy (Deut 18:9-12; 2 Chr 33:2, 3, 6); various forms of sorcery and divination (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:9-12, 14; Hos 4:12; Ex 22:18; Isa 44:25; 29:8, 9; Ezek 21:21; cf. 1 Sam 15:23); astrology (Deut 17:2-5; 2 Kgs 17:15-17; Isa 47:9-14); and magic (Acts 13:8; 19:16-19; Isa 47:9, 12).

In ancient Israel, divination was a capital crime; if someone was caught casting a horoscope, or other occultic practice, they were put to death.

Why? Because God is jealous of His uniqueness, and He alone knows what the future holds (Isa 46:10; 45:3, 5). To intrude on His office is to attempt to intrude on His glory (Ex 19:12, 13; 1 Chr 16:22 cf. David quoting Psalm 105:15).

Occult activity also courts deception and betrayal from the demonic realm, and promotes evil under the guise of legitimate religious practice. Occult involvement will eventually lead to judgment for those who refuse to forsake it (Rev 22:15; 2 Chr 33:6).

## Kabbalah’s Errors

De-personalize God? Uncovering the Father’s nakedness? Occult practices? For all these errors, Paul had one remedy, the *epignosis*—superknowledge—of the fullness of God in Jesus Christ.

- 19] And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

The mystic, while believing that he is in touch with a higher reality, has, in fact, lost connection with the Head (Jn 15:1-5).

## Three Warnings

- Let no man judge you (Col 2:16,17);
  - Let no man beguile you of your reward (Col 2:18,19);
  - Let no one enslave you (Col 2:20-23).
- 20] Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

“...if”: Condition of the first class, assumed as true (“since”).

“...rudiments”: or, elements; row or a series. In Greece, rudiments also meant the elemental spirits of the universe, the angels that influence the heavenly bodies; one of the words in the astrological vocabulary of that day.

The **rudiments** (*stoicheia*) or *elemental spirits* are identified 1) with demonic powers to whom have been delegated authority in the cosmos and, therefore, over men (Col 2:15) or 2) with angelic powers generally who mediated the law and exercised in the old age a certain suzerainty over men.

## Astrology (excerpted from *Sky & Telescope*, Aug.1989)

1984 Gallup Poll: 55% of American teenagers believe in astrology! But empirical results prove: *It Doesn't Work!*

**Marital compatibility:** Psychologist Bernard Silverman of Michigan State University analyzed birth dates of 2978 couples who were getting married and 478 who were getting divorced. No correlations with predicted compatibility.

**Professional aptitude:** Random expectation of 34% achieved [*Nature*, December 5, 1985.] French statistician Michel Gauquelin sent the horoscope for one of the worst mass murderers in French history to 150 people and asked how well it fit them; 94% said they recognized themselves in the description. Geoffrey Dean, an Australian researcher, *reversed* the astrological readings of 22 subjects: 95% identified themselves with the *reversed* readings. Astronomers Culver and Ianna tracked the published predictions of well-known astrologers and astrological organizations for five years. Out of 3000 predictions, only 10% came to pass.

## 10 Questions for Astrologers

- 1) What is the likelihood that 1/12th of the world's population is having the same kind of day today?
- 2) Why is the moment of birth, not conception, crucial for astrology? Why don't identical twins always have the same personality?!
- 3) If the mother's womb can keep out astrological influences until birth, can we do the same with a slab of steak?
- 4) If astrologers are as good as they claim, why aren't they richer? (e.g.: stock market, etc. How many foresaw Black Monday, October 1987? The plunge of 2008? None.)
- 5) Aren't all horoscopes done before the discovery of the three outermost planets incorrect? (Uranus, 1781; Neptune, 1846; Pluto, 1930)
- 6) Shouldn't we condemn astrology as a form of bigotry? (i.e., refusing to hire a Leo or date a Virgo, etc.)
- 7) Why do different schools of astrology disagree so strongly with each other? (Ex: Precession of the Earth's axis, how many planets and celestial objects to be included, allocation of personality traits, etc. No convergence of consensus.)
- 8) If the astrological influence is carried by any known force, why do the planets dominate? The obstetrician who delivers the child turns out to have about six times the gravitational pull of Mars and about 2,000 billion times its tidal force (less mass, but a lot closer!)

- 9) If astrological influence is carried by an unknown force, why is it independent of distance? The importance of Mars in a horoscope is identical whether the planet is on the same side of the sun as the Earth or seven times farther away on the other side, etc.
- 10) If astrological influences don't depend on distance, why is there no astrology of stars, galaxies, and quasars? Doesn't the omission of Rigel, the Crab pulsar, and M31 render a horoscope incomplete?

## Additional Sources

*Astronomy versus Astrology*, 20 page pamphlet, Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 390 Ashton Ave., San Francisco, CA, 94112.

*Astrology: True or False*, by Roger Culver and Philip Ianna, 1988, Prometheus Books, 700 E. Amherst St., Buffalo, NY 14215. Best skeptical book on the subject.

## "Jetology"?

A "new science" not weighed down by tradition and history: taken from the position of all jumbo jets at the moment of birth... etc.

- 21] (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
- 22] Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

"...commandments and doctrines of men": Cf. Eve's carnal exaggeration: Gen 3:3 (vs. Gen 2:16-17). Asceticism, the pseudo-spiritual ritual that revels in rules of physical self-denial, is based on man's rules. Circumcision, a sign of grace becomes *a condition* of grace... The ascetic's entire life is wrapped up in a system of rules.

## Asceticism

Paul condemned legalism and mysticism; next he attacked and condemned *asceticism*. An ascetic practices rigorous self-denial and even self-mortification in order to become more spiritual.

Ascetic practices were popular during the Middle Ages: wearing hair shirts next to the skin, sleeping on hard beds, whipping oneself, not speaking for days (maybe years), going without food or sleep, etc.

- God "giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).
- Foods have been "created to be received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim 4:3).
- But the "commandments and doctrines" of the false teachers re-

- placed the inspired Word of God (Mk 7:6-9).
- God gave foods to be used, and they “perish with the using” (Col 2:22).
- Jesus explained that food went into the stomach, not the heart (Mk 7:18ff).
- “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself” (Rom 14:14).

23] Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

The “flesh”: doctrinally, the nature which fallen man has inherited from his first father. Human nature is something we are to rise above (1 Cor 9:27). [Which “dog” wins? The one I feed the most.]

Monasticism is not the answer. Untold thousands of monks, hermits, and ascetics of all descriptions have proved that they are useless against the indulgences of the flesh. By creating a reputation for superior sanctity, as some did, they did not really honor God but only satisfied the flesh.

This section closes the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Colossians, in which the emphasis was on *danger*. Paul defended the preeminence of Jesus Christ, and he refuted the false doctrines of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism:

- The answer to legalism is the spiritual reality we have in Christ.
- The answer to mysticism is the spiritual union with Christ, the Head of the church.
- The answer to asceticism is our position in Christ in death, burial, and resurrection.

Wrong doctrine always leads to wrong living. Right doctrine should lead to right living. In the two concluding chapters, Paul applied the preeminence of Christ to the daily affairs of life. If Christ is truly preeminent in our lives, then we will glorify Him by keeping pure, by enjoying fellowship with other saints, by loving each other at home and being faithful at work, and by seeking to witness for Christ and serve Him effectively.

Unless *doctrine leads to duty*, it is of no use to us.

As we study this profound letter, we must heed Paul’s warnings: “Lest any man should beguile you” (Col 2:4); “Lest any man spoil you” (Col 2:8); “Let no man therefore judge you!” (Col 2:16).

## Next Session

Study Colossians 3:1-17. What is God’s *primary* jealousy? Is there a specific judgment for its violation? Is there a “litmus test” to reveal its commitment?

## The Epistle to the Colossians Session 6 Chapter 3:1 - 17

Paul always gives the doctrinal section and then the practical section. Chapters 3 (after v.4) and 4 comprise the practical section of Colossians.

## Review

Is there any sense in which “we are on probation”? Just what *are* our responsibilities? After his lengthy digression (Col 2:13-23), Paul returns to apply the truth of verse 12: “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

After all, it does little good if Christians *declare* and *defend* the truth, but fail to *demonstrate* it in their lives. There are some Christians who will defend the truth at the drop of a hat, but their personal lives deny the doctrines they profess to love (Cf. Titus 1:16). We must keep in mind that the pagan religions of Paul’s day said little or nothing about personal morality. What a person believed had no direct relationship with how he behaved, and no one would condemn a person for his behavior.

## Outline of Colossians

### DOCTRINE: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE **DECLARED** Chapter 1

- |    |                       |         |
|----|-----------------------|---------|
| A. | In the Gospel message | 1:1–12  |
| B. | In redemption         | 1:13–14 |
| C. | In Creation           | 1:15–17 |
| D. | In the church         | 1:18–29 |

### DANGER: CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE **DEFENDED** Chapter 2

- |    |                                |         |
|----|--------------------------------|---------|
| A. | Beware of empty philosophies   | 2:1–10  |
| B. | Beware of religious legalism   | 2:11–17 |
| C. | Beware of man-made disciplines | 2:18–23 |

A.	In personal purity	3:1-11
B.	In Christian fellowship	3:12-17
C.	In the home	3:18-21
D.	In daily work	3:22-4:1
E.	In Christian witness	4:2-6
F.	In Christian service	4:7-18

### Three Instructions

- 1) Seek the Heavenly (Col 3:1-4)
- 2) Slay the Earthly (Col 3:5-9)
- 3) Strengthen the Christly (Col 3:10-11)

#### 1) Seek the Heavenly (Col 3:1-4)

- We died with Christ v.3a (Cf. Rom 6-8)
- We live in Christ v.4a (Cf. Phil 1:21)
- We are raised with Christ v.1a
- We are hidden in Christ v.3b
- We are glorified in Christ v.4b

- 1) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

“If”: Should be translated “Since...” 1<sup>st</sup> class condition: assumes that the premise (*protasis*) is true for the sake of argument; with any mood and tense in the *apodosis*. [Greek has more ability than English in describing the kind of relationship between the *protasis* and the *apodosis*. It is possible for the writer/speaker to indicate whether the *protasis* is true or not.]

“...seek”: “having an urgency and a desire and an ambition.” There should be an excitement that goes with seeking spiritual things.

- 2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

“...on things above”: Think heaven. Set your watch on “HQ time.” Daniel, when he was a captive of Babylon, yet reckoned his time to Jerusalem, 200 miles to the west (e.g. Dan 9:21).

Politics: “How you stand depends upon where you sit.” Where are *you* seated? “In the heaventies” (Eph 1:3, 10; 2:6).

A warning against false systems which attempt to rob the believer of the great unity with Christ in His death and resurrection (Col 2:13-23).

“...things on the earth”: “In Adam” we are fallen. “In Christ” we have received a new life from Him and, *therefore*, we are not to think of ourselves as in any sense on probation. We do not stand before God on the ground of responsibility. The “responsible man” utterly failed to keep his obligations. There was nothing for him but condemnation, but the Lord Jesus Christ has borne that condemnation (Rom 8:1). “Things on earth”: Idols? = Any alternative obsession.

Don’t expect the world to understand us. Cain hated Abel because his own works were unacceptable. Even the Lord said, “They hated Me without a cause” (Jn 15:25). [Cf. Ps 69...]

- 3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

“...ye are dead”: We have *died* in Christ (Rom 6-8). He died *for us* (substitution); we have died *with* Him (identification); He not only died *for* sin, bearing its penalty, but He died *unto* sin, breaking its power.

Our link that has bound us to the world—and all its purposes—has been severed, and we are *freed* from all necessity to be subject to sin in the flesh (Rom 5:1ff).

Two deaths; the order is important. 1<sup>st</sup>: separation of the soul and the body; 2<sup>nd</sup>: separation of soul from God. (Our “second” was taken care of at the cross; Cf. Jude 1:12; Rev 2:11; Rev 20:6, 14; 21:8).

“...life is hid”: Our life is in *His* safekeeping. “Whoever heard of a man drowning with his head that high above water!” Nothing can separate us from the risen Christ (Rom 8:31-39). The Christian life is a “hidden life” as far as the world is concerned, because the world does not know Christ (1 Jn 4:5, 6).

- 4) When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

“...then shall ye also appear with him”: “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). How can we appear *with* Him, but for a *pre-trib* rapture? Contrast: 1 Thess 1:5-11.

This ends the doctrinal teaching; Christ is the antidote for every form of error. What a gospel! It makes nothing of man and everything of Christ.

## 2) Slay the Earthly (Col 3:5-9)

Paul will now focus on the practical holiness that derives from the first two chapters... More than declare and defend the truth, it is important to demonstrate it.

- Verses 5-11: relates to *ourselves*;
- Verses 12-17: our relationship with *others*.

Note the order: we must be right with ourselves before we can be right toward others.

- 5] Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

“Mortify”: νεκρώσατε [*nekrōsate*]: Put to death; Take them to the undertaker...We are to deal *unsparingly* with the sins of the flesh.

“...fornication”: πορνείαν [*porneian*]: sexual immorality in general (a characteristic of our world as well as that of the Colossians);

“...uncleanness”: ἀκαθαρσίαν [*akatharsian*]: lustful impurity connected with loose living;

“...inordinate affection”: παθος [*pathos*]: inappropriate and excessive affection: appetites seek opportunities to satisfy themselves;

“...evil concupiscence”: ἐπιθυμίαν κακὴν [*epithumian kakēn*] (base, evil desires; unlawful lusts): desires lead to deeds. To purify our actions, we must first purify our minds and hearts. “Taking every thought captive...” (2 Cor 10:5).

“...covetousness”: πλεονεξίαν [*pleonexian*]: Putting things in the place of God; worship of self) which is Idolatry.” (Cf. Ex 20:17). No excuse can be offered on the ground of the innate tendencies of human nature (cf. Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:19; 5:5).

- 6] For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

The “wraths” of God: Eternal Wrath (vs. sin...); Eschatological Wrath (Rev 6-19); Calamitous Wrath (Gen 6-9); Consequential Wrath (Gal 6:7); and, Abandonment Wrath (Judg 16:20; Prov 1:24-32; Hosea 4:17; Rom 1:18-32).

## Abandonment Wrath

*And [Delilah] said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.*

Judges 16:20

How can we tell if God has “abandoned” us?

*Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.*

Hosea 4:17

“Ephraim” (37 times in Hosea) is God’s synecdoche for the Northern Kingdom, the name of its dominant tribal constituent. The parallels between “Ephraim” and the U.S. is sobering, conspicuous and relevant.

“Let him alone” has a painful note of finality (cf. Rev 22:11).

*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.*

Proverbs 1:24-32

Is there a *national* indicator that would confirm God’s abandonment? *There is a specific judgment of God clearly so identified!*

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped*

*and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

Romans 1:18-32

- 7] In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Paul then turned to “social sins.” [G. Campbell Morgan called these “the sins in good standing.”]

- 8] But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Now *that’s* our pollution problem!

“...anger”: Anger cherished begets wrath.

“wrath”: Wrath, if not judged, begets malice.

“...malice”: Malice is an attitude of ill will toward another (Eph 4:26: “let not the sun set on your wrath...”).

“...blasphemy”: Slander, either Godward or manward. To impute evil to God, or seek to misrepresent Him, or pervert the truth as to the Father, the Son, or the Spirit...To speak injuriously of one another, to circulate wicked and untruthful reports against one’s brethren—as seems so common, even in “Christian” newsletters or websites!

“...filthy communication”: It is just that: foul speech, coarse humor, obscene language. Some Christians think it is manly or contemporary to use this kind of speech: If someone says, “Now, take this with a grain

of salt!” you can remind him of Colossians 4:6: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” Salt is a symbol of purity, and grace and purity go together.

- 9] Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Lying is one of the very first evidences of the carnal nature. “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Ps 58:3). A lie is a misrepresentation of truth, *even if the words are accurate*. It involves the intent to deceive. When a Christian lies, he is cooperating with Satan, the father of lies (Jn 8:44). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 15:26).

“...put off”...“put on”: These are terms of changing our garments. (In the Greek, the grammar indicates a “once and for all” action.)

“Habits” = garments. At His resurrection, Jesus left His grave clothes behind. Cf. **Lazarus**: Dead (Jn 11:14); **Defeated**; yet entangled in his grave clothes (Jn 11:44); **Dangerous** (Jn 12:10); and **Dining** with our Lord (Jn 12:2).

### 3) Strengthen the Christly (Col 3:10-11)

- 10] And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

“...renewed” = present participle, indicating “constantly being renewed.” Cf. Rom 12:1,2. [Do see Nancy Missler’s study of these verses in *Be Ye Transformed*.] This is the very opposite of legalism: the spontaneous expression of the life of the Head in the members here on earth!

“...after the image of him”: Man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27). When man sinned, this image of God was marred and ruined. Adam’s children were born in the image of their father (Gen 5:1, 3). In spite of the ravages of sin, man still bears the image of God (Gen 9:6; James 3:9).

We were *formed* in God’s image, and *deformed* from God’s image by sin. But through Jesus Christ, we can be *transformed* into God’s image! We must be renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph 4:23).

As we grow in knowledge of the Word of God, we will be transformed by the Spirit of God to share in the glorious image of God (2 Cor

3:18). God transforms us by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2) and this involves the study of God's Word. It is the truth that sets us free from the old life (John 8:31-32). God's purpose for us is that we be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29).

- 11] Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

"...Barbarian, Scythian": Greeks regarded all non-Greeks as "barbarians." However, the Scythian was proverbially the worst! [N. beyond the Caspian and Black Sea: "Caucasian"(!?)] All distinctions irrelevant: national, religious, et al. Ministries that are built upon human distinctions, such as race, color, social standing, etc., *are not Biblical*.

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

Galatians 6:15,16

## Pursuit of Holiness

- Verses 5-11: Relates to *ourselves*;
- Verses 12-17: Our relationship with *others*.

- 12] Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

"...elect of God": Those whom He has foreknown from outside of time (eternity) and who are manifest in time as believers in His Son. [Were you *chosen* of God? Cf. Deut 7:7-8.] *When?* Before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).

God's sovereign purpose exemplified in these two verses:

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Romans 8:29,30

Spurgeon quipped: "God chose me before I was born. I'm glad He did; otherwise He might have changed His mind!" *Uncertainty about election can arise from some kind of self-righteousness...*

This eternal choice and foreknowledge involves more than establishing a relationship between God and believers—it involves the *certainty*

*of our sanctification!* Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son (Rom 8:29).

## A Chain of 5 Links (Romans 8:29-30)

- 1) Foreknow (God's Knowledge): The process starts with Foreknowledge. The entire group is brought into God's eternal plan by divine foreknowledge and choice is predestined, "predetermined."
- 2) Predestinate (Abraham): Simply planned in advance (Eph 1:4-6).
- 3) Called (Issac): The efficacious call to come to Him (Jn 10:27; Rom 1:6; 8:28).
- 4) Justified (Jacob): Declared righteous (Rom 5:1; cf. 3:24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9).
- 5) Glorified (Joseph): "Those...he also"; Rom 8:30 (Cf. 3:23; 8:17; Col. 1:27; 3:4).

"Glorified" is another way of saying that God's children will be "conformed" to His Son; and that is God's ultimate "purpose." No longer will they "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). In the process *not a single person is lost*. (How many were missing from Noah's Ark?)

## Paradigm of Divine Volition

- Foreknowledge determines Election;
- Predestination brings to pass the Election;
- Election looks back to Foreknowledge;
- Predestination looks forward to Destiny.

## Divine Election

- Corporate: Israel (Isa 45) and the Church (Eph 1:4).
- Individual: According to the foreknowledge of God (1 Pet 1:2); wholly of grace, not human merit (Rom 9:11; 11:5,6), whereby certain are chosen for Himself (Jn 15:19) or for distinctive service (Lk 6:13; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor 1:27,28).

Predestination has to do with God's purpose with His people; it refers only to those who are saved.

- Election = people of God
- Predestination = purposes of God

- 12] Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

“...holy (set apart) and beloved”: Those who have been set apart in Christ; sanctified by the blood of the everlasting covenant, dear to God because they are His own children, partakers of the Divine Nature.

“...bowels”: an ancient idiom equivalent to our use of “heart” to express the deepest feelings of humanity. Stirred with deep compassion. We need to express our tender feelings of compassion to one another (Phil 2:1ff).

“...mercies, kindness”: Mercies and kindness are our “inner vestments.” [David’s treatment of Mephibosheth, the crippled prince of Saul’s family, to show the kindness of God (2 Sam 9).

“...humbleness of mind”: The next is a cap for the head: “humbleness of mind.” Pride is a stench in God’s nostrils. It was through pride that sin was introduced through Lucifer (Isa 14:12-17). Leaven is a “type” of sin; it corrupts by puffing up. Humbleness of mind is not thinking poorly of oneself; it is having the proper estimate of oneself in the will of God (Rom 12:1-3).

In contrast with the world’s (and psychotherapy’s) pursuit of “self-esteem,” we are to take on a vesture of *meekness*. Meekness is not weakness; it is power under control (i.e., a soothing wind, a healing medicine, a broken colt). This is composed of rarer material than most suppose. Moses also was meek (Num 12:3). We are told to seek meekness (Zeph 2:3) and Jesus is the model (Mt 11:29). I know of no other source than God’s presence and we need to constantly seek it.

“...longsuffering”: (lit. “long-tempered”) = readiness to endure grief or suffering wrongfully. It is natural for us, when falsely accused, to feel we must defend ourselves, or to resent such treatment. When King Hezekiah and his officers were taunted by the adversary, charging them falsely and threatening severe treatment, the king’s command was, “Answer them not a word” (2 Kgs 18:36; Isa 36:21).

God can be depended upon to vindicate His own if they do not attempt to vindicate themselves, “praying for those who spitefully use them and who persecute them.” (Mt 5:44). Again, Jesus is the model (Ps 35:11).

- 13] Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

“Forbearing”: lit. “to hold up” one another (cf. Eph 4:32).

“...forgiving on another”: Forgiveness opens the heart to the fullness of the love of God (Mt 6:14,15). How much—and how frequently—has He forgiven *you*? The Christian’s “bar of soap” (1 Jn 1:9). But you need *to ask* one for forgiveness! Don’t say you’re “sorry”; it needs to be a two-party transaction: you ask, the other forgives.

- 14] And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

“...put on charity”: In the clothing of *spiritual* warfare, we need a white belt, not a black one. The pinnacle of gifts is *ἀγάπη agape* (1 Cor 13). Love is the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22); the others follow (v.15 next).

The biggest shortage *in the Body of Christ* is Love. Mahatma Ghandi was asked, “What is the biggest obstacle to Christianity in India? His answer: “Christians.” (Cf. Ex 20:7!).

- 15] And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

“...rule”: *βραβεύω brabeuo* is an athletic term: it means “to preside at the games and distribute the prizes.” In the Greek games, there were judges (we would call them *umpires*) who rejected the contestants who were not qualified, and who disqualified those who broke the rules.

“...be ye thankful”: How *much* we have to be thankful for! One of our most common sins is ingratitude. Always, for *all* things (Eph 5:20).

- 16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

“...word of Christ”! (only here) Does His Word dwell *in you*?

“...spiritual songs” Songs are important. Our lives are to be lyrical and filled with the melody of Him. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh 8:10).

“...singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”: [It is sobering to contrast the richness of theology of the classic hymns with the somewhat vapid lyrics of today...] A hymn is addressed to *Him*. From our hearts, not our lips. This is all parallel to Eph 5:18-6:9.

There is a danger today, as there was in Paul's day, that local churches minimize the Word of God. There is (according to Paul) a definite relationship between our knowledge of the Bible and our expression of worship in song.

One way we teach and encourage ourselves and others is through the singing of the Word of God. But if we do not know the Bible and understand it, we cannot honestly sing it from our hearts. Perhaps this "poverty of Scripture" in our churches is one cause of the abundance of unbiblical songs that we have today.

- 17] And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

*This verse summarizes it all!*

"...the name of the Lord Jesus": His Name: names were assigned to reflect our character. Often they were changed: Abraham & Sarah: the "n" (*heh*) to reflect the Spirit); Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul, et al.

Our entire life—every detail—is to be put in subjection to the Lord. This is the ultimate test of appropriateness, conduct, etc. Can you do "X" in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks? There is no room for self-will, self-assertiveness. He doesn't want to be "No.1" on a list of 10; He is to be No.1 on a list of one!

Even the Lord of the Universe "...came not to do Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me" (Jn 5:30; 6:38).

Comparing the Ephesians passage (Eph 5:18-21) with this one, we are to be "filled with the Spirit" as well as filled with His Word.

"...giving thanks": 5<sup>th</sup> of 6 references in this letter (Col 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2). Remember, Paul was a Roman prisoner while writing this!

## Four Motivations

- 1) We forgive because Christ forgave us (Col 3:13).
- 2) The peace of Christ that should rule in our hearts (Col 3:15).
- 3) The Word of Christ should dwell in us richly (Col 3:16).
- 4) The name of Christ should be our identification and our authority. "Christ is all, and in all" (Col 3:11).

## Next Session

Study Colossians 3:18 - 4:1: Why is the government the predictable purveyor of immorality? Why will many Christians be disappointed when they get to heaven? Why was Paul so fearful of "being a castaway"?

## The Epistle to the Colossians Session 7 Chapter 3:18-25

### Four Motives

The Grace of Christ (Col 3:12-14):

- God chose them v. 12
- God set them apart v. 12
- God loves them v. 12
- God has forgiven them vv. 13-14

### Outline of Colossians

#### DOCTRINE: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DECLARED Chapter 1

- A. In the Gospel message 1:1-12
- B. In redemption 1:13-14
- C. In Creation 1:15-17
- D. In the church 1:18-29

#### DANGER: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED Chapter 2

- A. Beware of empty philosophies 2:1-10
- B. Beware of religious legalism 2:11-17
- C. Beware of man-made disciplines 2:18-23

#### DUTY: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED Ch. 3-4

- A. In personal purity 3:1-11
- B. In Christian fellowship 3:12-17
- C. **In the home 3:18-21**
- D. **In daily work 3:22-4:1**
- E. In Christian witness 4:2-6
- F. In Christian service 4:7-18

The first institution God founded on earth was the home (Gen 2:18-25; Mt 19:1-6). [The following statistics were excerpted from Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's article "Dan Quayle was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1993.]

## Our Dysfunctional Society

In the postwar generation: 80% grew up in a family with two biological parents who were married to each other. Since 1980, less than 50% expect to spend their entire childhood in an intact family. An increasing number of children will experience family breakup *two or even three times* during childhood.

## Broken Families

Scientific evidence demonstrates that children in disrupted families do worse than those of intact families: they are 6X more likely to be poor; 22% of one parent families will experience poverty during childhood for 7 years or more, vs. 2% of children in two-parent families.

Children of single parent families are 3X as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems and more likely to drop out of high school, get pregnant as teenagers, abuse drugs, or be in trouble with the law. They are also at higher risk for physical or sexual abuse and less likely to be successful as adults: esp. in love, and in work. They have a harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job.

Teen suicide rate has tripled; juvenile crime has increased and become more violent; school performance has continued to decline. Welfare dependency tends to be passed on from one generation to the next.

Daughters of single parents are: 53% more likely to marry as teenagers; 111% more likely to have children as teenagers; 164% more likely to have premarital birth; and, 92% more likely to dissolve their own marriages.

Problems since the 1960s: after the Supreme Court outlawed mentioning God in schools: Divorce: 10/1000; then sudden growth to (1979) 23/1000.

In 1974 divorce exceeded death as leading cause of family breakup. In 1990: 1 out of 4 women had a child while unmarried. Half of all marriages now end in divorce. Remarried couples are more likely to break

up than couples in first marriages (56%). 1 in 4 children will eventually enter a stepfamily. Hollywood celebrates divorce and unwed motherhood. Federal policy celebrates social and sexual variances

## The "Me" Generation

Fewer than half of all adult Americans today regard the idea of sacrifice for others as a positive moral value. The adult's quest for freedom, independence, and choice in family relationships conflicts with a child's developmental needs for stability, constancy, harmony, and permanence in family life.

Each divorce is the death of a small civilization. It inflicts wounds that never heal. Survey after survey demonstrates that Americans are less inclined than they were a generation ago to value sexual fidelity, lifelong marriage, and parenthood as worthwhile personal goals.

## The Lack of Love in America

The love of many will grow cold (Mt 24:12). The most basic form: the family.

Heterosexuals reproduce; homosexuals recruit. God's judgment as Creator (Rom 1:18-32). The family serves as the seedbed for virtues. This is the first generation in the nation's history to do worse psychologically, socially, and economically than its parents.

See also our briefing package, *Being Faithful in a Faithless World*, and our *Expositional Commentary on Ephesians*. Is your home a refuge or a battleground?

## The Insidious Cycle

Our government is now the *purveyor* of immorality. Why are we surprised? Governments have always loved crises: they provide the rationale for increasing budgets and bureaucracies, and subjugating the population. Most new dictators create external crises to consolidate their internal powers.

In our country, they long ago learned that *social* crises serve as well as military ones. There is one insight that supplies a key missing link: *immorality* results in social crises. Is it any surprise to learn that *governments have an enormous incentive to promote immorality*?!

18] Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

One rule for wives (cf. Eph 5:22-27).

19] Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

One rule for husbands (Eph 5 also). There's only one rule for each; why can't we simply follow them?

"...be not bitter": A "root of bitterness" in a home can poison the marriage relationship and give Satan a foothold (Eph 4:31; Heb 12:15).

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" is a wise policy to follow if you want to have a happy home (Eph 4:26).

20] Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

One rule for children: Decalogue commitment, with a promise (Ex 20:12; cf. Lev 19:3; Stoned: Deut 21:18-21; Prov 6:20; Mt 19:19 Eph 6:1-3). Lack of obedience of children a sign of moral decay in the nation (Isa 3:4, 12). Children who do not obey their parents when young will not obey their parents when older. For the most part, children do not *create* problems; they *reveal* them.

## Commitment to Honesty and Devotion

We have lost the concept of the "sanctity of commitment"—in our marriages and in our businesses. We have a society which completely severed any ostensible connection between Character and Destiny.

Even in the Christian Body, we have so focused on grace that we have abandoned any practical call to obedience and holiness. Our conduct is to be our *primary* form of witness to what God has done in our lives.

21] Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

One rule for fathers. We are to imitate Him who is *our* Father-God. [The word *fathers* in Col 3:21 could be translated "parents," as it is in Heb 11:23. Paul made it clear that parents must make it as easy as possible for children to obey.]

22] Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:  
[Incidentally, the peasants in the feudal period owed their landowners

25% of their produce; we are required to pay over 60% (counting state and municipal taxes as well as federal.) You work until August before you earn anything for yourself!]

If this applies to bondmen, how much more to those of us who have (a measure of) freedom of our choices of employment?

"...singleness of heart": in honest dedication; we owe *fiduciary* duties to our employers! ...as to Lord Himself!

*Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

Colossians 4:1

(This 1<sup>st</sup> verse of Chapter 4 concludes these topics in Chapter 3.) The duties of an employee to his employer is simply 60 minutes of faithful work for each hour paid. *But the Christian, however, should be a fiduciary which is a much higher calling* (normally just applying to senior management responsibilities).

## Basic Vocabulary

- **Faithful:** Firmly adhering to duty; of true fidelity; loyal; true to allegiance; constant in the performance of duties or services; true to one's word; honest; *loyal*.

*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

1 Corinthians 4:2

- **Fiduciary:** The relation existing when one person justifiably reposes confidence, faith, and reliance in another whose aid, advice, and protection is sought in some matter; the relation existing when good conscience requires one to act at all times for the sole benefit and interests of another with loyalty to those interests; the relation by law existing between certain classes of persons (as confidential advisors and the one advised; executors or administrators and legatees or heirs; corporate directors or officers).

## The Requirements of a Fiduciary

*Many forms of conduct permissible in a workaday world for those acting at arm's length, are forbidden to those bound by fiduciary ties. A trustee is held to something stricter than the morals of the marketplace. Not honesty alone, but the punctilio of an honor the most sensitive, is then the standard of behavior. As to this there has developed a tradition that is*

*unbending and inveterate. Uncompromising rigidity has been the attitude of the courts of equity when petitioned to undermine the rule of undivided loyalty by the “disintegrating erosion” of particular exceptions... Only thus has the level of conduct for fiduciaries been kept at a level higher than that trodden by the crowd.*

—Justice Cardozo, *Meinhard v. Salmon*

*A director of a corporation is in the position of a fiduciary. He will not be permitted improperly to profit at the expense of his corporation. Undivided loyalty will ever be insisted upon. Personal gain will be denied to a director when it comes because he has taken a position adverse to or in conflict with the best interests of his corporation. The fiduciary relationship imposes a duty to act in accordance with the highest standards which a man of the finest sense of honor might impose upon himself... While there is a lofty moral ideal implicit in this rule, it actually accomplishes a practical beneficent purpose. It recognizes the frailty of human nature; it realizes that where a man’s immediate fortunes are concerned he may sometimes be subject to a blindness often intuitive and compulsive. This rule is designed on the one hand to prevent clouded conception of fidelity and a moral indifference that blurs the vision, and on other hand, to stimulate the most luminous critical sense and the finest exercise of judgment uncontaminated by the dross of prejudice, of divided allegiance, or of self-interest.*

—Justice Shientag, *Litwin v. Allen*

## Social Action?

Why didn’t the church of that day openly oppose slavery and seek to destroy it? For one thing, the church was a minority group that had no political power to change an institution that was built into the social order. Paul was careful to instruct Christian slaves to secure their freedom if they could (1 Cor 7:21), but he did not advocate rebellion or the overthrow of the existing order. “Remove not the ancient landmark” (Prov 22:28; 23:10); “Meddle not with them that are given to change” (Prov 24:21).

Something should be noted: the purpose of the early church was to spread the Gospel and win souls, not to get involved in social action. Had the first Christians been branded as an antigovernment sect, they would have been greatly hindered in their soul-winning and their church expansion. While it is good and right for Christians to get involved in the promotion of honesty and morality in government and society, this concern must never replace the mandate to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Mk 16:15).

23] And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

“...as to the Lord”: Employment instructions... Who is your real supervisor? Your heavenly supervisor “*loves you so much He can’t take His eyes off of you!*”

24] Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

“...reward of the inheritance”: You are the fiduciary for the estate—that you will inherit!

25] But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

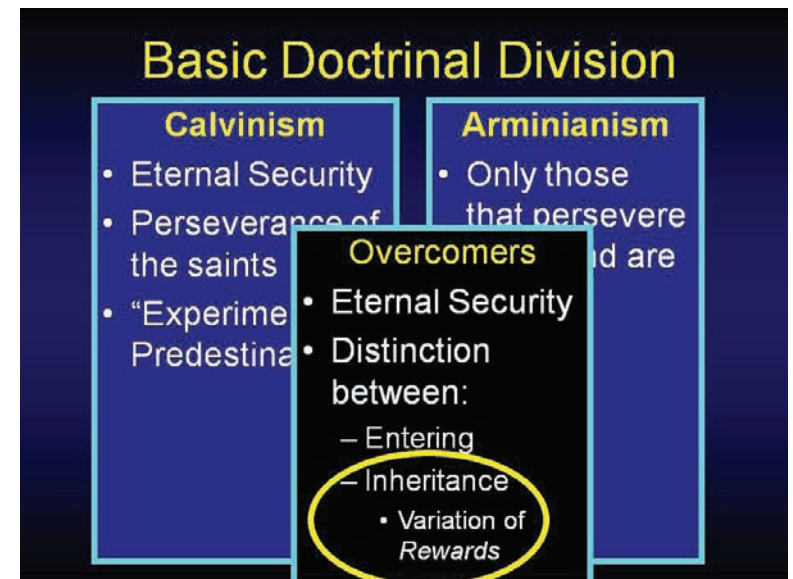
God is no respecter (of rank) of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; James 2:1, 9). Everything will be brought to light at the Judgment Seat (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10) or, in the case of the unsaved, at the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15).

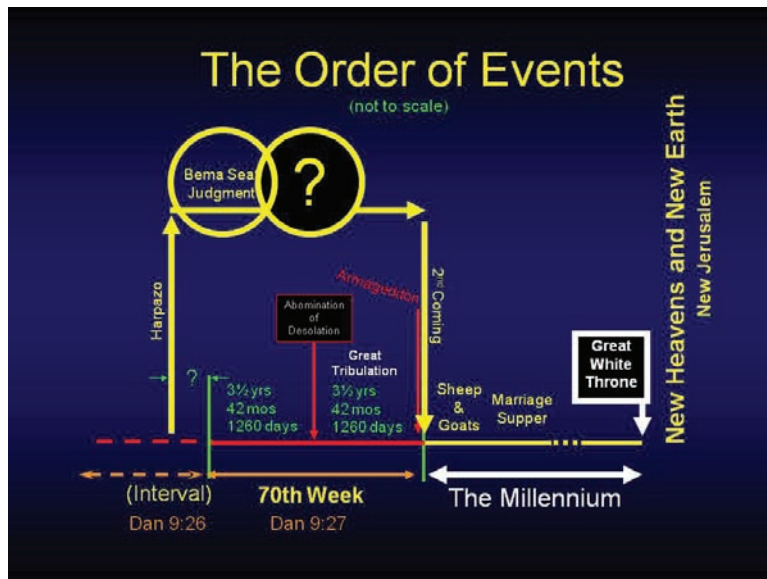
*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

1 Corinthians 9:27

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

2 Corinthians 5:10





*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;*

Hebrews 3:14

## Overcomers Of the Seven Churches

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| • To eat of the Tree of Life            | Rev 2:7  |
| • Not hurt of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> death | Rev 2:11 |
| • Hidden manna, white stone, new name   | Rev 2:17 |
| • Power over the nations                | Rev 2:26 |
| • White raiment, assured                | Rev 3:5  |
| • Pillar, new name                      | Rev 3:12 |
| • Sit with Christ on His Throne         | Rev 3:21 |
| <i>They Shall inherit all things</i>    | Rev 21:7 |

## Crowns Promised

- Crown of Life (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10) for those who have suffered for His sake.
- Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim 4:8) for those who loved His appearing.
- Crown of Glory (1 Pet 5:4) for those who fed the flock.
- Crown Incorruptible (1 Cor 9:25) for those who press on steadfastly.
- Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess 2:19) for those who win souls.

*For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Revelation 7:17

*Of all the words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: It might have been.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Rewards for Faithfulness

- Some entrusted with special privileges; some not (1 Cor 3:11-15);
- Some reign with Christ ; some not (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21);
- Some rich; some poor (Lk 12:21,33;16:11);
- Some heavenly treasures of their own; some not (Lk 16:12).

## Separate Events?

The Marriage takes place in the Father's house. The Marriage Supper takes place in the Kingdom and includes the Old Testament saints resurrected at His Second Coming (including John the Baptist, a "friend of the Bridegroom"; Cf. Mt 22:1-14).

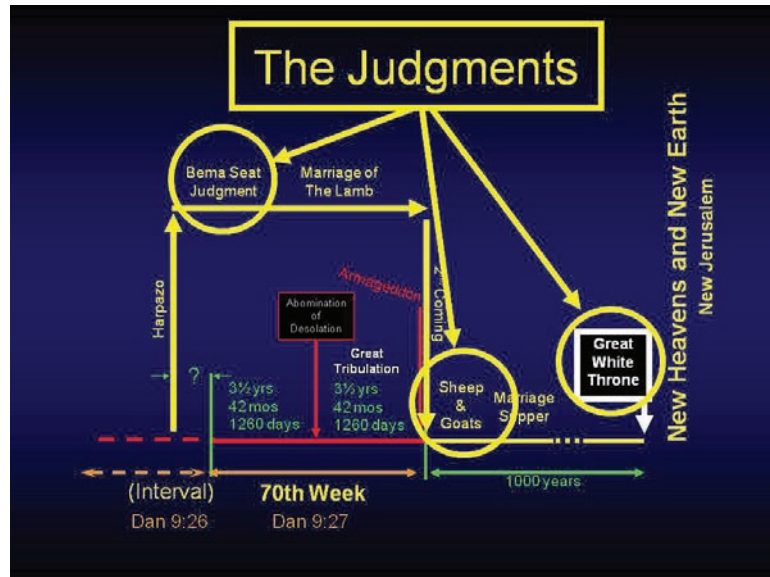
## Judgments

- Bema Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:11-15)
  - Rewards: crowns, assignments
- Kingdom Parables: Talents, Virgins, Uninvited...
  - Call of the Bride to the Marriage of Lamb
- "Sheep & Goat" judgment (Mt 25:31-46)
  - On the earth: (3 separate parties involved)
  - Mortals are judged on the basis of "works"

- Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15)
  - At the end of the Millennium
  - Then: New Heavens, New Earth, New Jerusalem

*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

Revelation 3:11



## Caveats

- Not under the Law—*The Messiah is the fulfillment of the Torah* (Mt 5:17).
- Avoid a “Works Trip”—Walk by the Spirit not the flesh (Gal 3:3). Sin is not to reign anymore... (Rom 6:12).
- Walk with Him: not ahead, nor behind (Heb 4).
- How about us? Note the centrality of Christ:
  - Forgiven by Him;
  - His Peace in our hearts;
  - His Word to dwell in us;
  - His name to be our primary identification;
  - “...is all, and in all” (Col 3:11).
- We have all we shall ever need.

## Final Session

Study Colossians 4. Review your notes on the entire Epistle.

## The Epistle to the Colossians Session 8 Chapter 4

### Review of the Book

- Ephesians is on the church, the *Body* of Christ;
- Colossians is on the Christ, the *Head* of the Body.

Paul did not begin by attacking the false teacher or their doctrines. He began by exalting Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence in five areas:

- The Gospel message,
- The Redemption,
- The Creation,
- The Church, and
- Paul’s own ministry.

Chapter 1: Christ’s Preeminence **Declared**.

Chapter 2: Christ’s Preeminence **Defended**.

Chapters 3 & 4: Christ’s Preeminence **Demonstrated**.

Our moment-by-moment existence depends upon His gracious sustenance of every electron, every atom, every molecule and every spiritual entity as well. We are safe when we place our trust in Him and put our whole lives into His hands.

We have reviewed the freedom we have in Christ (re: holidays, dietetic laws, etc.) and practical implications for our walk. We closed last week on the subject of employee/employer relations.

### Outline of Colossians

**DOCTRINE: CHRIST’S PREMINENCE DECLARED** Chapter 1

- |    |                       |         |
|----|-----------------------|---------|
| A. | In the Gospel message | 1:1–12  |
| B. | In redemption         | 1:13–14 |
| C. | In Creation           | 1:15–17 |
| D. | In the church         | 1:18–29 |

- A. Beware of empty philosophies 2:1–10
- B. Beware of religious legalism 2:11–17
- C. Beware of man-made disciplines 2:18–23

- A. In personal purity 3:1–11
- B. In Christian fellowship 3:12–17
- C. In the home 3:18–21
- D. In daily work 3:22–4:1
- E. **In Christian witness 4:2–6**
- F. **In Christian service 4:7–18**

## Colossians 4

- 1] Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

(In our previous session we explored the fiduciary requirements involved in the subject of employee/employer relations, etc.)

## The Power of Speech

In James 3, the tongue is compared to a bridle, a rudder, a fire, a poisonous animal, a fruitful tree, and a fountain! In each of these pairs, the tongue has the power to direct, to destroy, and to delight.

The power of speech is a gift from God. Paul now follows with focuses on our ministries of speech: *Prayer*.

- 2] Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

“Continue in prayer”: persist; devote yourself to. The biggest lack in the Christian walk: prayer. Not a casual luxury; it is essential.

Prayer = “the Christian’s vital breath.” Prayer is the heavy artillery of the Armor of God (Eph 6:10-17).

Prayer should be **faithful**: “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” “Praying in the Holy Ghost.”

Our walk will directly reflect the time we spend with Him. The soul flourishes in an atmosphere of prayer.

“...watch in the same”: Prayer should be **watchful**: Prayer is God’s way of enlisting us in what *He* wants to do. Christ was our example: again and again, retreating into the solitude of a garden, a desert, or a mountain side. It was an essential part of preparation for His mightiest works and to bear witness to the truth.

We are bidden to bring *everything* to Him in prayer. God delights in answering our prayers. God’s delays are not always God’s denials. Prayer is the effective antidote to anxiety (Phil 4:6).

*Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness.*

—Richard Trench (1807-1886) Archbishop of Dublin

“Watch and Pray.” These are never separated. “Watch in the same”: be alert; beware of spiritual drowsiness by attention to the world (Mt 24:42; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor 16:13; 1 Thess 5:6) or by the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:16; 1 Pet 5:8). It is interesting that we are to pray even for that which is prophesied (Dan 9:2, 3ff); “Thy Kingdom come” (Mt 6:10).

Prayer is to be **purposeful**: A forward spotter, calling in an artillery barrage, needs to be precise. (“Shoot the enemy” isn’t very practical direction in a battle...)

- 3] Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

“...a door of utterance”: Paul was never shy in requesting prayer. (Neither are we.) Paul was in a prison cell! Paul did not ask for the prison doors to be opened, but that doors of ministry be opened (1 Cor 16:9; Acts 14:27).

“...I am also in bonds”: Yet it was from here that we have the four great “prison epistles!” Also, it was from here that even the guards were saved (Phil 1:12-18; 4:22). Study Paul’s prison prayers: Phil 1:9-11; Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Col 1:9-12.

- 4] That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

“...as I ought to speak”: Paul needed more boldness? (Eph 6:19). As wonderful as Paul’s preaching was to his hearers and seems to us, he was never satisfied with it. Neither can any of us be...

- 5] Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

“...them that are without”: Those outside the family of God. There are some things that are best confined to those who are of the faith and possess the essential background to understand... [There are resources in KI that are only available to those who have *earned* the access to them...]

Careless behavior when we are among those of the world will only convince them *that we do not ourselves really believe the tremendous truths which we would press upon them*.

“...redeeming the time”: a commercial term; the faithful steward exploits an opportunity when he encounters one. We should be making the very most of every opportunity. And the time is short! Do you really understand *how* short? How many *weekends* do *you* have left? Wasting time can be the most expensive opportunities gone to waste...

You might say, “I have 20 years left...” but 20 years is an abstraction lacking tangibleness or palpability—“1000 weekends” pinches us in more graphic terms! How many “weekends” do *you* have left?

- 6] Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

“Seasoned with salt”: the condiment of conversation; the preservative power of faithfulness. (Salt was added to the sacrifices: Lev 2:13.) Cf. 1 Pet 3:15.

## Paul

As you follow Christ through the Gospels, notice that He had *no* stereotyped or formula methods of dealing with souls: He met each individual case with its unique needs: In the Jewish synagogue, he reasoned as a rabbi. At Mars Hill, among the Athenian philosophers, he was a master of rhetoric and Greek thought and literature (Acts 17:22-34). Addressing the idolaters of Lycaonia, (Acts 14:11-18) he met them on their own ground, and appealed from nature to nature’s God, seeking to turn them from their vanities and draw their hearts to the Creator of all things.

[In our book, *Alien Encounters*, we attempted to meet the New Agers on their own ground, in their own idioms—even using a foreword by Doug Mahr, one of the founders of the New Age.]

## Closing Personal Salutations

Paul made many friends: over 100 different Christians (some named and unnamed) are referenced in Acts and his letters (26 in Romans 16 alone!)

- 7] All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

“...Tychicus”: He was among the seven who accompanied Paul when he left Ephesus (Acts 20:4). Tychicus was a pastor of the church in Ephesus (Eph 6:21, Acts 20:4, 2 Tim 4:12). These men were helping Paul deliver the love offering from the Gentile churches to the poor saints in Judea (1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8-9).

Tychicus and Onesimus delivered the Ephesian letter (Eph 6:21,22) and this Colossian letter (Col 4:7-9), as well as the letter to Philemon. Paul would send Tychicus to Crete (Titus 3:12) and then to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12).

“...faithful minister and fellowservant”: Evidently one in whom the apostle had complete confidence: beloved and faithful. How precious. How rare it is to find one who is *both* faithful to the truth, and yet caring and sensitive personally.

- 8] Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;  
9] With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

“...Onesimus”: Also, faithful and beloved. A dishonest runaway slave who had robbed his master. [Be sure to study the charming and insightful letter Philemon which deals with this loveable rascal, and how Paul teaches real *intercession*.]

Onesimus has been suggested as the collector of the Pauline corpus of letters [John Knox, *Philemon Among the Letters of Paul*].

- 10] Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

“Aristarchus”: A “fellow-prisoner,” a Thessalonian who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2). At the uproar at Ephesus (Acts 19:28-41), he endangered his own life

on behalf of the Gospel. He sailed with Paul to Rome (Acts 27:2), which means he also experienced the storm and shipwreck that Luke so graphically described in Acts 27. (He is also called a fellow worker in Philemon 24.)

His name seems to imply a member of the upper class, an aristocrat of Macedonia, who apparently renounced his place of prominence in the world to become a *doulos* (bondslave) of Jesus Christ.

“...Marcus”: It is gratifying to see Paul speak affectionately of Marcus, the nephew of Barnabas (“son of consolation or encouragement”); Acts 4:36. Years before, Marcus was the cause of a serious contention between Paul and Barnabas. After the completion of the evangelistic tour in Cyprus (Acts 12), Paul lost confidence in John Mark because of his leaving the work to return to his mother in Jerusalem (Acts 15:37-39). Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance, but Paul was adamant.

Mark ultimately made good and became a trusted companion to Peter, and subsequently endeared to all (1 Pet 5:13). That Paul endorsed him here implies that there were some that still harbored doubts. (God is not finished with any of us yet!)

Mark is also mentioned in Philemon 24 and Paul requests Timothy to bring Mark with him (2 Tim 4:11).

- 11] And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

“...Jesus, which is called Justus”: Jesus—now a name above every name—was then a common Hebrew name, Joshua. Here we have a brother with a Roman surname for a reputation for integrity. (Cf. Joseph Barabas, Acts 1:23 and Justus in Acts 18:7.) The surname Justus is the Latin *Justus* for the Greek Δίκαιος [*Dikaïos*] and the Hebrew *Zadok* [זָדוֹק; ז, ת״ן] and very common as a surname among the Jews. [Source: Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1997.]

The manner in which Paul eulogizes these brethren suggests that gift and grace do not *necessarily* go together.

- 12] Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

“Epaphras”: We have discussed Epaphras in Col 1:7. It was his efforts that founded the church at Colossae, and it was Epaphras’ visit and status report that prompted this letter. It is also significant that he was a prayer warrior.

- 13] For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

“...Laodicea”: All three churches were his burden. (They were only a few miles apart.) Zeal is a key part of prayer. Remember Paul’s “agony” earlier (Col 2:1). Laodicea was Christ’s “last word” in His letters to the Seven Churches (Rev 3:14-21). *It’s His Word to us today.*

- 14] Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

“Luke”: He was not mentioned among the three that “were of the circumcision.” He seems to have been a Gentile. [There are some traditions that he may have been among the 70 (Lk 10:1) or that he may have been the other disciple on the Emmaus Road (Lk 24:13). Some suspect that he was the man who appeared in Paul’s vision (Acts 16:9,10)

It is intimated in Acts 16, when Luke changes his pronoun from “they” to “us,” indicating that then Luke formed one of the party at Troas (Acts 16:8,9). Luke remained with Paul until the end, and possibly saw him martyred.

“...Demas”: It is pathetic to compare v.14 with 2 Tim 4:10, 11. When Paul first mentioned Demas, he called him a fellow worker. Here he simply says, “and Demas”; this may indicate that Paul isn’t really sure about him at this time. Demas and Luke seem to have been intimately associated as they are bound together here and in Philemon 24. However, upon Paul’s second imprisonment we learn that the love the world had been too much for Demas (2 Tim 4:10, 11).

- 15] Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

The apostle’s salutation is a three-fold one—to the brethren that are in Laodicea, that is to the whole of the Christian community in that city, and to Nymphas, and to the church in his house. Nymphas would be a person both of Christian character and of generous feeling, and of some amount of wealth. Nothing more is known regarding him, as this is the only passage in which he is named.

Nymphas was a person of outstanding worth and importance in the church of Laodicea, for he had granted the use of his dwelling-house for the ordinary weekly meetings of the church. (But the Sinaiticus and the Alexandrinus and the Ephraemi Rescriptus manuscripts read “which is in their house”; the Vaticanus manuscript has “her house,” making Nymphas a woman.)

This fact, that the church met there, also shows that Nymphas was a person of some means, for a very small house could not have accommodated the Christian men and women who gathered together on the first day of every week for the purposes of Christian worship.

Indeed, so near were they, that Paul directs that the Epistle to the Colossians be read also in Laodicea.

“...the church which is in his house”: Home churches (Acts 12:12; 16:15, 40; Rom 16:5, 23; I Cor 16:19; Philmon 2). It was not till the 3<sup>rd</sup> century that separate buildings were used for church worship. Even today, this is still where the *real personal growth takes place!*

- 16] And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Apostolic letters were *circulated*. This was done usually by copying and keeping the original. [The fascinating connection with Laodicea Rev 3:14-21 is the end-time church; the Epistle to Colossians is the antidote!]

There are 34 words unique to Colossians. Expressions common to both: “...the beginning of the creation of God.” “I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne.” Some suspect that the letter “*from Laodicea*” may have been our epistle to the Ephesians, a circular letter to the other churches in Roman Proconsular Asia, reaching Colossae from Laodicea.

- 17] And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

“...Archippus, Take heed to the ministry”: Also mentioned in Philemon (possibly his son and the pastor of the church that met in his home), he was apparently also ministering at Colosse, but, with a tendency not uncommon today, settled down comfortably and taking things easily. Promptness, energy, and sense of urgency, is important in our spiritual work as in anywhere else.

Our work ethic is an important part of our witness! How about *us*? One day we each will have to give an account...

- 18] The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

You can hear the clank of his chains, reminding us that he wrote as a prisoner...

Paul signed it (cf. 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11); Paul’s trade mark: 2 Thess 3:17; Philemon 19. All of Paul’s (and only Paul’s) —13 signed and Hebrews—close with “grace” at the end.

Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus.

They were Paul’s amanuenses. (Due to Paul’s eye problem? Cf. 2 Cor 12:7; Gal 4:15).

## Summary

We are *complete* in Christ. We should beware of any teaching that claims to give us “something more” than we already have in Jesus Christ. All of God’s fullness is in Him and He has perfectly equipped us for the life God wants us to live. We do not live by *addition*, but by *appropriation*. May the Lord help us to live as those who are indeed, complete in Christ.

Seven Churches	
Jesus:	Paul:
• Ephesus	• Ephesus
• Smyrna	• Philippians
• Pergamos	• Corinthians
• Thyatira	• Galatians
• Sardis	• Romans
• Philadelphia	• Thessalonians
• Laodicea	• Colossians

## Your Challenge

“We are being plunged into a period of time about which the Bible says more than it does about any other period of time in history...”

## Two Basic Challenges

Find out what the Bible says—this is not to be delegated to others (Mt 5:17). Take advantage of our unique environment of *Today*, with *Advanced Information Appliances and Internet Resources*. Explore the role of small groups/

Then, find out what is really going on in the world. “What is truth?” Remember, we live in the age of deceit...

## Your Action Plan?

What is God calling *YOU* to do? “Raise the bar” on your personal walk with Him: Commit to a systematic program to really learn your Bible; join (or start) a Small Study Group; respond to His calling...*NOW!*

## The Koinonia Institute

- A worldwide lifetime fellowship;
- Non-denominational; very fundamental;
- *A supplement, not a replacement;*
- “On your own clock” & schedule...
- A volunteer “think tank” for Christians;
- Committed to support *your* personal calling—*whatever it is...*

## How Can You Get Involved?

- Undertake a life-long learning program;
- Volunteer to serve as a:
  - Teaching Assistant
  - Area Representative
  - Research Assistant
  - Folio Specialist
- Sponsor special programs to support:
  - Student prizes and incentives
  - Practicums and Internships
  - Endowments for course development, etc.

## Our Coming King

—inspired by Pastor S.D. Lockridge

He is:

King of the Jews (*racial*);  
King of Israel (*national*);  
King of all the Ages;  
King of Heaven;  
King of Glory;  
King of Kings;  
..and Lord of Lords. [Do you know Him? *Do you really?*]

A prophet before Moses;  
A priest after Melchizedek;  
A champion like Joshua;  
An offering in place of Isaac;  
A king from the line of David;  
A wise counselor above Solomon;  
A beloved/rejected/exalted son like Joseph.  
*And yet far more...*

The Heavens declare His glory...  
and the firmament shows His handiwork..

He who **is**, who **was**, and who always **will be**;

The first and the last  
He is the Alpha and the Omega  
the Aleph and the Tau  
the A and the Z;  
He is the first fruits of them that slept.

He is the  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$   
the אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה  
the “I AM that I AM” [*the Voice of the Burning Bush!*]  
He is the Captain of the Lord’s Host  
He was the conqueror of Jericho

He is enduringly strong;  
He is entirely sincere;  
He is eternally steadfast;

He is immortally graceful;  
He is imperially powerful;  
He is impartially merciful;

In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily;  
The very God of very God.  
He is our Kinsman-Redeemer  
and He is our Avenger of Blood;

He is our City of Refuge;  
our Performing High Priest,  
our Personal Prophet,  
our Reigning King.

He's the Loftiest idea in Literature;  
He's the highest Personality in Philosophy;  
He's the Fundamental Doctrine of Theology;  
He's the Supreme Problem in "higher criticism"!  
He's the Miracle of the Ages  
the Superlative of everything good

We are the beneficiaries of a Love Letter:  
It was written in blood,  
on a wooden cross  
erected in Judea  
2,000 years ago.

*He was crucified on a cross of wood,  
yet He made the hill on which it stood.*

By Him were all things made that were made;  
without Him was not anything made that was made;  
By Him are all things held together!

What held Him to that cross? *It wasn't the nails!*  
(At any time He could have declared, "I'm out of here!")  
*It was His love for you and me.*

He was born of a woman  
so that we could be born of God;  
He humbled Himself  
so that we could be lifted up;  
He became a servant  
so that we could be made co-heirs;

He suffered rejection  
so that we could become His friends;  
He denied Himself  
so that we could freely receive all things;  
He gave Himself  
so that He could bless us in every way.

He is  
*Available to the tempted and the tried;  
Blesses the young;  
Cleanses the lepers;  
Defends the feeble;  
Delivers the captives;  
Discharges the debtors;  
Forgives the sinners;  
Franchises the meek;  
Guards the besieged;  
Heals the sick;  
Provides strength to the weak;  
Regards the aged;  
Rewards the diligent;  
Serves the unfortunate;  
Sympathizes and He saves!*

His Offices are manifold;  
His Reign is righteous;  
His Promises are sure;  
His Goodness is limitless;  
His Light is matchless;  
His Grace is sufficient;  
His Love never changes;  
His Mercy is everlasting;  
His Word is enough;  
His Yoke is easy and  
*His Burden is light!*

He's indescribable;  
He's incomprehensible;  
He's irresistible;  
He's invincible!

The Heaven of heavens cannot *contain* Him;  
Man cannot *explain* Him

The Pharisees couldn't *stand* Him  
 and learned that they couldn't *stop* Him;  
 Pilate couldn't *find any fault* with Him;  
 the witnesses couldn't *agree against* Him.  
 Herod couldn't *kill* Him  
 death couldn't *handle* Him  
 the grave couldn't *hold* Him!

He *has always been and always will be*;  
 He had no predecessor and  
 will have no successor;  
 You can't impeach Him and  
 he isn't going to resign!

His name is above every name;  
 That at the name of Yeshua  
 Every knee shall bow  
 Every tongue shall confess  
 That Jesus Christ is Lord!

*His* is the kingdom, the power, and the glory... for ever, and ever.  
 ...Amen!

\* \* \*

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# About The Cover Design

*(on the tape cassette volumes)*

## The “Front” cover:

The Greek border: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).” The center design element symbolizes the Word of God Incarnate, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

## The “Back” cover: (the “front” to the Jewish reader)

The Hebrew border: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (from the Sh’ma, Deut 6:4-5).”

The center design represents the Burning Bush, made up of Hebrew letters which proclaim “the Eternal One cannot lie.”

## The Spine:

The spine includes a Menorah from the Old Testament, a Maranatha Dove suggesting the New Testament, and the Koinonia House logo at the base.



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